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REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AS PROCESS VARIABLES IN NIGERIA: PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examines the need to rethink leadership and school management in Nigeria in order to improve the quality and sustainability of education. Literature reveals that the education system faces several challenges, including inadequate funding, poor teacher motivation, weak policy implementation, low student performance and perceived declining educational outcomes. To address these issues, the paper examines modern leadership approaches such as transformational, instructional and distributed leadership, which focus on collaboration, accountability and improved teaching practices and align with the sub-theme of leadership and school management. The study draws on secondary sources of peer-reviewed local and international academic publications by reviewing relevant literature and existing practices. It emphasises the importance of involving key educational stakeholders such as government, school administrators, teachers, parents, guardians and the wider community in decision-making and school activities. It also highlights the role of continuous training for school leaders in improving school management. The findings show that effective and innovative leadership can lead to better school performance, improved learning outcomes and long-term educational development. The study concludes that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable educational growth, there is a need for strong leadership capacity, supportive policies and the adoption of modern management practices. It is recommended that school leaders be properly trained, policies be effectively implemented and collaborative practices be encouraged to ensure meaningful and lasting improvements in the education sector.

Keywords: educational governance, leadership, school management, sustainable development, stakeholder participation, capacity building

1. Introduction

Education is widely recognised as a critical driver of national development, social transformation and human capital formation. The core mandate is to prepare learners for useful living within society and for tertiary education. Education is generally designed to provide students with relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable them to function effectively as responsible citizens and contribute to national development (Adefowora et al., 2025). In Nigeria, the effectiveness of the education system largely depends on the quality of its leadership and school management practices. Therefore, educational leadership plays a central role in shaping school vision, improving teacher performance, managing resources and enhancing students' academic outcomes.

Sustainability is a term that is generally concerned with the long-term viability and existence of a resource, process or an entity. It is commonly used in different contexts to describe how to efficiently manage a system to ensure its effective continuity or how best to use resources such that the resources are enduring (Nnaji & Unamba, 2024). In the education sector, sustainability implies the actions and practices that ensure that quality education in all its facets continue to exist for future generations. Sustainability of education is therefore the practices and activities at different levels that ensure the continuous achievement and fulfilment of the mandate. Gbendim (2023) emphasised that sustainability of the school is a function of education's ability to continually fulfill their core mandates.

Despite its importance, Nigeria's education system continues to face persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, teacher attrition, policy inconsistency and weak accountability mechanisms. These issues have been linked to ineffective leadership and poor management practices across different levels of education (Salimon et al., 2025). Furthermore, leadership failures have also contributed to systemic problems such as corruption, low student performance and declining educational standards where students are not achieving expected learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, values and competencies (Adeoye et al., 2023).

Globally, education systems are moving away from traditional bureaucratic leadership models of strict, top-down leadership to more dynamic and participatory approaches such as transformational, instructional and distributed leadership. These leadership styles promote collaboration, shared decision-making, teacher empowerment and a strong focus on teaching and learning outcomes. For example, in Finland and other developed systems, teachers are actively involved in decision-making, which improves teaching quality and student learning. Recent evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2025) shows that when teachers participate in leadership and school decisions, their motivation, self-confidence and classroom effectiveness improve (Ifere et al., 2024; Akhimien, 2025). Another critical dimension of school management is stakeholder involvement. Effective collaboration between schools and communities through structures such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), School Governing Boards (SGBs), Village Education Committees (VECs) and Missionaries is essential for accountability and sustainability (Oyewale, 2022; Babalola, 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature on educational leadership, several gaps still exist, particularly in Nigeria. Many studies have focused on the impact of individual leadership styles on specific outcomes such as teacher performance or student achievement. However, there is limited research that integrates multiple leadership styles within a single framework. Also, existing research has not adequately explored the combined role of leadership and stakeholder participation in achieving sustainable educational development. Most studies tend to examine these variables in isolation rather than as interconnected factors. Again, there is limited emphasis on sustainability in educational leadership research. Given these emerging trends, there is a growing need to reimagine leadership and school management in Nigeria, hence, this study.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's education system continues to face persistent challenges that still undermine the achievement of quality and sustainable educational development. Despite various reforms and policy interventions such as Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme established under the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004); 9-3-4 System of Education, introduced through the revised National Policy on Education to strengthen basic education and improve curriculum continuity (FRN, 2013; Adefowora et al., 2025); Almajiri Education Programme, launched in 2012 to integrate Qur'anic education with formal basic education under the UBE framework (Universal Basic Education Commission [UBEC], 2012); increased investments in educational infrastructure through interventions of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) established by the TETFund Act, 2011 (FRN, 2011); the National Teacher Education Policy and the National Policy on Teacher Education aimed at improving teacher quality and professional development (Federal Ministry of Education [FMoE], 2021); the implementation of the National Curriculum for Basic Education by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013; revised 2024); and the National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education, designed to promote digital teaching, learning and educational administration (FMoE, 2019) among others remain prevalent. These challenges suggest that existing leadership and school management practices may not be sufficiently effective in addressing the complex and evolving demands of the education sector. School leadership, especially at the secondary school level, is still largely characterised by traditional, centralised and bureaucratic approaches that limit innovation, collaboration and responsiveness to change. As a result, school administrators often struggle to effectively manage human and material resources, motivate teachers and create a conducive environment for teaching and learning, leading to inefficiencies in school operations and declining educational outcomes. Furthermore, the increasing demands for stakeholder participation seem not to be adequately addressed by current leadership practices. Many school leaders appear to lack the necessary training, competencies and support systems

required to adapt to this. In addition, weak collaboration between schools and key stakeholders, including parents, communities, government and non-governmental agencies, continues to hinder effective school governance. Although studies have highlighted the importance of modern leadership styles such as transformational, instructional and distributed leadership, their application within the Nigerian educational system remains limited and inconsistent. This creates a gap between global best practices and local realities in school management. This study seeks to address this gap by examining new perspectives and practices that can enhance leadership effectiveness and improve school management outcomes in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine innovative leadership and school management practices that can enhance sustainable educational development in Nigerian secondary schools through a review of existing literature and policy documents. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the existing leadership styles and school management practices reported in the literature in Nigerian secondary schools.
2. Identify the challenges affecting effective leadership and school management in Nigerian secondary schools as documented in empirical and policy literature.
3. Analyse the documented roles of key stakeholders (government, parents and the community) in school management in Nigerian secondary schools.
4. Propose evidence-based strategies for strengthening leadership and school management practices for sustainable educational development in Nigerian secondary schools.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the existing leadership styles and school management practices reported in the literature in Nigerian secondary schools?
2. What are the challenges affecting effective leadership and school management in Nigerian secondary schools as documented in empirical and policy literature?
3. What are the documented roles of key stakeholders (government, parents and the community) in school management in Nigerian secondary schools?
4. What evidence-based strategies have been proposed in the literature for strengthening leadership and school management practices to achieve sustainable educational development in Nigerian secondary schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary leadership theories: Transformational Leadership Theory, Instructional Leadership Theory, and Distributed Leadership Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding effective leadership and school management in Nigerian secondary schools. They are considered sufficient because they collectively address the major dimensions of school leadership required for sustainable educational development. Transformational Leadership Theory explains how school leaders inspire a shared vision, motivate teachers and drive organisational change. Instructional Leadership Theory emphasises the leader's role in improving teaching, learning, curriculum implementation, and students' academic achievement. Distributed Leadership Theory highlights the importance of shared leadership, collaboration and stakeholder participation in school governance and decision-making. Together, these theories explain how visionary leadership, effective instructional supervision and collaborative management practices can enhance school effectiveness, strengthen institutional capacity, improve educational quality, and promote sustainable educational development. Consequently, they provide an appropriate framework for analysing leadership and school management practices and for proposing evidence-based strategies for improving educational outcomes in Nigeria.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory was first developed by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass (1985). The theory emphasises the ability of leaders to inspire, motivate and transform followers towards achieving higher levels of performance in pursuit of organisational goals and objectives. In the management of a school system, this theory emphasises creating a shared vision, encouraging innovation and building commitment among teachers and students. School leaders who adopt this approach often improve teacher morale, promote teamwork and enhance overall school efficiency and effectiveness. Empirical evidence such as Salimon et al. (2025) has shown that transformational leadership positively influences teacher performance and student achievement in Nigerian schools. This makes the theory relevant to this study, as it highlights the importance of motivation and visionary leadership in addressing challenges in the education sector.

Instructional Leadership Theory

Instructional Leadership Theory centres on the role of school leaders in improving teaching and learning processes. It was popularised by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), who emphasised that principals should act as instructional leaders rather than just administrators. The theory focuses on activities such as supervising instruction, evaluating teachers and monitoring students' academic progress. Instructional leaders ensure that classroom practices align with educational goals and standards. Studies conducted in Nigeria have demonstrated that instructional leadership contributes significantly to improved teaching quality, effective curriculum implementation, teacher effectiveness, and students' learning outcomes. For example, Akhimien (2025) has shown that instructional leadership improves both teaching quality and students' academic performance. Also, Ayeni (2011) found that principals' instructional roles and classroom supervision were positively associated with quality assurance in secondary schools, while Adeyemi (2010) reported that effective school leadership significantly influences teachers' job performance. These findings suggest that instructional leadership plays a vital role in enhancing school effectiveness and promoting sustainable educational development in Nigeria. Therefore, the theory is important for achieving better school outcomes and sustainable educational development.

Distributed Leadership Theory

Distributed Leadership Theory, advanced by James P. Spillane (2006), emphasises shared leadership among members of the school community. Instead of leadership being concentrated in one person, it is distributed among teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. This approach encourages collaboration, teamwork and joint decision-making. It recognises that effective school management depends on the collective efforts of various actors, including parents and community members. In Nigeria, this is evident in structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMC). Empirical evidence from Babalola (2024) supports the view that distributed leadership improves school governance and accountability.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative, non-empirical research approach. This approach is appropriate because it allows for the systematic examination and interpretation of existing knowledge on educational leadership without the need for field data collection. The study involves the integration of theoretical, empirical findings and relevant educational policy documents from the literature. These included national education policies, international reports from organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as peer-reviewed local and international academic publications published in English and mainly between 2020 and 2026, selected based on their relevance, credibility and currency using academic databases and search platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and institutional repositories. The sources of data used for the study were entirely secondary sources. The selection process was carried out within six weeks and was guided by key terms such as school leadership in Nigeria, transformational leadership in education, school management challenges, distributed leadership and sustainable education. The inclusion criteria were materials written in English and were relevant to leadership and school management in educational settings while the exclusion criteria for this study included studies without explicit reference to educational leadership and non-English documents where translations were unavailable. The data collected were analysed thematically. This involved organising the literature into areas such as leadership styles, challenges affecting school management, stakeholder participation, technology integration and strategies for sustainable educational development. The paper is hinged on three major theoretical frameworks, namely transformational leadership theory, instructional leadership theory and distributed leadership theory. Transformational leadership emphasises motivation, vision and change-oriented practices; instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning processes; while distributed leadership highlights shared responsibilities among school stakeholders. These theories

provide a strong foundation for analysing leadership practices in Nigerian schools. However, the major limitation of this approach is that it does not involve any primary data collection.

4. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the existing leadership styles and school management practices reported in the literature in Nigerian secondary schools?

Empirical studies have consistently shown that leadership style plays a crucial role in determining school effectiveness. In Africa, studies showed that instructional leadership contributes to school improvement by strengthening teaching practices and student outcomes (Hompashe, 2024). Furthermore, recent global research indicates that effective leadership improves school climate and learning conditions, which are key factors in student success (Hians, 2021; Ozdogru et al., 2025).

In a study conducted in Edo State, Eromomene (2025) examined leadership practices among secondary school principals and found that participatory and supervisory leadership styles significantly influenced school performance. The study revealed that principals who engaged teachers in decision-making achieved better administrative outcomes. Similarly, Salimon et al. (2025) further examined leadership approaches and found that while transformational and instructional leadership styles are recognised, their application is inconsistent. Their findings suggest that leadership effectiveness is often constrained by systemic issues such as lack of training and institutional support. The study of Leithwood et al. (2020) established through an extensive empirical investigation that effective school leadership significantly improves school climate and student learning outcomes through multiple leadership pathways. The study further emphasised that leadership influences student achievement largely by shaping conditions that support effective classroom instruction. In the same vein, Papadakis et al. (2024), using meta-analytic structural equation modelling (MASEM), examined the relationships among instructional, transformational and distributed leadership, teacher performance and student achievement. Almarshad (2017) found no discernible differences among instructional, transformational and distributed leadership in relation to students' academic outcomes, while Papadakis et al. (2024) found that teacher performance mediates the relationships between these leadership approaches and student achievement.

In a separate study, Mutunga et al. (2023) confirmed that instructional supervision practices, including classroom monitoring and active involvement in teaching and learning activities, significantly contribute to improved academic performance in public secondary schools. Similarly, Olaifa and Awodiji (2023) established that principals' instructional responsibilities, particularly regular evaluation of teaching and curriculum implementation, positively influence school effectiveness and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools. This was supported by the work of Akhimien (2025) who examined instructional leadership practices and found that school leaders who focus on curriculum supervision and teacher development significantly improve teaching outcomes. The study emphasised the need for leaders to prioritise instructional roles over administrative routines. Similarly, Pietsch et al. (2023) reported that instructional leadership focused on teaching and learning improves teacher performance and indirectly boosts student achievement. Drawing from a large international study involving over 75 countries, the authors deduced that leadership practices centered on classroom instruction and effective teaching significantly influence learning outcomes, although the extent of the impact may vary depending on the educational context and conditions under which such leadership approaches are applied.

In Ondo State, Owaduge (2024) explored the influence of school leadership on teacher effectiveness and found a strong positive relationship between supportive leadership practices and instructional quality. The study concluded that inclusive, transformational and instructional leadership approaches enhance teacher commitment, professional growth and classroom performance in public secondary schools. Akomolafe and Ogunruku (2021), on the other hand, found that principals who adopt participatory leadership styles record higher teacher motivation and improved instructional delivery compared to those using autocratic approaches. Nevertheless, Babalola (2024) investigated school leadership across Sub-Saharan Africa and reported that leadership practices in Nigeria remain largely bureaucratic and hierarchical. The study highlighted that many school leaders operate within rigid administrative frameworks, limiting innovation and responsiveness to change.

Evidence from the Nigerian literature suggests that leadership in many public secondary schools operates within a centralised and hierarchical administrative structure, where principals are required to comply with formal regulations and bureaucratic procedures. School leaders adopt a combination of leadership approaches, including bureaucratic, instructional, transformational, democratic and distributed leadership, depending on institutional needs and demands. Recent studies further indicate that while instructional, transformational and distributed leadership practices are increasingly being promoted, their implementation remains uneven due to the centralised nature of educational

governance, limited leadership capacity and institutional constraints (Umar et al., 2021; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Collectively, these studies suggest that the effectiveness of school leadership depends less on the adoption of a particular leadership style than on how leadership practices are implemented to improve teaching, learning, collaboration, and school effectiveness.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges affecting effective leadership and school management in Nigerian secondary schools as documented in empirical and policy literature?

Several empirical studies have identified key challenges affecting leadership effectiveness in Nigerian schools. Salimon *et al.* (2025) identified inadequate funding, policy inconsistency and teacher shortages as major constraints. Their study revealed that these factors limit the ability of school leaders to implement effective management strategies. So also, Babalola (2024) highlighted the lack of professional development opportunities as a major issue, noting that many school leaders are not adequately trained to handle modern educational challenges. This lack of capacity often results in poor decision-making and ineffective school administration. In a similar vein, Akhimien (2025) also reported that curriculum complexity and insufficient financial resources create additional burdens for school administrators. Leaders are often forced to focus on administrative survival rather than instructional improvement.

In a separate study, Oyewale and Olalekan (2025) found that inadequate funding remains the most significant constraint to effective school management, limiting resource availability and teacher motivation. This finding is consistent with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022), which reported that many education systems in sub-Saharan Africa continue to face significant challenges, including inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited access to quality textbooks, insufficient teacher support, and weak school resources, all of which adversely affect learning outcomes. These constraints underscore the need for sustained investment in school infrastructure, instructional resources and teacher capacity development (UNESCO, 2022). Aside from this, Yusuf and Bello (2023) identified weak leadership training and lack of professional development opportunities as major barriers to effective school administration. Their findings revealed that many principals are promoted based on seniority rather than leadership competence. Additionally, Eze and Nwankwo (2024) observed that overcrowding in classrooms and teacher shortages negatively affect supervision and instructional leadership effectiveness in urban schools.

The literature distinguishes between structural challenges and leadership-capacity challenges affecting school leadership. The structural challenges include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching and learning resources and limited funding. These are seen as the systemic issues that constrain school effectiveness and require sustained government investment and policy interventions (UNESCO, 2023; World Bank, 2022). In contrast, leadership-capacity challenges relate to the knowledge, skills and competencies of school leaders. Awodiji and Naicker (2024) found that many school leaders require additional professional development in digital technologies and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) competencies to effectively perform their instructional and administrative responsibilities. These findings suggest that improving school leadership requires both adequate educational resources and continuous leadership capacity development. Effective school leadership in Nigeria is hindered by funding shortages, weak capacity development, infrastructural deficits and technological gaps. These findings collectively show that leadership challenges in Nigeria are both systemic and capacity-related.

Research Question 3: What are the documented roles of key stakeholders' participation (government, parents and community) in school management in Nigerian secondary schools?

Stakeholder involvement has consistently been identified as a critical determinant of effective school management because it influences specific organisational processes and measurable school outcomes rather than merely providing moral support. The literature suggests that active participation by governments, parents, communities, school governing bodies like School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and other development partners contributes to improved resource mobilisation, greater financial accountability, enhanced teacher support, increased student attendance, stronger community ownership, and more transparent decision-making. These outcomes, in turn, strengthen school management effectiveness by improving institutional efficiency, teaching and learning conditions, and overall school performance.

For example, Ogunode (2021) reported that active parental participation through Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) enhances accountability, mobilises financial and material resources, and promotes collaborative decision-making, thereby supporting effective school administration. Similarly, Ayeni (2021) found that effective School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) strengthen school governance by promoting stakeholder participation, improving accountability, supporting quality assurance and enhancing students' academic performance. Anyakorah, Oguejiofor and Kasimanwuna

(2022) reported that SBMC participation in school funding contributes significantly to the effective management of junior secondary schools in Abuja, demonstrating that community involvement can improve resource availability for school administration. Likewise, Oko, Nguwasen and Nzewi (2022) observed that active collaboration between School-Based Management Committees and school administrators in planning, staffing, and monitoring strengthens school administration and enhances institutional effectiveness.

Institutional support from government also plays a complementary role in strengthening school leadership. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has emphasised that School-Based Management Committees are designed to promote community participation, improve accountability, and support the implementation of school improvement projects through collaborative governance (UBEC, 2025). Furthermore, Awodiji and Naicker (2024) demonstrated that effective leadership development in the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires sustained institutional support through professional development, policy backing, and investment in digital leadership competencies. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that stakeholder support contributes to measurable school-management outcomes by improving governance, increasing resource mobilisation, strengthening accountability, supporting leadership capacity development, and facilitating sustainable school improvement.

The study of Nwosu and Okpara (2022) further reinforces the position that School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) contribute significantly to infrastructure development and monitoring in rural schools. This finding is consistent with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2023) report, which summarises the independent evaluation of the Girls' Education Project Phase 3 (GEP3) in Northern Nigeria. The report indicates that community mobilisation and enrolment campaigns, implemented alongside complementary interventions such as school grants and household support, contributed to increased school enrolment, improved pupil retention, and reduced gender disparities in access to education. These findings underscore the important role of community engagement in supporting school participation and educational improvement, particularly in underserved communities. In contrast, research conducted by Adebisi and Fagbemi (2024) observed weak stakeholder collaboration in many Nigerian public schools due to mistrust between school authorities and communities. These studies demonstrate that stakeholder involvement is essential for sustainable school management and that it plays a vital role in supporting, funding, monitoring and improving school management effectiveness in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: What evidence-based strategies have been proposed in the literature for strengthening leadership and school management practices to achieve sustainable educational development in Nigerian secondary schools?

Empirical studies have proposed several strategies for improving leadership and school management in Nigeria. Based on empirical findings, Awodiji and Naicker (2024) recommended continuous professional development and leadership training in digital technologies and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) competencies after identifying significant leadership development needs among basic school leaders. Similarly, Umar, Kenayathulla and Hoque (2021), following their empirical investigation of principal leadership practices in Niger State, recommended sustained professional development for principals and teachers to strengthen school effectiveness. Likewise, Wokoma (2023) found that principals' development skills significantly enhance administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools and recommended regular in-service training and leadership development programmes for school administrators. These recommendations are drawn directly from the findings of their respective empirical studies.

In addition to these empirical findings, the broader educational leadership literature provides complementary recommendations based on theoretical synthesis and accumulated evidence. Leithwood et al. (2020) argued that leadership development should be viewed as a continuous and lifelong process through which school leaders regularly update their knowledge, instructional skills, and leadership competencies to respond effectively to changing educational contexts. Similarly, Awodiji and Naicker (2024) emphasised that sustainable leadership development requires supportive institutional policies, structured professional learning opportunities and investment in leadership capacity. Collectively, both the empirical evidence and the broader leadership literature suggest that sustainable improvements in school leadership depend on continuous professional learning, effective leadership preparation and sustained institutional support.

On the other hand, the study by Salimon et al. (2025) advocated for the adoption of transformational and distributed leadership models to enhance collaboration and innovation. This result is consistent with the study of Salami and Adekunle (2024) who reported that distributed leadership enhances teacher collaboration and reduces administrative burden on principals. Furthermore, the World Bank (2023) emphasises that strengthening school leadership and institutional capacity is fundamental to improving education system performance. The report highlights that effective school leaders require continuous professional development, supportive governance structures, strong stakeholder

collaboration and sustained investments in teacher and leadership capacity to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Consistent with this evidence, sustainable improvement in the Nigerian education system requires continuous leadership development, collaborative stakeholder engagement, the adoption of contemporary leadership approaches and the strengthening of digital leadership competencies. Together, these strategies provide a holistic framework for enhancing school leadership and promoting sustainable educational development

5. Conclusion

This review suggests that school leadership in many Nigerian public schools continues to operate within centralised administrative structures, although elements of transformational, instructional and distributed leadership are increasingly reflected in policy discussions and school improvement initiatives. The literature also indicates that persistent challenges including inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, inconsistent policy implementation, insufficient professional development opportunities and emerging digital competency needs continue to shape leadership and school management practices.

Drawing on the three theoretical perspectives underpinning this study, the review highlights the complementary contributions of transformational, instructional and distributed leadership to effective school management. Transformational leadership emphasises vision, motivation and organisational change; instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching, learning and instructional quality; while distributed leadership underscores collaboration, shared decision-making and stakeholder participation. Collectively, these perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how leadership practices can contribute to improved school governance and sustainable educational development.

Based on the evidence synthesised, the study concludes that strengthening leadership capacity, promoting collaborative school governance, supporting continuous professional development and creating enabling institutional conditions are widely identified in the literature as important strategies for enhancing leadership effectiveness and improving school management in Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and educational stakeholders should organize continuous professional development programmes for school leaders such as headmasters/mistresses and principals to enhance their leadership and management skills, particularly in transformational and instructional leadership.
2. School administrators should adopt transformational, instructional and distributed leadership styles to improve collaboration, accountability and teaching effectiveness in schools.
3. Government at all levels should increase budgetary allocation to the education sector to ensure adequate provision of instructional materials, infrastructure and general staff welfare.
4. Parents, communities and private organisations should be more actively involved in school management through PTAs and School-Based Management Committees to enhance accountability and support.
5. Schools should adopt digital tools and data-driven systems for planning, decision-making and monitoring academic performance.
6. Educational policies should be stable, well-coordinated and properly implemented to ensure continuity and effectiveness in school management reforms.
7. Regular supervision and evaluation of school leadership practices should be carried out to ensure compliance with best practices and continuous improvement

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