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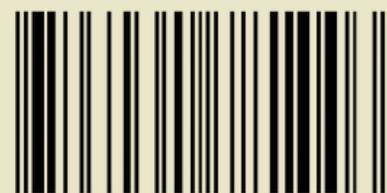
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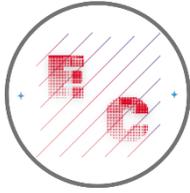


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**LEADING OR MANAGING: THE LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
IMPACT**

**LIDERAR O GESTIONAR: LAS LUCES Y LAS SOMBRAS DEL IMPACTO  
ORGANIZACIONAL**

**Elvis Humberto Tabares Quintero**

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## Leading or Managing: The Lights and Shadows of Organizational Impact

### Liderar o gestionar: Las luces y las sombras del impacto organizacional

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#### ABSTRACT

Leadership is a decisive factor within organizations. Unlike a manager, who focuses on processes, a leader mobilizes emotions and builds culture, although both roles often overlap. Organizational impact depends on how authority is exercised: while transformational leadership fosters innovation and sustainability, transactional leadership can create cold and demotivating environments.

Positive leadership drives personal growth, whereas toxic leadership erodes institutional trust. Ultimately, success is not measured solely by goals achieved, but by collective identity and the well-being of followers. This essay proposes integrating a transformative vision with efficient management. Only by prioritizing both results and the human factor can ethical, sustainable institutions be built to transcend the short term.

**Keywords:** Leadership, management, positive leadership, toxic leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership.

## RESUMEN

El liderazgo es determinante en las organizaciones. A diferencia del gestor, enfocado en procesos, el líder moviliza emociones y construye cultura, aunque ambos roles suelen solaparse. El impacto organizacional depende de cómo se ejerce la autoridad: mientras el liderazgo transformacional fomenta la innovación y sostenibilidad, el transaccional puede generar entornos fríos y desmotivadores.

Un liderazgo positivo impulsa el crecimiento personal, mientras que uno tóxico erosiona la confianza institucional. En última instancia, el éxito no se mide solo por metas alcanzadas, sino por la identidad colectiva y el bienestar de los seguidores. Este ensayo propone integrar una visión transformadora con una gestión eficiente. Solo priorizando tanto los resultados como el factor humano se logran construir instituciones éticas y sostenibles que trasciendan el corto plazo.

**Palabras clave:** Liderazgo, gestión, liderazgo positivo, liderazgo tóxico, liderazgo transformacional, liderazgo transaccional.

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## INTRODUCTION

When we think or speak about leadership, purpose is not usually the first concept that comes to mind (Marques & Dhiman, 2017, p. 8). The following article is for academic evaluation. It highlights the positive effects of Serendipity, described by Busch (2024) as “surprising discovery that results from unplanned moments in which our decisions and actions lead to valuable outcomes” (p. 1112). Its goal is to show skills in identifying and explaining organizational strengths and weaknesses. It serves as a way for instructors or evaluators to assess understanding of leadership, management, and organizational analysis. Viewing

leadership as a process suggests that it is not an inherent trait within the leader, but rather an interactive exchange that takes place between leaders and their followers (Northouse, 2016, p. 6).

According to Northam, Higgs & Mbaye (2023), “Management is about accomplishing quantifiable tasks whereas leaders are committed to the vision” (p. 4). The focus on this paper is less on persuading stakeholders and more on demonstrating critical thinking and communication abilities. So, in short, this is a presentation designed to identify and analyze organizational features for academic purposes, not to officially represent the company. Programs focused on training, supervision, and career development are designed with the aim of cultivating leaders equipped with the skills required for their roles (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro & Reiter-Palmon, 2000, p. 88).

Leadership should not be understood as a fixed trait or inherent characteristic within the leader, but rather as a transactional process that emerges through the interaction between the leader and their followers (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). This paper will discuss the relevant traits a true leader must have in order to be followed. Leadership is not merely about holding authority or directing others; it is about embodying values and principles that inspire trust, respect, and commitment. Trust, according to Marques & Dhiman (2017), “is a critical skill in establishing and maintaining strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders” (p. 3). For Men et al. (2020) cited in Lu (2025) trust in leadership “is one of the significant employees’ change-related attitudes, behaviors, and mindsets” (p. 21); following this line, Lei et al. (2019) cited in Lu (2025) argued that “organizational change capacity is associated with employees’ trust in their colleagues and leaders” (p. 21).

Other traits such as integrity, empathy, resilience, and vision are essential when working with a group of individuals in pursuit of a common goal. A leader must not only guide but also motivate, creating an environment where collaboration thrives and challenges are met with determination.

In concordance with Burke (2023); Tucker et al. (2024); Zukof (2021) cited in Lu (2025) “transformation demands the organization shift its culture, mission, approaches, strategies, and people’s behaviors, skills, and mindsets” (p. 20). Leadership must not be related to management now that the two of them follow along different paths. Whereas managers focus on numbers, leaders will accompany their followers to achieve a common objective. While managers may at times assume a leadership role, they are not always expected or equipped to lead. Similarly, leaders may occasionally need to perform managerial tasks, yet leadership does not inherently require, nor guarantee, the ability to manage (Northam, Hipps & Mbaye, 2023, p. 4).

By examining these qualities, this paper will point out how effective leadership transcends simple management and becomes a force that unites people with a shared purpose. In the complex framework of contemporary organizations, leadership stands as a decisive factor for sustainability and collective success. Many people demonstrate genuine leadership without holding formal positions at work or in other institutional settings. At the same time, there are those who, despite having attained recognized positions of power, fail to truly function as leaders (Marques & Dhiman, 2017, p. 9).

Although the terms leader and manager are often confused, they represent distinct but complementary dimensions of institutional life. At certain times, a manager may assume leadership of a group, although they are not always in a position, nor obligated, to do so. Similarly, a leader may find themselves needing to manage their followers, but they are not permanently called upon, nor always qualified, to fulfill that role (Northam, Hipps & Mbaye, 2023, p. 4). While the manager administers processes, resources, and structures, the leader mobilizes emotions, inspires shared visions, and builds culture. This duality poses a fundamental challenge. How are management and inspiration articulated in organizational practice?

The impact of leadership transcends the mere achievement of objectives. According to Agaga, Abdelmoetyc, Aboul-Dahabe, Daherf, Sharkasig, Tahah, Yousafi & Abdelwahab (2025), “transformational leadership is a technique by which leaders motivate subordinates to perform beyond expectations to achieve the organization goals and mission” (p. 4). Based on Blanch et al. (2016) and Cameron (2012) cited in Riaz, Shinwari, Khan, Jamil & Khurshid (2025), “positive leadership emphasizes inspiration, empowerment, and enabling individuals and teams to reach their full potential while fostering a supportive organizational culture” (p. 2609). A positive leader can transform the work environment, strengthen institutional identity, and enhance the creativity of their teams; conversely, a negative leader can erode trust, generate resistance to change, and lead to talent loss. Riaz, Shinwari, Khan, Jamil & Khurshid (2025) declare that “dark leadership encompasses actions, attitudes, and strategies that foster toxic work environments, demotivate employees, and hinder collaboration and productivity” (p. 2609). Thus, leadership not only influences immediate results but also shapes the trajectory and reputation of organizations in the long term.

According to the declarations of Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000), “leaders’ constructions and interpretations of environmental events are not the only influences on their development” (p. 92). Effective leadership in complex transitions like base conversion requires not only meeting immediate requirements but also anticipating long term impacts, engaging staff in problem solving, and balancing efficiency with sustainability.

Leadership has long been recognized as a cornerstone of organizational success, shaping not only the achievement of goals but also the culture and resilience of those who follow. Unlike management, which emphasizes the completion of measurable tasks, leadership is rooted in vision, influence, and the ability to inspire collective action.

Here we will explore the nature of leadership, its defining skills, and the ways in which leaders can cultivate both personal growth and organizational success and present the difference between management and leadership and the skills and traits necessary for the

development of an organization. This is based on the Skills Model proposed by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000). Effective leaders balance technical expertise with interpersonal skills, guiding their teams through uncertainty while fostering trust, creativity, and commitment. This essay seeks to explore the relationship between leader and manager and analyze how leadership styles—both positive and negative—affect organizational dynamics, offering a critical reflection on the need to balance efficient management with transformative inspiration.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Leader vs. Manager: Convergences and Divergences**

In the organizational sphere, the figure of the manager is usually associated with resource management, strategic planning, and process control. Their role is to ensure that structures function efficiently and that objectives are met within established deadlines and budgets. The manager, therefore, represents the technical and operational dimension of the organization.

On the other hand, a leader is distinguished by their ability to inspire, mobilize, and foster a sense of belonging. As stated in Kim and Kim (2015) cited in Agaga, Abdelmoetyc, Aboul-Dahabe, Daherf, Sharkasig, Tahah, Yousafi & Abdelwahab (2025), “transformational leaders have the ability to transform organizations through their vision for the future and by clarifying their vision they can empower the employees to take responsibility for achieving that vision” (p. 4). Beyond procedures, a leader focuses on people: their motivation, their development, and the building of a shared vision that transcends immediate tasks.

While a manager ensures stability, a leader drives transformation. However, these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive. A manager without leadership risks becoming a mere mechanical administrator, incapable of generating emotional commitment within their team. Likewise, a leader without management skills can lose effectiveness, as inspiration without

structure can lead to chaos. Therefore, the relationship between leader and manager should be understood as complementary. The balance between management and leadership is what allows organizations to thrive in increasingly complex and changing environments.

As explained by Rockwell (2021), “transformational leaders try to motivate their followers to go beyond what is expected of them and to excel in their pursuit of the goals of the organization” (p. 2). Although leader and manager represent distinct dimensions, in practice many leaders end up assuming management functions and neglecting the well-being of their followers. When attention is focused exclusively on indicators, processes, and results, there is a risk of obscuring the human needs that sustain the organization.

This deviation transforms the leader into a rigid administrator, incapable of inspiring and building trust. The result is often a negative workplace atmosphere, teams feel demotivated, communication becomes merely instrumental, and creativity is stifled. Mackey et al. (2021) cited in Riaz, Shinwari, Khan, Jamil & Khurshid (2025) describe negative leadership as “despotic leadership, petty tyranny, abusive supervision, pseudo-transformational leadership, and exploitative and destructive leadership” (p. 2609). Instead of mobilizing emotions and building meaning, the leader who acts excessively as a manager conveys pressure, control, and a lack of concern for people. Thus, the organization may achieve short-term goals, but sacrifices cohesion, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

Therefore, understanding the difference between leading and managing is not merely a theoretical exercise, but a practical necessity. The real challenge lies in balancing both dimensions, leadership that inspires and cares, coupled with management that organizes and supports. Only in this way can we prevent the leader's role from becoming that of a manager who erodes the work environment and ensure that the organization thrives in a healthy setting, or as Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, Kepner, Farnsworth & Clark (2019) declare, “managers with intellectual stimulation promote critical thinking and problem solving in an effort to make the organization better” (p. 2).

## Transformational Leadership vs. Transactional Leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve a higher level of performance and commitment. Hesselbein and Cohen (1999) cited in Hall et al. (2019) suggest that “organizations that take the time to teach leadership are far ahead of the competition” (p. 3).

The transformational leader does not simply direct tasks, but seeks to awaken creativity, foster innovation, and generate a shared sense of purpose. Hall et al. (2019) argue that “effective transformational leadership results in performances that exceed organizational expectations” (p. 2). Their influence is based on trust, ethics, and the ability to convey a vision that motivates people beyond their individual interests. In this model, the leader acts as a change agent who transforms both individuals and the organization. Unlike pseudotransformational leadership which is considered by Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) cited in Northouse (2016) as “personalized leadership, which focuses on the leader’s own interests rather than on the interests of others” (p. 163).

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is based on exchange. The leader offers rewards or sanctions depending on the fulfillment of objectives and rules. Burns (1978) cited in Northouse (2016) says that “transactional leadership refers to the bulk of leadership models, which focus on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers” (p. 162). It is a more pragmatic and short-term-oriented style, where the relationship with followers is reduced to a contract of benefits and obligations. Although it can be effective for maintaining order and achieving immediate goals, transactional leadership rarely generates emotional commitment or innovation, as it is limited to managing the relationship in terms of reward and punishment. In short, while transformational leadership seeks to uplift and transform individuals and the organization, transactional leadership focuses on controlling and regulating performance through explicit agreements. Both styles can coexist, but the long-term impact of transformational leadership is usually deeper and more sustainable.

## Preventing Negative Leadership and Balancing Styles

Managers sometimes mistakenly believe that holding a managerial title automatically makes them leaders, and that employees will naturally follow without question (Hall et al. 2019, p. 1). Analyzing leadership styles reveals that it is not enough to distinguish between a leader and a manager; it is also necessary to understand the different ways in which influence is exerted. In this sense, the difference between transformational and transactional leadership is key.

In line with Hall et al. (2019) “effective transformational leadership results in performances that exceed organizational expectations” (p. 2). It seeks to inspire and mobilize followers toward a higher purpose, fostering innovation, trust, and emotional commitment. Conversely, as reported by Hieng, Hum, Soeung, Sam, Phorn & Vy (2024), “transactional leaders are known for their structured approach to management. They believe in creating a clear roadmap for employees to follow” (p. 128). It focuses on the exchange of rewards and punishments, ensuring the achievement of immediate goals but without building a deep connection with people.

Both styles can coexist in organizations now that according to Hieng et al. (2024), “transactional leadership is a type of leadership style in which reward ultimately arouses employees’ motivation to accomplish their goals” (p. 130). It brings order and clarity to daily management, while transformational leadership as mentioned in Shahid (2024), “relies on leaders’ ability to adapt to new challenges and embrace continuous learning” (p. 3808). It fosters creativity and cultural sustainability. The risk arises when the transactional approach is prioritized, reducing the relationship with teams to a contract of benefits and obligations, which can lead to cold and demotivating environments. Two defining attributes of transactional leadership exert a strong influence on organizational effectiveness. Such leaders prioritize stability by enforcing rigorous supervision and control mechanisms (Cashman, 2017 cite in Hieng et al. 2024, p. 133).

Hieng et al. (2024) acknowledge that transactional leadership style “prioritizes achieving specific outcomes and objectives” (p. 128). Therefore, organizations must promote a healthy balance by integrating transactional efficiency to guarantee concrete results, incorporating transformational inspiration to mobilize emotions and build institutional identity, developing leaders who understand that their impact is not limited to short-term goals, but rather shapes long-term culture and reputation. Shahid (2024) claims that “the ability to adjust strategies quickly based on external factors allows transformational leaders to maintain competitive advantage and foster innovation” (p. 3809). In this way, negative leadership is prevented, and it is ensured that both managers and leaders fulfill their roles with ethics, vision, and care for people.

### **Positive and Negative Leadership: The Paradox of Managers and Leaders**

Sometimes, the lines between leader and manager blur. There are managers who, beyond their administrative role, manage to positively transform their followers, supporting their professional and personal growth. In accordance with Tucker et al. (2024) cited in Lu (2025), “managing the organization's human side is a significant hurdle in organizational change” (p. 21). These managers become trusted role models, as they not only ensure the efficiency of processes but also promote the well-being and motivation of their teams. Their impact transcends immediate results and is reflected in a solid organizational culture, capable of being sustained over time. Reduced burnout and emotional exhaustion, combined with managerial support, foster reciprocal commitment and supportive actions directed at the organization (Lu, 2025, p. 22).

In contrast, there are leaders who, despite their capacity for influence, exercise their role in a toxic way. They lead groups by exploiting their position, focusing solely on short-term goals and neglecting the human dimension of the organization. In compliance with Udchachone, Udin & Zumitzavan (2025), “these behaviors include abusive supervision, authoritarian control, manipulation, narcissism, unpredictability, and a general disregard for the well-being of

subordinates” (p. 2). This type of leadership is considered as the dark side of leadership because it erodes trust, creates tense work environments, and limits the creative potential of teams. Although they may achieve immediate objectives, they do so at the expense of cohesion and institutional sustainability.

The paradox is clear, the title of “*leader*” does not always guarantee a positive impact, nor does that of “*manager*” imply rigidity or dehumanization. True value lies in how influence is exercised over others. A manager with human sensitivity can become an inspiring leader, while a leader without ethics or vision can become a destructive force for the organization.

### **Positive Leadership: Inspiration and Transformation**

Unlike those who exercise their role in a toxic way, positive leaders place people at the center of the organization, recognizing that well-being and human development are the foundation of productivity and innovation. Within the field of positive leadership, theoretical models typically concentrate on organizational outcomes, like achievement, expansion, and efficiency, or on fostering employee welfare, satisfaction, and harmonious relations (Riaz et al. 2025, p. 2609). Positive leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire, mobilize, and build trust within teams.

Authors such as James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass have described this approach under the concept of transformational leadership. Burns (1978) cited in Agazu, Kero & Debela (2025) explains that “transformational leadership emerges when one or more individuals engage with others” (p. 1). In the same line, Bass (1997) cited in Agazu et al. (2025) identifies four dimensions of transformational leadership “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (p. 2).

With an idealized influence, the leader acts as an ethical and consistent role model; the inspirational motivation conveys a clear and stimulating vision; the intellectual stimulation promotes innovation and critical thinking; finally, the individualized consideration attends to the needs and aspirations of each team member. In the words of Shahid (2024) “Leaders who

navigate challenges effectively and adjust their strategies are better positioned to drive innovation and achieve sustainable growth” (p. 3807). The transformational leader does not simply direct tasks but rather empowers their followers to surpass their own limitations, fostering creativity, commitment, and identification with the institutional mission.

The impact of positive leadership is evident. Hall et al. (2029) establish that “becoming an effective transformational leader is an iterative process. This means that conscious effort must be made to adopt a transformational style” (p. 2). More motivated teams, lower staff turnover, greater creativity, and an institutional culture that transcends immediate results.

Through individualized consideration, managers encourage associates to achieve objectives that simultaneously foster their growth and contribute to organizational progress (Hall et al., 2029, p. 2). In this sense, some managers, by integrating these practices, even become inspirational leaders who support the professional and personal growth of their employees. An authentic leader does not hide behind masks of power but builds relationships based on trust and integrity, fostering a healthy and sustainable organizational climate.

### **Negative Leadership: Toxicity and Organizational Consequences**

Udchachone, Udin & Zumitzavan (2025) assert that “employees under toxic leaders frequently experience low morale, emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and high turnover intentions” (p 2). Negative leadership manifests itself when a leader's influence is exercised in an authoritarian, manipulative, or disregarding manner, regardless of the well-being of their followers. Unlike positive leadership explained by Azila-Gbettor, Honyenuga, Atatsi, Ayertso Laryea & Konadu Quarshie (2024) who demonstrate that “in the case of personalized development, organizations should provide tailored plans that are grounded in individual assessments, career objectives, and performance evaluations” (p. 12). It seeks to inspire and transform, whereas the negative leader uses their position to impose, control, and achieve immediate goals without considering the human impact or institutional sustainability.

Authors such as Whicker (1996) and Akinyele & Chen (2024) have described this phenomenon as toxic leadership. While Akinyele & Chen (2024) declare that “toxic leaders exhibit various negative behaviors” (p. 477), Whicker (1996) cited in Akinyele & Chen (2024) described it as “damaging leadership behaviors that destroy employees” (p. 479). It is characterized by the creation of hostile work environments, the erosion of trust, and the emotional manipulation of teams. This type of leadership can generate high levels of stress, demotivation, and staff turnover, weakening organizational cohesion.

Similarly, narcissistic leadership focuses on the pursuit of personal recognition and the satisfaction of individual interests. Schmidt (2008) cited in Akinyele & Chen (2024) report that these toxic leaders “lack emotional intelligence, are insensitive and self-interested, using negative managerial tactics to influence followers” (p. 479). They lead arrogantly, focus solely on short-term results, and neglect building genuine relationships. While they may achieve immediate success, this comes at the expense of organizational culture and the development of their employees.

Pursuant to Berzosa & Ganguly (2025) “toxic leadership is characterized by behaviors such as manipulation, intimidation, and emotional volatility” (p. 888). The consequences of negative leadership are noticeable, loss of talent, damage to institutional reputation, resistance to change, and decreased innovation. Wolor et al. (2022) cited in Berzosa & Ganguly (2025) “highlight the negative impact of toxic leadership on employee performance” (p. 888). In this sense, even some charismatic and influential leaders can become destructive forces if they do not balance their power with ethics, vision, and care for people.

### **Preventing Negative Leadership and Fostering Balance**

Outcomes can vary, with reactions being favorable or unfavorable, contingent upon the way managers implement change and the subsequent responses of stakeholders (Diaz, 2024 cited in Lu, 2025, p. 21). Analysis of leadership styles shows that a leader's impact on an organization depends not only on their title but also on how they exert their influence. From the

viewpoint of Cameron (2012) and Demirtas (2020) cited in Riaz et al. (2025) positive leadership “include agile, sustainable, empathetic, adaptive, inclusive, authentic, and servant leaderships” (p. 2609).

Managers who integrate humane and transformative practices can become positive leaders, while negative leadership is explained by Udchachone, Udin & Zumitzavan (2025) as “a critical deviation from the ideals of healthy leadership” (p. 2). As well as Watkins and Walker (2021) cited in Akinyele & Chen (2024) who describe toxic leadership as “value-less leaders who rise to authoritative positions due to certain accompanying leadership traits and narcissistic personalities” (p. 479). Leaders who neglect the well-being of their followers can become toxic figures. This paradox compels organizations to reflect on how to cultivate leadership that combines efficiency with humanity.

To prevent negative leadership, it is necessary to implement clear strategies such as: rigorous selection processes that evaluate not only technical skills but also ethical values and interpersonal abilities; ongoing training programs focused on developing positive leadership skills, such as empathetic communication, emotional intelligence, and trust-building; a strong organizational culture that rewards collaboration, transparency, and collective well-being, reducing the space for authoritarian or narcissistic practices; feedback mechanisms that allow teams to express their perceptions of leadership and foster accountability.

Commitment to lifelong learning equips leaders with the capacity to implement transformative initiatives and motivate teams to embrace innovation (Shahid, 2024, p. 3809). The real challenge lies in balancing the dimensions of management and leadership. Without management, inspiration is diluted by improvisation; without leadership, management becomes a mechanical and dehumanized exercise. Tucker et al. (2024) cited in Lu (2025) say that “transformation occurs when organizations recognize that things cannot continue in the old way of operations and cannot achieve the business strategies required to succeed in fundamentally different environments” (p. 20). Only the integration of both perspectives guarantees that

organizations achieve their goals without sacrificing the well-being of their members or the sustainability of their culture.

## **Reflection from professional practice**

### **Positive leadership section**

Terms like strategy, action, profits, stakeholders, shareholders, production, resources, supply, and expansion are often linked to leadership (Marques & Dhiman, 2017, p. 8). Now you will learn about the Problem Statement and Proposed Improvement Plan I presented at my workplace with the objective of improving the outcomes of the whole community including teachers, students and administrators.

Having noticed the necessities of my team before leading them made me the emergent leader who encouraged people to change and developed skills that are the foundations of transformational leadership. According to Northouse (2016), “transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them” (p. 161). I was promoted as a leader, but still I kept using the Feedforward Interview (FFI) by listening to the members of the team with the objective of fulfilling their needs. As Budworth & Latham (2025) explain “the FFI is rooted in positive psychology, a branch of psychology that focuses on conditions that support the optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (p. 2).

Bilingual education has become one of the main challenges for schools in the 21st century, as it involves not only teaching a second language but also the cultural and pedagogical transformation of the entire educational community. Environmental factors to which leaders are exposed significantly influence the acquisition and refinement of critical leadership competencies (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro & Reiter-Palmon, 2000, p. 92). In this context, my experience as an English teacher in the humanities and later as coordinator of the bilingualism project at a school in transition to become bilingual allowed me to critically reflect

on the initial weaknesses of the process and, at the same time, lead improvement initiatives that generated tangible results.

In this segment I will evaluate my performance within this team, highlighting how identifying problems, designing innovative strategies, and implementing cross-curricular projects contributed to establishing a bilingual environment at the school. Following the declarations of Northam, Hipps & Mbaye (2023), “leaders take risks and push the envelope to try to move the organization beyond its own self-imposed boundaries” (p. 4). Through this experience, it is evident that committed leadership and a passion for the language can become drivers of change capable of transforming educational quality and propelling the institution toward international standards.

Evaluation of the performance as part of a work team based on the theories studied

The transition of a school to a bilingual model represents an institutional challenge that demands pedagogical coherence, high academic standards, and a teaching staff prepared to respond to the demands of contemporary education. In this context, my work in the humanities department and as an English teacher in grades six through eleven was defined by a critical and reflective approach to the teaching and assessment practices being implemented. As Agaga et al. (2025) state, “transformational leaders should provide a vision that paints a bright picture of the future for their followers” (p. 9).

My experience allowed me to recognize that, beyond the institution's commitment, there were structural limitations that compromised the quality of the bilingualism process. The thesis that will guide this evaluation argues that my main contribution consisted of identifying these weaknesses and proposing alternatives aimed at raising the academic and pedagogical level of the school.

### **Problem Statement**

During my teaching career, I observed that the methods used to teach and assess English did not meet the established national standards for second language acquisition. Most

of the students showed a significant delay in developing communicative skills, revealing a gap between institutional objectives and actual results. This difficulty was compounded by the lack of preparation among the teaching staff. Several English teachers lacked the necessary linguistic and methodological skills to guide students through a solid and progressive learning process. This situation created a vicious cycle in which deficient pedagogical practices perpetuated academic underachievement, jeopardizing the credibility of the bilingual program and the students' holistic development.

### **Proposed Improvement Plan Based on Change-Oriented Leadership**

Quaquebeke & Gerpott (2023) explain that “change-oriented leadership functions refer to formulating an attractive vision for employees, charismatically spreading enthusiasm and energy among followers, or initiating change” (p. 267). Given the evident lack of linguistic and methodological preparation among several English teachers, my efforts focused on finding concrete solutions to strengthen the bilingual program.

First, I worked with the department head to redesign the institutional curriculum, aligning the content and teaching strategies with national and international standards. This process allowed us to rethink the learning sequence and establish clearer, more achievable objectives for each grade level.

Additionally, I recommended a substantial change to the assessment system. The existing exams focused almost exclusively on grammar and vocabulary, which limited the ability to measure students' true progress in language proficiency. In response, I designed an assessment model that integrated the four communicative skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, thus ensuring a more comprehensive and realistic evaluation of language proficiency levels.

Budworth & Latham (2025) assure that “appreciative inquiry is often used to initiate organizational change efforts where dialogue about an organization’s strengths uncovers untapped potential sources of innovation” (p. 2). Therefore, this model was shared with the

language department team to reach a consensus and promote assessment practices more aligned with the nature of second language learning.

In summary, my improvement plan not only sought to address the weaknesses identified, but also to offer practical tools so that the teaching team could improve their performance and contribute effectively to the transition process towards bilingualism.

### **Achievement**

The implementation of the improvement plan had a significant impact on the institution and on my own professional development. In recognition of the initiative and the results achieved, I was promoted to bilingualism project coordinator. This new role allowed me to more directly lead the transformation of the school, bringing together the teaching team and guiding our actions toward building a true bilingual culture.

One of the first steps was to work on institutional cultural integration, understood as incorporating English into the daily life of the school community. To this end, we designed practical strategies that extended beyond the classroom. We taught basic English commands to teachers in other subject areas and even extended this practice to the woman in charge of the school cafeteria, so that daily interactions, from classroom instruction to conversations in the cafeteria, would become learning opportunities. This approach allowed English to cease being perceived solely as a subject and begin to solidify as a regular means of communication within the institution.

Consequently, the achievement was not limited to my promotion but translated into a tangible cultural change. The school began to experience a transition from Transactional Leadership, defined by Rockwell (2021), “as management by exception” (p. 2) to Transformational Leadership, which according to Rockwell (2021), “is concerned with developing the follower and allowing discourse for change” (p. 2). As a result, bilingualism started to be perceived as a collective project, in which each member of the educational

community had an active role in building a more inclusive environment consistent with the institutional objectives.

### **Project Implementation and Consolidation Plan**

Alavi et al. (2018) cited in Agaga et al. (2025) debate that “transformational leaders can reduce their followers’ levels of uncertainty and anxiety” (p. 9). Coordinating the bilingualism project allowed me to apply a positive leadership and design and implement a comprehensive plan that aimed to move beyond teaching English as an isolated subject and make it a cross-curricular element of school life. I was, as Riaz, Shinwari, Khan, Jamil & Khurshid (2025) suggest to the leader of an institution to be, “committed to the success of the organization rather than personal gain” (p. 2608).

First, I spearheaded a cross-curricular project in which other subjects, such as natural sciences, technology, arts, and physical education, began to be taught in English. To ensure the quality of this process, I organized training sessions for teachers so they could gain confidence and assurance when using the language.

Bresciani et al. (2021); Ferreira et al. (2019); Leso et al. (2023) cited in Bevilacqua, Masárová, Perotti & Ferraris (2025) discuss that “Digital Transformation (DT), led by the rise of digital technologies, has embodied a revolutionary change affecting all sectors and companies” (p. 2900). Thanks to the existing contract with the publisher of the textbooks, I managed training programs that offered courses in technology, pedagogy, and especially in the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach. This allowed teachers in non-linguistic subject areas to naturally incorporate English into their classes. Furthermore, it opened the possibility for language teachers to take international exams such as IELTS, Cambridge FCE, and TKT, thus strengthening their professional profile and raising the academic level of the institution.

The plan also included cultural and community initiatives. In collaboration with the arts and movement department, I proposed holding bilingualism festivals, which not only promoted

language practice in a creative and festive environment but also served to raise funds for improving the school's infrastructure.

Finally, I extended the project's impact to the students, who had the opportunity to take the Cambridge FCE international exam and participate in international exchanges. One of the most significant milestones was organizing a cultural exchange camp on Victoria Island, Canada, where I led a group of twelve students from the school. This experience not only strengthened their language skills but also allowed them to experience bilingualism as a cultural and social reality.

Taken together, these actions consolidated the bilingualism project as a comprehensive process encompassing curriculum, assessment, teacher training, institutional culture, and international experiences, generating a lasting impact on the educational community.

#### Results Reached

The implementation plan and actions undertaken with the bilingualism team generated tangible progress at the institution. First, a significant improvement was achieved in the subject's achievement indicators, reflected in the stronger development of students' communicative skills. Thanks to the constant commitment and dedication to the project, the institution advanced in its bilingual certification process, consolidating its academic credibility.

One of the most significant results was the level achieved by students upon completing eleventh grade: the majority obtained B2 and C1 level certifications according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), surpassing the national average. This achievement not only demonstrated the effectiveness of the project but also the institution's capacity to offer internationally competitive education.

Furthermore, the bilingual environment established at the school extended beyond the classroom and permeated the daily life of the educational community. A passion for the language became a driving force that attracted more families, which in turn spurred the expansion of the school facilities and strengthened the school community. As mentioned in

Morelos-Gómez et al. (2023) cited in Agazu, Kero & Debela (2025), “Innovation in organizations in a global context, making an emphasis on the benefits and contributions of the innovations as a strategic purpose for the competitiveness of the companies” (p. 2). Consequently, bilingualism ceased to be a distant goal and became an institutional reality that generated prestige, trust, and sustainability.

Bevilacqua, Masárová, Perotti & Ferraris (2025) assert that “the ability to analyze data critically and accurately, extract relevant insights, and translate them into strategic actions is crucial for top managers' leadership” (p. 2914). Therefore, my performance within the bilingualism team was distinguished by a critical, proactive, and committed attitude toward educational transformation. Porfírio et al. (2021) cited in Bevilacqua, Masárová, Perotti & Ferraris (2025) posit that “top managers are responsible for steering and harmonizing the myriad organizational and operational changes” (p. 2914). From identifying initial weaknesses to implementing a comprehensive improvement plan, my work was always focused on finding solutions that would raise academic standards and consolidate a true bilingual culture within the institution.

From the point of view of Riaz et al. (2025), “organizational success in the corporate world is thus seen as the achievement of goals while simultaneously attending to employee needs” (p. 2610). The results achieved—improved communication skills, bilingual certification, students graduating with B2 and C1 levels, and the growth of the school community—demonstrate that consistent transformational leadership, effort as well as passion for the language can generate structural and sustainable changes. Beyond the indicators, the most significant achievement was transforming bilingualism into a daily experience, shared and celebrated by the entire school community.

In this regard, my performance not only contributed to meeting national and international standards, but also left a legacy of innovation, leadership, and commitment. As stated in Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, Kepner, Farnsworth & Clark (2019), “managers with idealized influence can be trusted and respected by associates to make good decisions for the organization” (p. 2). The

experience taught me that the true impact of an educational project lies in its ability to inspire others, transform the institutional culture, and broaden horizons that allow students and teachers to experience bilingualism as a tool for personal and collective growth.

### **Final Remarks**

The transition to bilingualism at the institution was a challenge that demanded vision, leadership, and commitment. My performance within the team was characterized by the ability to identify initial weaknesses—such as a lack of teacher preparation and inadequate assessment methods—and transforming them into opportunities for improvement through concrete and sustainable proposals.

My promotion to the position of bilingualism project coordinator allowed me to consolidate a comprehensive implementation plan that encompassed curriculum, assessment, teacher training, institutional culture, and international experiences. The results achieved—students graduating with B2 and C1 levels, bilingual certification for the institution, cultural festivals, international exchanges, and a school environment where English was a daily reality—demonstrate that consistent effort and a passion for the language can generate a profound leadership and lasting impact.

Connolly and Farrier (2021); Demirtas (2020) cited in Riaz et al. (2025) concur that “leadership styles like ambidextrous, transformational, paradoxical, charismatic, and authentic reflect a balanced concern for both organizational goals and employee welfare” (p. 2610). Beyond academic indicators, the true achievement was establishing a bilingual culture that strengthened the school's identity and attracted new families, fostering the growth of the educational community and most importantly, the personal and professional development of all members of the team. My performance, therefore, not only contributed to meeting national and international standards but also left a legacy of innovation, leadership, and commitment that will continue to inspire the institution on its path to excellence.

### **Negative Leadership Section**

Following the declarations of Udchachone, Udin & Zumitzavan (2025), “toxic leadership often remains under-acknowledged in practice due to power dynamics, performance results, or cultural norms that normalize abusive behaviors” (p. 3). In my professional practice, I have observed how negative leadership can deteriorate the work environment and limit the potential of teams. On the authority of Berzosa & Ganguly (2025), “toxic leadership refers to a pattern of destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal characteristics exhibited by individuals in leadership positions that inflict serious and enduring harm on followers, organizations, and non-followers alike” (p. 888).

On one occasion, a leader focused exclusively on meeting short-term indicators exerted constant pressure on their team members, neglecting their emotional and professional needs. Although immediate objectives were met, the atmosphere became hostile, motivation decreased, creativity was stifled, and trust eroded.

This example reflects what Whicker (1996) and Schmidt (2008) call toxic leadership. On one hand Whicker (1996) cited in Akinyele & Chen (2024) described toxic leadership as “damaging leadership behaviors that destroy employees” (p. 479). On the other hand, Schmidt (2008) cited in Akinyele & Chen (2024) referred to toxic leadership as “leaders who show intense emotions in an unpredictable manner” (p. 479). My experience confirms the perspective that when leadership is reduced to pressure and control, achievements become empty victories, incapable of lasting impact. The real challenge lies in balancing high expectations with care, preventing authority from becoming a source of organizational toxicity.

Management is primarily concerned with the attainment of measurable outcomes, ensuring that subordinates effectively complete designated tasks. Leadership, however, is oriented toward the pursuit of a broader vision (Northam, Hipps & Mbaye, 2023, p. 4). The difference between a leader and a manager is essential: the former mobilizes emotions and builds culture, while the latter ensures the efficiency of processes. However, both roles complement each other and must be integrated to achieve sustainable organizations.

Positive leadership transforms the organization provided that it implements achievement-oriented leadership. According to Kim et al. (2018) cited in Riaz et al. (2025), “achievement-oriented leadership is characterized by setting high goals, establishing challenging standards, and motivating individuals or teams to reach their full potential through goal attainment” (p. 2610). It inspires trust, fosters innovation, and promotes the personal and professional growth of teams. Its impact transcends immediate results and strengthens institutional identity.

On the contrary, as indicated by Udchachone, Udin & Zumitzavan (2025), “toxic leadership has been consistently associated with severe negative outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels” (p. 4). Negative leadership deteriorates the work environment; it creates toxic atmospheres, erodes trust, and limits creativity. Although it may achieve short-term goals, it does so at the expense of organizational cohesion and sustainability. The paradox between leader and manager. The title of "leader" does not always guarantee a positive impact, nor does that of "manager" imply rigidity. True value lies in how influence is exerted over others.

## CONCLUSIONS

Leadership is, in essence, a force that shapes collective destinies. It is not limited to resource management or goal achievement; it is the ability to transform human energy into culture, identity, and purpose. Where a leader inspires, creativity and trust flourish; where a leader oppresses, motivation and cohesion wither.

The difference between leading and managing, between transforming and transacting, is not a technical detail, but a matter of legacy. Positive leaders leave lasting imprints on the memory of their teams and the history of their institutions. Negative leaders, on the other hand, create scars that take time to heal and can compromise the future of the organization.

Transformational leadership elevates and mobilizes people toward a higher purpose, while transactional leadership ensures the achievement of immediate goals through rewards and

punishments. Both styles can coexist, but the transformational approach offers a deeper and more lasting impact.

Ultimately, true leadership is not measured by the goals achieved, but by the atmosphere created and the impact left on people. An organization that balances the manager's efficiency with the leader's inspiration, that combines the transactional with the transformational, becomes a space where outcomes and welfare go hand in hand. That is the leadership that transcends, the one that builds the future, the one that leaves a legacy, the one that transforms management into humanity. Organizations must foster leaders capable of integrating a transformational vision with efficient management. Only in this way can strong, ethical, and sustainable institutions be created.

### **Conflict of Interest Declaration**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to this research.

### **Authorship Contribution Declaration**

Elvis Humberto Tabares Quintero: conceptualization, visualization, drafting of the original manuscript, review, and editing.

### **Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Usage**

The author declares that artificial intelligence was used as support for this article, and also notes that this tool in no way replaces the intellectual task or process. After rigorous reviews with different tools confirming that there is no plagiarism, as evidenced, the author states and acknowledges that this work is the result of their own intellectual effort, and has not been written or published on any electronic platform or AI platform.

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