

Theories of Educational Leadership

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Concise, organized, and ready for study or presentation

1. Overview

Aspect	Key Idea	Typical Focus
Purpose	Explain how leaders influence schools, teachers, and learners	Vision, change, improvement
Scope	From classroom?level (teacher?leadership) to whole?district or system leadership	Micro ? macro
Evolution	From trait?based ideas ? situational, transformational, distributed, and beyond	Historical development

2. Classical & Trait Theories

Theory	Core Assumptions	Leadership Behaviors	Educational Application
Great Man / Trait Theory (late 1800 ?early 1900s)	Certain innate qualities make a great leader (intelligence, confidence, charisma)	Decision?making, authority, moral example	Identifying “natural” school heads; early principal selection criteria
Behavioural Theories (1930? 1950s)	Leadership can be learned; focus on actions rather than traits	Task?oriented (planning, organizing) vs. Relationship?oriented (support, communication)	Training programs that develop classroom management and staff? support skills

3. Contingency & Situational Theories

Theory	Main Propositions	Variables Considered	School?Level Implications
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Fiedler's Contingency Model	Effectiveness = match between leader style (task? vs. relationship?oriented) and situational favorableness	Leader?member relations, task structure, positional power	Assign principals to schools where their style fits (e.g., strong?task leader in high?discipline schools)
Path?Goal Theory (House)	Leaders clarify paths to goals, remove obstacles, adapt style to follower needs	Subordinate ability, task clarity, environment	Teachers need clear curriculum goals; leaders adjust supportive vs. directive style accordingly
Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard)	Leadership style (telling, selling, participating, delegating) should match follower maturity	Competence & commitment of teachers	New teachers ? more directive; experienced staff ? delegating authority

4. Transformational & Charismatic Leadership

Element	Description	Educational Outcomes
Idealized Influence	Leader acts as role model, earns trust	Higher staff morale
Inspirational Motivation	Articulates a compelling vision	Shared school mission
Intellectual Stimulation	Encourages innovation, critical thinking	Curriculum redesign, inquiry?based learning
Individualized Consideration	Provides personal mentorship	Teacher growth plans, differentiated professional development

Why it matters: Research links transformational practices to improved student achievement, reduced teacher turnover, and stronger school culture.

5. Distributed (Shared) Leadership

Concept	Key Points	Practical Strategies
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Leadership is a collective activity	Authority and responsibility spread across teachers, staff, and sometimes students	• Form instructional leadership teams • Rotate committee chairs • Use peer?coach cycles • Provide collaborative planning time • Develop “lead teachers” in content areas • Joint goal?setting • Data?driven team reviews
Focus on capacity building	Emphasizes professional expertise rather than positional power	
Accountability is shared	Success measured at team and school levels	

6. Instructional Leadership

| Dimension | What It Looks Like | Evidence of Impact