

Review Article

## The principal strategies for crises' management among teachers in public secondary schools in Ekiti State—A literature review

Leonard SHAIBU PhD<sup>\*1</sup>, ANISULOWO Bukola Olumide PhD<sup>2</sup>, Iyabo Similoluwa ADEYANJU PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Management and Planning, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State-Nigeria

<sup>2,3</sup> Department of Educational Management and Business Education, Federal University Oye-Ekiti Ekiti State, Nigeria

*\*\*Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article*

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**Correspondence Author:**

Leonard SHAIBU PhD<sup>\*</sup>

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### Abstract

This study presents a narrative review of existing literature on crisis management strategies employed by principals in public secondary schools, with particular attention to the context of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The review synthesizes evidence from scholarly publications on educational leadership, crisis management, and school administration to identify the leadership approaches and institutional factors that influence effective crisis response in resource-constrained environments. Through thematic analysis of the reviewed literature, the study examines instructional, transformational, and entrepreneurial leadership styles as key strategies for sustaining teacher professionalism, ensuring curriculum continuity, and fostering innovation during crises. The review reveals that instructional leadership provides a foundation for continuous professional support and uninterrupted teaching and learning, while transformational and entrepreneurial leadership enhance flexibility, collaborative problem-solving, and educational innovation during periods of disruption. However, the findings also indicate that limited school autonomy and inadequate resources significantly constrain principals' capacity to respond effectively to crises. The major contribution of this review is the development of a context-specific theoretical perspective that emphasizes the need for an integrated crisis management framework tailored to public secondary schools in resource-constrained settings. The study further recommends targeted leadership training in instructional, transformational, and entrepreneurial practices, alongside policy interventions to address systemic constraints and strengthen principals' crisis management capacity,

thereby improving educational resilience and continuity in Ekiti State and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Principal Strategies; Crisis Management; Teachers; Public Secondary Schools; Educational Leadership

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning have been impacted by crises, including COVID-19, war, humanitarian crises, and other systemic failures, changing normal education in schools around the world. The pandemic highlighted many deficiencies in principals' school leadership. School leaders faced challenges in their leadership during the transition to online and blended learning amid periods of high stress (Schechter et al., 2022; Adams et al., 2021). The crises pose complex challenges, including curriculum and organisational disruptions, student-teacher tensions, and socio-emotional effects (Mahfouz et al., 2019). The conveyed relationship reveals that principals encountered a lot of challenges in the online/hybrid schooling, even with great stress and needed to employ a flexible crisis leadership style to address the various challenges in relation to curriculum, organisational changes, social and emotional issues of students and teachers as they were forced to take schools online during the COVID-19 pandemic which is relevant to the Ekiti State public secondary schools.

School principals' crisis leadership styles play an important role in fulfilling school functions and in fostering school recovery. Distributed and transformational leadership models have been advocated to empower teachers to lead, foster teamwork among staff members, and encourage adaptive problem-solving (Adams et al., 2021; Ruloff and Petko, 2022). The principals assume multidimensional leadership roles, from ensuring teachers' physical safety and well-being to fostering strong community relations and ecologically responsive practices within the school setting (Alon and Schechter, 2025). The kind of crisis leadership styles implemented by school principals, as evident in the link described, is crucial to keep the school running and restore it after the crisis by empowering and cooperating with teachers, while school principals are expected to adopt other leadership behaviors such as maintaining the safety of teachers, building relationships with the school community and applying the ecologizing approach in school.

Despite the diversity of crises confronting schools, crisis management in educational leadership has not yet been extensively researched, yet it is a very relevant topic. The fact that there are few empirical studies examining school principals' personality traits, problem-solving competence, and strategic decision-making frameworks when facing school crises is remarkable (Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou, 2023). A good crisis response should involve extensive coordination and effective collaboration among stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the community (Margherita et al., 2025). The above link suggests that the area should be studied rigorously, but an empirical study of the personality types, problem-solving skills, and decision-making approaches that school principals need to adopt to become effective in integrating

teachers, parents, the community, etc., is not available. Resources are scarce in any context amid different crises, and that is definitely the situation public secondary schools in Ekiti State are in.

The governance system and the degree of autonomy granted have a significant effect on the leadership effectiveness of school principals in Ekiti State. By decentralising leadership, research has shown that schools become more adaptable and engage more stakeholders in crises such as declining enrolment, social unrest, and health crises, common in developing countries like Nigeria (Rind, 2024). As shown in this review, principals' leadership practices, particularly in managing crises such as falling enrolment and social unrest in schools, could be more effective and efficient in such a structure, as autonomy and distributed leadership encourage adaptability and participation of all stakeholders, including in times of crisis like those in developing nations such as Nigeria.

The study is, hence, situated within the context of understanding how public secondary school principals in Ekiti State manage school crises and utilise strategies to ensure school continuity and support teachers. This research project aims to fill critical gaps in the literature in Nigeria regarding school crisis management and support for teachers in crisis situations. Several gaps have been identified in the study, including empirical gaps, geographical gaps, conceptual gaps, literature gaps, and practical implementation gaps, that affect the major measures teachers in public secondary schools in Ekiti State should adopt during a crisis situation. In practice, there is not enough empirical evidence currently available on school crisis management, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. To date, most studies across Nigeria have focused on the responses of principals during the COVID-19 pandemic, with little empirical research on long-term and proactive crisis management strategies that can be applied to any type of crisis in resource-poor public secondary schools (Adams et al., 2021; Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). In addition, limited empirical evidence exists to show how principals' crisis response strategies impact the psychological health, continuity of instruction, resilience and effectiveness of teachers in deeper crises (Watson & Singh, 2022). This study aims at bridging this gap by synthesizing the available empirical body of evidence on principals' response strategies to crises and their implications for teacher well-being and continuity of education in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The literature reviewed reveals that the studies carried out have been mainly in developed countries and some urban areas in Nigeria; thus, the results of the studies are not applicable in states with infrastructure problems and insufficient educational facilities. Specifically, there is a lack of studies that are specifically targeted at Ekiti State, where the public secondary schools are situated in a peculiar socioeconomic and institutional context. As a result, the contextual conditions which influence principals' crisis management practices in Ekiti State have not been fully explored (Okunlola & Naicker, 2025). This review will fill this geographical gap by focusing on public secondary schools in Ekiti State alone, providing context-sensitive insight that may be useful for other resource-constrained educational environments.

Although leadership in the form of instruction, transformation, and entrepreneurship have been explored separately in the past, few studies have combined these leadership styles in a unified crisis management model. Additionally, there are gaps in the theorization of the conceptual

relationships among principals' instructional leadership, digital readiness, strategic decision-making, organizational resilience, and teachers' psychological well-being (Henkin et al., 2000; Galdames-Calderón, 2023). Current research also offers some conceptual understanding of how these aspects of leadership come together to maintain instructional continuity in a crisis context. In response to this conceptual gap, this review incorporates various leadership perspectives into a context-specific framework that explains principals' crisis management strategies in resource-poor public secondary schools.

Regarding the literature gap, the literature includes many discussions on leadership during crisis, but few have synthesized evidence on how leadership styles can positively influence teacher resiliency, create psychologically safe school environments, and keep schools afloat during challenging times (Adams et al., 2021; Watson & Singh, 2022). Further, existing research rarely examines the issue from a broad systemic perspective, such as looking at the role of centralized educational administration, insufficient funding, lack of infrastructure, and low school autonomy in influencing principals' crisis leadership practices (Rind, 2024). This paper contributes to the literature by consolidating evidence on crisis management strategies, contextual barriers, and institutional enablers to provide a comprehensive understanding of crisis management in public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Regarding the gap between theory and practice, although there is a general consensus that good leadership practices are effective during crises, there is a significant disconnect between the theory and practice of such leadership in schools. Previous research has provided few recommendations for how to apply the principles of instructional, transformational, and entrepreneurial leadership to actionable crisis management strategies that principals can use in low-resource environments. Likewise, there is a lack of evidence on practical interventions that can enhance principals' agency in addressing infrastructural challenges, supporting teachers' psychosocial well-being, fostering digital preparedness, and setting up sustainable support networks during crises (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Okunlola & Naicker, 2025). This review addresses this implementation gap and aims to provide evidence-based, context-specific response strategies to train leaders and inform educational policy and school management strategies in public secondary schools in Ekiti State and similar developing contexts.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

**The relationship between the long-term strategic approaches that principals use to manage crises in resource constrained environments, especially in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria and teachers' well-being and educational continuity.**

This course is about strategic leadership in crisis situations that occur in resource-limited school contexts.

In a resource-deprived environment such as public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, Educational leadership should be ethical and strategic, with crisis management skills, to keep education going and support teachers. Similar contexts show that instructional leadership is an important process that involves the school leader in a strategic, long-term way to manage crisis situations, support teachers and ensure student success.

In low-resource settings, instructional leadership, including principals' roles in establishing school mission, managing instructional programs, and fostering positive school learning climate, is often associated with positive teacher and student outcomes (Bada et al., 2020). As a case in point, instructional leadership as a viable, effective and much-needed strategy to manage crises and sustain student success in this particular context of Ekiti State with its resource challenges (poor infrastructure, socioeconomic factors, etc.) implies that instructional leadership could be a strategy to manage crises and achieve student success in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Moreover, the study conducted in resource-constrained areas of South Ethiopia revealed that teachers' self-efficacy was positively related to students' learning outcomes, and a cooperative model of instructional leadership was found to be related to teachers' self-efficacy, in particular, for the resource-constrained students (Gechere et al., 2025). From the findings of this study, it is found that principals can build teachers' confidence by working together, giving them feedback, and providing teachers with teacher development; all of which are crisis-cushioning, sustainable, and long-term solutions in Ekiti State.

Similarly, principals' instructional leadership also affects teachers' professional development in Anambra State, Nigeria, which means there is a need for a continuous, targeted teachers' development process to strengthen teachers' capacity for long-term, sustainable, and innovative pedagogical practices (He et al., 2024). The review findings indicate that school leaders' instructional leadership has a positive impact on teacher professional development in Anambra State. This indicates that planned, purposeful professional learning can contribute to teacher capacity building for sustainable, innovative practice. This is similar to what is being done in the public secondary schools of Ekiti State in terms of crisis management.

### **Leadership Styles and Innovation for Crisis Adaptation**

This paper looks at the intrinsic nature of instructional leadership and examines two different styles of leadership – transformational and entrepreneurial – that could help school leaders in the future as they face new challenges in schools. For example, it has been established that transformational leadership can drive speedy transformation in schools (e.g., Digital transformation in schools by Ruloff and Petko, 2022). Findings from this review show that principals have been employing 'transformational' and 'entrepreneurial' leadership behaviours to counter changing challenges in their schools, and that 'transformational' leadership is the chosen approach for swift change (e.g., digital transformation) in Ekiti State schools.

A transformational leadership style by the principal prioritizes learning outcomes over technology use and encourages an innovative, flexible mindset in the school that is critical for ongoing crisis response work. Entrepreneurial leadership has emerged as a more celebrated style to overcome novel problems, spur innovation and solve crisis-related issues (Pihie et al., 2014). The study shows a correlation between principals' leadership styles (transformational and entrepreneurial) and greater focus on educational outcomes and innovative problem solving, which will increase the adaptability and creativity of public secondary schools in crisis management in Ekiti State as opposed to just introducing technologies.

Through entrepreneurial principals, teachers are motivated to think innovatively to address dilemmas and to make schools responsive and flexible in the event of a crisis. Distributed leadership (teacher leadership, school-wide distributed decision-making) is needed to support teacher leadership and collegiality, which is crucial for the continuity of teaching in case of crisis (Song et al., 2025). The paper shows that teachers' participation is enhanced through the use of entrepreneurial leadership as a creative problem-solving approach, while collegiality and teacher leadership are enhanced through distributed leadership that guarantees good teaching practices during a crisis in Ekiti State public secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Leadership in times of crisis with inclusive challenges and contextual constraints**

Although these approaches are helpful, principals have limited resources to deal effectively with a crisis in an under-resourced school. However, a research study in Kuwait showed that some factors restrain principals from being full partners in taking charge of instruction; for example, centralized education governance has certain limiting effects on principals (Alsaleh, 2018). This is also a challenge in public schools in Nigeria, as the structure may limit principals' decision-making and resource allocation when a disaster occurs, further limiting their leadership capacity.

These challenges are further compounded by the lack of teachers in the public school system, an issue common to many schools. The nature of scarcity further increases principals' roles and the role of instructional leadership in the school and can create a negative work culture that affects teacher well-being (Castro, 2022). Therefore, the role of principals is to balance operations, instruction, teachers' well-being, and manpower shortages.

### **Impact of Principals' Crisis Management Strategies on Teachers' Well-Being and Instructional Continuity**

The following are long-term solutions in the principal's crisis management action: developing and strengthening teaching instructional leadership practices to boost teaching effectiveness and professional development, reinforcing teacher well-being through empowering shared leadership practices during uncertainties in education, and extending teachers' long-term pedagogical capability of adapting to ever-changing circumstances in educational contexts (Shaibu et al. 2020; Bada et al. 2020; He et al. 2024). It depicts the relationship between the school principal's crisis-management interventions in public secondary schools in Ekiti State and their contributions to the three factors for improving teachers' effectiveness and well-being through improved pedagogical ability.

Teachers' professional development and performance have been associated with principals' clear vision, organized teaching, positive learning environments, and positive feedback and relationships (Bada et al. 2020; He et al. 2024). Shared leadership and transformative leadership could better sustain teaching well-being because, in this way, principals and teachers can manage crises in the learning environment hand in hand instead of relying on a single individual leader to manage the crisis. Teachers' stress and burnout, which in the long run affect teaching effectiveness, are better addressed by delegating teaching responsibility to teachers to have ownership over decision-making and greater independence (Ruloff & Petko, 2022; Song et al., 2025).



Principals' attention to improving teachers' long-term pedagogical ability to manage the crisis is helpful in building teachers' ability to respond to the crisis more effectively in the long run, but teachers' need to be more adaptive to new pedagogical needs (such as the ability to teach through digital platforms), so as not to lose the quality of teaching in the long run, should not be overlooked, particularly in public secondary schools, where resources or external assistance may be limited to address the crisis situation in school. From the above, principals empower teachers by delegating responsibilities and allowing teachers some discretion in making decisions to improve their well-being by reducing teachers' stress, building their pedagogical competence, and preparing teachers to better handle crises and teaching challenges that will happen over time. This ultimately protects the quality of education in educational institutions, particularly public secondary schools in Ekiti State, without much or any support from external institutions or systems.

## CONCLUSION

It is a review of the major approaches used by principals in crisis management in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, an area of resource constraint, and therefore useful in providing insights on crisis management leadership in a resource-poor setting. The study shows that the practice of instructional leadership is a sustainable solution to combat long-term consequences due to its ability to continuously improve teachers' skills and maintain normal teaching and learning during crisis. Transformational and entrepreneurial leadership are important leadership styles employed by principals to help schools be creative, flexible and participatory in decision-making, thereby helping them to deal with problems and mitigate the effects of a crisis. But the findings of the research reveal that there are systemic problems that principals perceive are affecting them and making it difficult for them to manage crises, such as lack of autonomy, lack of resources, etc. Therefore, more studies are required to create context-specific models and theories to improve leadership for crisis management and give teachers and students effective leadership in learning situations during crises.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Based on the above conclusions from the review, the following suggestions are made:**

1. The state authorities and policy makers should organize Instructional Leadership Training for the principals to help build leadership capacity of school administrators to help in sustaining the learning process during emergencies and professional development of teachers. Principals' strong leadership might enable school leaders to alleviate issues in a supportive learning environment and enhance school productivity.
2. School districts should encourage principals to assume a transformative and entrepreneurial leadership style and develop a professional development program for school administrators to foster adaptive and innovative leadership and collaboration to meet the needs of teachers and student well-being in schools. Principals should offer a series of training, workshops, lectures,

and seminars to share effective techniques and best practices to strengthen the school's resilience.

3. Policy makers should try to identify and remove all constraints in the system that are impeding the efficiency of operation and the free decision making of principals when allocating resources in publicly funded secondary schools and conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of the governing system to make it more effective and responsive to the needs of principals in the event of crisis, as well as make resources available to deal with infrastructure deficiencies that can benefit the coping mechanism and crisis response capability of principals, and thus enhance the physical and mental health of the teachers and students.

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The author(s) declare that not applicable.

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#### **Competing interests**



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