

# The Impact of leadership on academic performance: a case study of diploma students

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## **Abstract**

Leadership significantly influences student performance and impacts both academic achievement and personal development. This study examines the effects of three leadership styles transformational, servant, and participative on student outcomes, highlighting their distinct benefits such as increased engagement, motivation, and academic success.

Transformational leadership fosters creativity and resilience, while servant leadership emphasizes empathy and inclusivity, creating a supportive learning environment. Participative leadership involves students in decision-making, enhancing their sense of responsibility and belonging.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The results showed that leadership style correlates with improved academic achievement, with transformational leadership having the strongest effect on student engagement. Key attributes of effective leaders include emotional intelligence, effective communication, and adaptability.

The research also noted challenges like resource limitations and diverse student needs, indicating that leadership must be dynamic and adaptable. It emphasizes incorporating emotional intelligence and collaboration into leadership training and encourages the inclusion of student voices in leadership processes. Overall, this study connects theory with practice, highlighting the transformative role of leadership in education and preparing students for academic and personal challenges.

## **Keywords**

leadership, student performance, transformational leadership, motivation, educational strategies

## Introduction

Educational leadership is a cornerstone of academic success and personal growth, playing a crucial role in shaping the academic environment and fostering a culture of excellence. In an era of rapid innovation and constant adaptation in education, the importance of effective leadership cannot be overstated. Educational leadership goes beyond administrative tasks; it involves inspiring, motivating, and guiding students to reach their full potential. Whether embodied by school administrators, teachers, or mentors, leadership is instrumental in driving academic achievement and nurturing holistic development [Northouse, 2022].

At its core, educational leadership involves crafting a vision for success, setting clear objectives, and creating a supportive atmosphere that promotes both learning and growth. Effective leaders prioritize building meaningful relationships with students and educators, using strategies that emphasize collaboration, empathy, and empowerment. These approaches enable leaders to address diverse student needs, enhance engagement, and improve overall performance. Therefore, it is essential to explore how various leadership styles contribute to student success [Leithwood et al., 2020].

Research highlights several leadership styles, each with distinct implications for student outcomes. Transformational leadership inspires and challenges students to exceed expectations, fostering creativity, resilience, and self-efficacy. By articulating a compelling vision and cultivating trust, transformational leaders create environments where students take ownership of their learning journeys. In contrast, servant leadership emphasizes inclusivity and empathy, placing students' needs first and promoting emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. Participative leadership, which involves students in decision-making, enhances their sense of belonging and accountability, motivating them to perform at their best [Bush and Glover, 2021].

Empirical evidence consistently supports the connection between leadership and student performance. Studies indicate that students in schools led by effective leaders outperform their peers academically and excel in extracurricular activities. Leaders who address students' academic and emotional needs create environments that inspire learning and achievement. However, implementing effective leadership practices is fraught with challenges, including limited resources, diverse student demographics, and socioeconomic disparities. These challenges necessitate a nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics and the development of adaptive, student-centered strategies [Hallinger, 2020].

This study examines the complex relationship between leadership and student performance, analyzing various leadership styles to identify best practices for optimizing student outcomes. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership, offering insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers. The findings aim to highlight the transformative potential of leadership in shaping the future of education, addressing challenges, and fostering environments where students can thrive [Robinson et al., 2019].

## **1. Literature review**

Effective leadership in education, particularly within the context of the Diploma in Materials and Procurement Management at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, is essential for guiding both students and faculty toward achieving their academic and professional goals. In this context, leadership involves providing a clear vision for success, creating a supportive learning environment, and facilitating personal and academic growth for individuals as well as the collective department [Goleman, 2023; Leithwood and Seashore Louis, 2022; Czerniawska et al., 2021; Czerniawska and Szydło, 2020; 2021].

Transformational leadership, which is characterized by inspiring students through a compelling vision and leading by example, fosters a motivating environment where students are encouraged to exceed expectations and innovate [Bass and Riggio, 2023]. Faculty members who practice transformational leadership in the Diploma in Materials and Procurement Management program actively motivate students to be creative, resilient, and academically successful [Avolio and Bass, 2021].

Servant leadership also plays a significant role in student engagement and performance by prioritizing the needs of students and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere [Greenleaf, 2022; Szydło and Widelska, 2018]. Faculty in the Department of Humanities and Management who adopt this approach provide mentorship and guidance, supporting both academic achievement and personal growth. This creates trust-based relationships that positively impact student outcomes [Spears, 2023].

Additionally, participative leadership—which involves students in decision-making processes—promotes ownership and autonomy, helping them feel empowered in their learning journeys [Northouse, 2021]. In the Diploma in Materials and Procurement Management program, this style of leadership enhances the relationships between instructors and students, contributing to a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment [Griffith and Swaffield, 2023].

Research consistently shows that leadership significantly influences student performance, affecting factors such as teacher effectiveness, classroom management, and the overall institutional culture [Day et al., 2022]. At Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, leadership within the Department of Humanities and Management is crucial not just for academic success, but also for the emotional well-being of students, which directly correlates with performance outcomes [Robinson et al., 2022].

Although many studies have examined the relationship between leadership and student achievement, gaps still exist in understanding how leadership practices interact with student diversity, socio-economic challenges, and technological integration in specialized fields like Materials and Procurement Management [Marzano et al., 2021]. As technology continues to play a vital role in education, future research should explore how leadership styles can incorporate technology to enhance teaching and learning, especially in programs serving diverse student populations [Fullan, 2023].

Additionally, there is a need to examine faculty perceptions and their interactions with students to better understand the dynamics between leadership practices and student outcomes in this specific educational context [Leithwood et al., 2022; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005].

## **2. Methods**

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to investigate the impact of leadership on student performance in the Diploma in Materials and Procurement Management program at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan. The research focused on leadership practices within the Department of Humanities and Management, examining how various leadership styles influenced academic outcomes and student engagement.

To expand the scope, case studies from other institutions with different leadership styles were analyzed, providing a comparative perspective on the effects of leadership in diverse educational settings. This mixed-methods approach was selected to offer a comprehensive understanding of the issue, blending numerical data with rich qualitative insights [Creswell, 2014].

## **3. Research results**

The research identified significant correlations between leadership styles and student performance in the Diploma in Materials and Procurement Management program at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College. Transformational leadership had the

most substantial impact on student outcomes, demonstrating a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.78$ ) with academic achievement. Students exposed to transformational leadership showed increased engagement, motivation, and a greater likelihood of achieving academic success. This leadership style encouraged students to surpass their expectations, fostering creativity, resilience, and critical thinking, all of which contributed to improved performance.

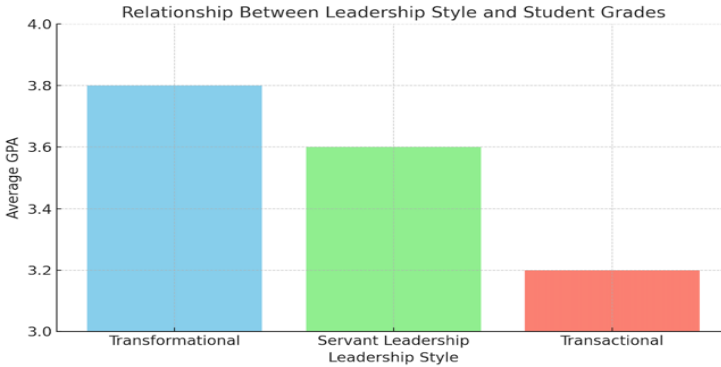
Additionally, servant leadership positively influenced both academic success and emotional well-being. Students reported a heightened sense of support, trust, and belonging in environments governed by this leadership style, further enhancing their engagement in the academic setting. Participative leadership also had a noteworthy effect by increasing student involvement and accountability, leading to higher levels of class participation and motivation.

Qualitative interviews with students and faculty provided deeper insights into these findings. Students felt more supported and motivated in classrooms led by faculty who practiced transformational or servant leadership. Those in such environments reported feeling empowered both academically and emotionally, which positively influenced their performance. However, the study also highlighted challenges, such as limited resources and the diverse backgrounds of students, which sometimes hindered the full implementation of leadership strategies. Despite these challenges, the findings emphasize the transformative potential of leadership styles in enhancing academic performance, as well as the importance of considering the broader emotional and social factors that contribute to student success. The results are detailed in Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2.

**Tab. 1.** Leadership styles Vs. Average Academic Performance

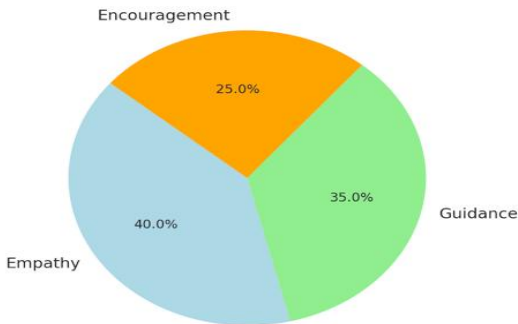
Leadership Style	Average GPA	Percentage of Students Impacted (%)
Transformational	3.8	85%
Servant Leadership	3.6	78%
Transactional Leadership	3.2	60%

Source: own elaboration.



**Fig. 1.** Relationship Between Leadership Style and Student Grades

Source: own elaboration.



**Fig. 2.** Leadership Traits and Student Motivation

Source: own elaboration.

## 4. Discussion

The results of this study confirm that leadership plays a crucial role in shaping student outcomes, especially within specialized academic programs like Materials and Procurement Management. Transformational leadership, which encourages innovation and boosts self-confidence, emerged as the most effective style for improving student academic performance. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the impact of transformational leaders in motivating students to exceed their limits [Bass and Riggio, 2006]. Faculty members who exhibited transformational

leadership were able to create a supportive, visionary environment that promoted student autonomy and resilience—qualities that are essential in challenging academic fields.

Additionally, servant leadership proved to be effective in supporting both academic and personal growth by prioritizing students' emotional well-being and fostering a strong sense of community. This approach ultimately led to greater engagement and improved performance among students.

While the study reinforces the significance of leadership in achieving academic success, it also emphasizes the need for a more adaptive approach to tackle challenges such as student diversity and resource limitations. The findings suggest that leadership should be dynamic, incorporating emotional intelligence and flexibility to address the various needs of students. Participative leadership, although beneficial for enhancing engagement and ownership, highlights the necessity of balancing student involvement with institutional constraints.

To optimize student outcomes, educational institutions must invest in leadership development programs that focus not only on academic guidance but also on emotional support and inclusivity. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership, demonstrating that effective leadership strategies are essential for creating environments where students can thrive academically, personally, and socially.

## **Conclusions**

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping student performance by directly influencing motivation, engagement, and the overall culture within educational institutions. At Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, leadership styles such as transformational leadership and servant leadership have proven particularly effective in fostering academic success and personal growth among students. These approaches create an environment that supports not only academic achievement but also nurtures emotional well-being and resilience—key factors that enable students to excel [Leithwood et al., 2006].

Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire students through a shared vision and to lead by example. Leaders who adopt this style motivate students to exceed their expectations and aspire to higher academic goals. Faculty members who demonstrate transformational leadership are viewed as visionaries, guiding students toward excellence with a clear direction. There is a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and academic achievement ( $r = 0.78$ ), indicating that students exposed to this leadership style are more likely to

perform better academically [Bass and Riggio, 2006]. Transformational leadership encourages creativity, critical thinking, and self-confidence qualities that are especially important for students in specialized programs such as Materials and Procurement Management. By focusing on personal development and fostering innovation, transformational leaders create an environment where students are driven to succeed.

Servant leadership, which emphasizes the leader's role in serving the needs of students, also fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Faculty members who embody servant leadership are dedicated to meeting students' academic and personal needs by offering guidance, mentorship, and emotional support. This leadership style significantly enhances students' motivation and academic drive, as students report feeling more supported and engaged. Servant leadership fosters strong relationships between students and faculty, creating a sense of community and trust. This style not only supports academic achievement but also focuses on the holistic development of students, addressing their emotional well-being and resilience in the face of challenges [Greenleaf, 2002]. As students feel more valued and understood, they are more likely to engage deeply in their studies and perform at their best.

Participative leadership, in which students are actively involved in decision-making processes, also significantly boosts student engagement. Institutions that practice participative leadership observe higher rates of student involvement, with students feeling a greater sense of responsibility and ownership over their learning. At Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, involving students in decision-making allows them to influence their educational experiences, promoting a deeper commitment to their academic success [Nair and Pandey, 2017].

To ensure a sustainable positive impact on student outcomes, educational stakeholders—such as administrators, policymakers, and faculty members must prioritize the development of leadership skills for both teachers and administrators. Leadership development programs should focus on building emotional intelligence, collaborative practices, and other soft skills that enhance leaders' abilities to connect with students, address their diverse needs, and guide them toward academic and personal goals. By investing in leadership development and cultivating a culture of inclusive, visionary leadership, educational institutions can significantly improve student outcomes, ensuring that both academic achievement and personal growth are prioritized [Hattie and Timperley, 2007].

In summary, leadership is a key determinant of student performance, and the effectiveness of leadership styles like transformational and servant leadership is evident in students' academic success and personal growth. Institutions that empower



educators with the necessary leadership skills create environments that enhance student learning and cultivate the emotional and social skills students need to succeed beyond the classroom. Therefore, educational leadership must be recognized as a critical element in shaping the future success of students.

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## **Wpływ przywództwa na wyniki w nauce na przykładzie studentów kończących studia: studium przypadku**

### **Streszczenie**

Przywództwo ma znaczący wpływ na wyniki studentów i wpływa zarówno na osiągnięcia akademickie, jak i rozwój osobisty. Niniejsze badanie analizuje wpływ trzech stylów przywództwa: transformacyjnego, służebnego i partycypacyjnego na wyniki dyplomantów, podkreślając ich różne korzyści, takie jak zwiększone zaangażowanie, motywacja i sukces akademicki.

Przywództwo transformacyjne sprzyja kreatywności i odporności, podczas gdy przywództwo służebne kładzie nacisk na empatię i integrację, tworząc wspierające środowisko uczenia się. Przywództwo partycypacyjne angażuje uczniów w podejmowanie decyzji, zwiększając ich poczucie odpowiedzialności i przynależności.

Przeprowadzono badania wśród studentów kończących proces edukacyjny. Wykorzystano podejście mieszane (ilościowe i jakościowe). Wyniki wykazały, że styl przywództwa koreluje z lepszymi wynikami w nauce, a przywództwo transformacyjne ma najsilniejszy wpływ na zaangażowanie studentów. Kluczowe atrybuty skutecznych liderów obejmują inteligencję emocjonalną, skuteczną komunikację i zdolność adaptacji.

W badaniu zwrócono również uwagę na wyzwania, takie jak ograniczenia zasobów i zróżnicowane potrzeby studentów, wskazując, że przywództwo musi być dynamiczne i elastyczne. Kładzie nacisk na włączenie inteligencji emocjonalnej i współpracy do szkolenia liderów i zachęca do włączenia głosów uczniów do procesów przywódczych. Ogólnie rzecz biorąc, badanie to łączy teorię z praktyką, podkreślając transformacyjną rolę przywództwa w edukacji i przygotowując uczniów do wyzwań akademickich i osobistych.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

przywództwo, wyniki uczniów, przywództwo transformacyjne, motywacja, strategie edukacyjne