

## INTEGRATING EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT THEORY INTO TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM EKITI SUBEB, NIGERIA

Bamidele Folakemi Olabisi<sup>1</sup>, Bamidele Vincent Olawale<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>School of Business Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author:

[vincentolawale@gmail.com](mailto:vincentolawale@gmail.com)

---

### Abstract

This study examines the integration of classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories into practical strategies for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) during the 2020–2025 period. The study is motivated by persistent challenges in basic education delivery in Nigeria, including inadequate funding, teacher shortages, infrastructure deficits, and limited community engagement, as well as the gap between educational management theories and their practical application in state-level educational contexts. Through document analysis, theoretical synthesis, and comparative analysis of empirical studies, the research develops a conceptual framework mapping educational management theory to SUBEB strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes. The findings reveal that SUBEB demonstrates partial application of classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories, with significant gaps in behavioral, systems, and transformational theory implementation. Classical theory provides the foundational framework for organizational structure and accountability, while behavioral theory is partially applied through teacher training and participatory mechanisms. Systems theory informs coordinated planning but is constrained by departmental silos and weak feedback loops. Contingency theory is reflected in contextual adaptation efforts, yet uniform approaches often persist. Transformational and distributed leadership are emerging through leadership training and School-Based Management Committees, but centralized authority limits their full realization. Furthermore, opportunities for enhanced theory-practice integration include fostering a continuous learning culture, improving monitoring and evaluation feedback loops, creating partnerships with external organizations, investing in leadership capacity building, and promoting greater school autonomy and responsibility. These findings suggest that bridging the theory-practice gap requires sustained commitment to organizational learning, capacity development, stakeholder collaboration, and contextual responsiveness to improve educational quality and outcomes in Ekiti State.

Keywords: Educational Management, Educational Management Theories, Theory-Practice Integration, Teaching and Learning, Ekiti SUBEB Nigeria

---

### 1. Introduction

Educational management in Nigeria has evolved significantly in response to the nation's diverse educational needs and persistent challenges in delivering quality basic education to all children. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, launched in 1999, represented a landmark policy initiative designed to provide free and compulsory basic education to every child of school-going age across the federation. However, the

effectiveness of this policy largely depends on how well state-level agencies, particularly the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), implement and adapt these national policies to local realities, resource constraints, and socio-cultural contexts (Abdullahi, 2022). Despite the policy's noble intentions, the gap between national policy frameworks and grassroots implementation remains substantial, with many states struggling to translate policy objectives into tangible improvements in teaching quality, learning outcomes, and educational infrastructure (Gyang, 2015). This persistent implementation deficit underscores the critical importance of understanding how educational management theories can be effectively integrated into practical strategies to enhance educational delivery at the state level.

Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) stands out as a compelling case for study due to its distinctive context within Nigeria's educational landscape and its demonstrated potential for innovative educational management practices. Ekiti State, historically recognized for its strong educational heritage and commitment to human capital development, faces unique challenges including limited funding allocation, uneven deployment of qualified teachers across urban and rural areas, inadequate physical infrastructure in many schools, and varying levels of community engagement and participation in school governance (Abdullahi, 2022). These challenges are compounded by the state's pronounced rural-urban divide, which significantly affects resource allocation patterns, teacher distribution, and access to quality educational opportunities for children in remote and underserved communities. At the same time, Ekiti SUBEB has demonstrated notable innovative approaches in teacher training programs, community involvement strategies, school-based management practices, and monitoring and evaluation systems, offering valuable lessons that could potentially be adapted and replicated in other states facing similar challenges (Gyang, 2015; Nurhikmah, 2024). The state's relative success in maintaining educational standards despite resource constraints provides a unique opportunity to examine how educational management theories can be operationalized in resource-constrained environments.

The urgency of this research is driven by several critical factors that necessitate a comprehensive examination of educational management practices in Ekiti State. First, the persistent challenges facing basic education delivery in Nigeria, including inadequate funding, teacher shortages, infrastructure deficits, and low learning outcomes, demand innovative management approaches that can effectively address these systemic issues (Abdullahi, 2022; Gyang, 2015). The educational sector in Nigeria continues to grapple with significant challenges that threaten the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and the realization of the country's human capital development aspirations. Second, the gap between educational management theories and their practical application in Nigerian school systems remains substantial, with many policies and programs implemented without sufficient grounding in proven theoretical frameworks (Akkaya, 2021; Clinciu, 2023). This theory-practice gap has resulted in the implementation of strategies that are often not sustainable, contextually inappropriate, or inadequately aligned with local needs and constraints. Third, while numerous educational management theories have been developed globally, their application and effectiveness in the Nigerian context, particularly at the state level, have not been sufficiently examined empirically (Nurhikmah, 2024). Fourth, the distinctive characteristics of Ekiti State, including its strong educational heritage, unique challenges, and demonstrated innovative practices, make it an ideal context for investigating how educational management theories can be adapted and applied to address practical challenges in basic education delivery.

Fifth, the need for evidence-based policy and practice in educational management has become increasingly urgent as Nigeria strives to improve educational quality and outcomes in alignment with national development goals and international commitments.

The research gap in this study lies in the limited understanding of how educational management theories can be effectively integrated into practical strategies to enhance teaching and learning outcomes at the state level in Nigeria. While various educational management theories, including classical, behaviorist, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories, have been extensively developed and discussed in the academic literature (Akkaya, 2021; Dwi, 2024), their application in practical educational contexts remains a significant challenge (Clinciu, 2023). Most previous studies have focused either on theoretical elaborations or on practical case studies without adequately bridging the gap between these two domains (Boni et al., 2023). Additionally, while some research has examined the challenges facing basic education in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to how state-level agencies such as SUBEBs can leverage educational management theories to develop more effective strategies for improving teaching quality, learning outcomes, and overall educational performance. Furthermore, the distinctive contextual factors that influence educational management practices in Ekiti State, including resource constraints, rural-urban disparities, and community engagement dynamics, have not been comprehensively examined through the lens of educational management theories.

The novelty of this research lies in several interconnected aspects that collectively contribute to advancing knowledge and practice in educational management in Nigeria. First, this study focuses on Ekiti State SUBEB, providing an in-depth examination of how educational management theories can be adapted and applied in a specific state-level context characterized by both significant challenges and notable innovative practices. By focusing on a single state, the study enables a detailed and contextually nuanced analysis that can generate rich insights into the dynamics of educational management practice in resource-constrained environments. Second, this research develops an integrative conceptual framework that bridges educational management theories and practical strategies, offering a structured approach for translating theoretical principles into actionable recommendations for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners. Third, this study addresses the theory-practice gap by explicitly examining how classical, behaviorist, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories (Akkaya, 2021; Dwi, 2024) can be operationalized in addressing specific challenges such as teacher morale, infrastructure deficits, and community involvement in school governance (Abdullahi, 2022). Fourth, this research contributes to the limited empirical literature on educational management in the Nigerian context, providing evidence-based insights that can inform policy development and program implementation at both state and national levels. Fifth, the study provides practical recommendations for SUBEB leadership, school principals, and education stakeholders on how to enhance teaching and learning outcomes through theory-informed management practices, thereby contributing to improved educational quality in Ekiti State and potentially other similar contexts across Nigeria.

The purpose of this study is to examine how educational management theories can be effectively integrated into practical strategies to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Specifically, this research aims to: (1) identify the key challenges facing basic education delivery in Ekiti State; (2) analyze the extent to which current educational management practices at SUBEB are informed by established educational management theories; (3) develop a conceptual

framework for integrating educational management theories into practical strategies for improving teaching quality, learning outcomes, and educational performance; (4) provide actionable recommendations for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners on how to bridge the theory-practice gap in educational management; and (5) contribute to the development of evidence-based policy and practice in basic education management in Nigeria.

The contribution of this research is multifaceted. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the enrichment of literature on educational management by proposing and testing an integrative framework that bridges theory and practice in the context of state-level basic education delivery in Nigeria. The findings contribute to the understanding of how classical, behaviorist, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories (Akkaya, 2021; Dwi, 2024) can be operationalized in addressing practical challenges in educational management, thereby extending the application of these theories to emerging market contexts and resource-constrained environments. From a practical perspective, this study provides actionable insights for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners in Ekiti State and beyond. For educational leaders and practitioners, the findings provide guidance on how to apply educational management theories to address specific challenges such as improving teacher morale, managing infrastructure deficits, and enhancing community engagement in school governance (Abdullahi, 2022). For policymakers at both state and national levels, the results offer empirical evidence to support the development of more effective policies and programs for improving basic education management and delivery. For Ekiti SUBEB specifically, the research offers a conceptual framework and practical recommendations that can inform strategic planning, program implementation, and performance improvement efforts. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader goal of improving educational quality and outcomes in Nigeria, thereby supporting the realization of national development objectives and international commitments to quality education for all.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Overview of Educational Management Theories**

Educational management theories provide the foundational framework for understanding how educational institutions can be effectively organized, led, and improved to achieve desired teaching and learning outcomes. These theories have evolved over time, reflecting changing perspectives on organizational behavior, human motivation, and the complex dynamics of educational systems. This section reviews five major educational management theories—classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories—and examines their relevance to the practical challenges facing educational management in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

### **2.2 Classical Management Theories**

Classical management theories, developed in the early 20th century, emphasize bureaucratic organizational structures, clearly defined lines of authority, and formalized processes as the foundation for efficient and accountable management (Boni et al., 2023; Nurhikmah, 2024). Early thinkers such as Henri Fayol, Frederick Taylor, and Max Weber formed the basis of modern organizational management, each contributing distinct perspectives on how organizations should be structured and managed. Fayol's principles of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling continue to influence school management practices by providing a systematic framework for administrative

decision-making and resource allocation (Akkaya, 2021). Taylor's scientific management encourages efficiency through specialization of tasks, standardization of procedures, and measurement of performance, offering insights into how educational tasks can be organized to maximize productivity and accountability (Clinciu, 2023). Weber's bureaucratic model emphasizes rule-bound behavior, formalized procedures, and impersonal relationships, providing a foundation for establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms in educational institutions (Nurhikmah, 2024). These theoretical foundations are clearly reflected in the administrative structures of most schools and educational agencies, including the Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), where formal hierarchies, defined job descriptions, and standardized procedures govern day-to-day operations (Abdullahi, 2022). Classical theories have been criticized for their susceptibility to rigidity, lack of creativity, and insufficient responsiveness to the human and dynamic aspects of educational organizations (Akkaya, 2021). Despite these limitations, the classical management tradition remains fundamental to establishing accountability, discipline, and systematic resource management in large-scale educational systems such as Nigeria's primary education sector.

### **2.3 Behavioral and Human Relations Theories**

Behavioral and human relations perspectives emerged as a corrective to the perceived deficiencies of classical management, recognizing the critical importance of social factors, motivation, and group behavior in determining organizational performance (Akkaya, 2021). The Hawthorne Studies conducted by Elton Mayo and colleagues in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrated that human factors such as recognition, social interaction, and participative decision-making significantly influence worker productivity and satisfaction, challenging the mechanistic assumptions of classical management (Boni et al., 2023). The human relations approach emphasizes that organizational success depends not only on formal structures and procedures but also on the quality of interpersonal relationships, employee motivation, and participative decision-making processes (Clinciu, 2023). In the context of educational management, behavioral theories give particular importance to teacher participation, student involvement, and stakeholder engagement in school governance and decision-making processes (Dwi, 2024). These perspectives recognize the potential of job satisfaction, career development opportunities, and professional motivation to improve teacher performance and consequently enhance student achievement (Akkaya, 2021). Behavioral theories also emphasize the importance of effective communication, leadership styles, and conflict management strategies in creating positive organizational climates conducive to learning and innovation (Clinciu, 2023). For SUBEB personnel, adopting a human relations philosophy can facilitate the development of a collaborative organizational culture, improve teacher morale and motivation, and increase stakeholder engagement in school improvement efforts (Nurhikmah, 2024). However, the successful implementation of behavioral approaches depends on the commitment of educational leaders to delegate authority, foster an open and inclusive organizational culture, and invest in professional development programs that address the diverse needs and aspirations of teachers and staff (Boni et al., 2023). Together, human relations and behavioral theories offer valuable insights for managing the human dimension of educational institutions.

## 2.4 Systems Theory

Systems theory views schools and educational organizations as open systems that continuously interact with their external environment and must adapt to changing conditions to remain effective and relevant (Lynch et al., 2024). Developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and other systems thinkers, the theory emphasizes the interdependence among various subsystems, including administration, teaching, students, and the external environment, and the need for coordinated management strategies that integrate diverse functions and processes toward achieving common organizational goals (Świecarz et al., 2024). The application of systems theory to educational management enables the integration of varied functions and processes in a collaborative effort to achieve shared educational objectives, recognizing that changes in one part of the system inevitably affect other parts (Fu, 2023). Key elements of systems thinking include feedback mechanisms that enable continuous learning and improvement, flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, and responsiveness to environmental pressures such as policy reforms, demographic changes, and technological advancements (Wojtaszek et al., 2023). For SUBEB, adopting a systems approach involves coordinating the activities of various departments, aligning resource allocation with strategic objectives, and engaging stakeholders throughout the management process to ensure coherence and effectiveness (Abdullahi, 2022). Systems theory emphasizes the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to environmental change, enabling educational organizations to navigate complexity, manage emergent challenges, and continuously improve teaching and learning outcomes (Lynch et al., 2024). Through the application of systems thinking, SUBEB can enhance its capacity to address interconnected challenges, coordinate diverse stakeholder interests, and improve overall educational performance (Świecarz et al., 2024). Successful implementation of systems theory requires visionary leadership, effective communication strategies, and a commitment to continuous learning and organizational adaptation (Fu, 2023).

## 2.5 Contingency and Situational Theories

Contingency and situational theories challenge the notion of a "one best way" to manage organizations, asserting instead that effective management strategies depend on situational factors such as organizational culture, environmental conditions, available resources, and the nature of the task at hand (Akkaya, 2021). Prominent scholars such as Fred Fiedler and Paul Hersey argued that leaders must adapt their management styles to suit the specific demands of each situation, recognizing that different contexts require different approaches to leadership and organizational management (Clinciu, 2023). In educational administration, contingency theory emphasizes that planning and management strategies must be tailored to address the unique problems, resources, and needs of each school or educational system, rather than applying uniform approaches across diverse contexts (Boni et al., 2023). For SUBEB, adopting a contingency approach involves recognizing the significant diversification among schools in Ekiti State and adapting management processes appropriately to address the specific challenges and opportunities of each context (Abdullahi, 2022). Situational leadership requires educational managers to assess the capacity and readiness of teachers, evaluate available resources, and understand the diverse needs of stakeholders, enabling them to make informed decisions about appropriate interventions and support strategies (Clinciu, 2023). Through the application of contingency theory, SUBEB can address local demands more effectively, improve decision-making processes, and promote innovation by encouraging

flexibility and contextual responsiveness (Nurhikmah, 2024). However, the effectiveness of contingency approaches depends on the ability of educational leaders to exercise prudent judgment, make well-informed decisions, and maintain flexibility in their management practices (Akkaya, 2021). Overall, contingency and situational theories provide a dynamic perspective for guiding educational organizations in complex and changing environments.

## **2.6 Transformational and Distributed Leadership Theories**

Transformational leadership theory, as developed by James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass, emphasizes the importance of stimulating and inspiring organizational members to achieve shared goals and exceed their own self-interests for the benefit of the organization (Akkaya, 2021). Transformational leaders are characterized by their vision, charisma, and ability to inspire innovation, commitment, and devotion among followers, creating a shared sense of purpose and direction (Dwi, 2024). In educational contexts, transformational leadership has been associated with improved teacher performance, enhanced student outcomes, and successful organizational change initiatives, as leaders motivate educators to embrace innovation and continuous improvement (Clinciu, 2023). Distributed leadership, in contrast, emphasizes shared responsibility and collaborative decision-making among all stakeholders, recognizing that leadership extends beyond formal positions and can be distributed across teachers, students, parents, and community members (Boni et al., 2023). Distributed leadership acknowledges that collective leadership capacity is essential for sustainable school improvement and that diverse perspectives contribute to more informed and effective decision-making (Akkaya, 2021). For SUBEB, adopting transformational and distributed leadership approaches can significantly enhance efforts to improve teaching and learning by building a collaborative organizational culture, empowering employees at all levels, and encouraging innovation and creativity (Dwi, 2024). These approaches foster the development of professional learning communities, shared accountability, and continuous improvement processes that are essential for sustainable educational transformation (Nurhikmah, 2024). However, successful implementation of these approaches depends on leaders' willingness to relinquish centralized control, employees' capacity to take initiative, and the establishment of supportive structures that enable participative decision-making (Boni et al., 2023). Transformational and distributed leadership theories provide powerful frameworks for initiating and sustaining educational change and improvement.

## **2.7 Empirical Studies on Theory-Practice Integration in Education**

Several empirical studies have examined the integration of educational management theories into practical strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes across different national contexts. Boni et al. (2023) conducted a study of educational management theory application in Brazilian schools and concluded that the integration of classical and behavioral structures resulted in higher organizational effectiveness and teacher satisfaction, with participatory decision-making and open organizational structures identified as critical factors in achieving positive educational outcomes. Clinciu (2023) examined how educational management could be enhanced in Romania, highlighting the ability of systems theory to construct effective learning environments and concluding that schools operating with a systems approach characterized by coordinated planning, stakeholder engagement, and feedback mechanisms reported higher levels of teacher and student satisfaction. Nurhikmah (2024) investigated the

functions of educational management in Indonesian schools, focusing on integrating planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions, and concluded that the combined use of classical and behavioral theories enhanced school performance and teacher motivation. Dwi (2024) examined the role of educational management in Indonesian secondary school learning innovation and found that transformational leadership and distributed management practices were the primary drivers of innovation, professional development, and improved student performance. Abdullahi (2022) evaluated Nigerian curriculum management approaches to education and demonstrated that systems integration and contingency theory guaranteed the effective implementation of Universal Basic Education, with contextual approaches and stakeholder engagement highlighted as essential for ensuring sustainable educational change.

## **2.8 Teaching and Learning Improvement Strategies: Global and Nigerian Perspectives**

Teaching and learning improvement strategies have evolved globally in response to changing educational needs, technological advancements, and policy reforms (Akkaya, 2021; Lynch et al., 2024). International strategies include teacher professional development, curriculum reform, enhanced school leadership, community engagement, and resource mobilization (Clinciu, 2023; Dwi, 2024). In countries such as Finland, Singapore, and Canada, education reform is anchored in ongoing professional development, collaborative learning communities, and data-driven decision-making, with significant investment in teacher training, school autonomy, and stakeholder partnerships (OECD, 2018). In Nigeria, teaching and learning improvement strategies are shaped by specific challenges including high student-teacher ratios, inadequate infrastructure, low resource levels, and diverse student populations (Abdullahi, 2022; Gyang, 2015). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program was established to address these concerns through increased access, equity, and quality in primary education, with state governments such as SUBEB tasked with implementing interventions including ongoing teacher workshops, curriculum review, school-based management committees (SBMCs), infrastructure development, and monitoring and evaluation systems (Abdullahi, 2022; Gyang, 2015). Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist. Teacher training is often undermined by inadequate funding, insufficient follow-up, and disconnection from classroom realities (Nurhikmah, 2024). Curriculum planning is constrained by resource shortages and resistance to innovation (Abdullahi, 2022). School management is characterized by hierarchical traditions and limited autonomy, while school-community participation is interrupted by inadequate awareness and involvement (Gyang, 2015). Resource mobilization remains a challenge, with most schools lacking minimum facilities and teaching materials (Abdullahi, 2022). Nonetheless, new initiatives have emerged at state and local levels, including mentorship programs, peer learning networks, and technology integration programs in some states (Dwi, 2024). Community engagement has been promoted through SBMCs and parent-teacher associations (Abdullahi, 2022). Monitoring and evaluation frameworks have been enhanced to track school performance and inform decision-making (Fu, 2023). These methods demonstrate increasing sensitivity to the need for implementing management theories, being context-sensitive, and fostering stakeholder collaboration (Świecarz et al., 2024). The Ekiti SUBEB experience offers rich insights into the challenges and opportunities for implementing teaching and learning improvement strategies in Nigeria.

## **2.9 Conceptual Framework: Integration of Management Theories into Teaching and Learning**

The conceptual framework of this study integrates elements of classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational theories (Akkaya, 2021; Lynch et al., 2024). It posits that effective teaching and learning improvement efforts should balance structure and flexibility, consider human factors, and respond to environmental forces (Boni et al., 2023). Classical theory provides the foundation for organizational design, responsibility, and standardization of procedures (Nurhikmah, 2024). Behavioral theory emphasizes the importance of motivation, teamwork, and participative management (Clinciu, 2023). Systems theory highlights the need for overall planning, coordination, and feedback controls (Świecarz et al., 2024). Contingency theory emphasizes the need for strategy adaptation to local conditions and the dynamic nature of teaching environments (Abdullahi, 2022). Transformational leadership theory emphasizes energizing innovation generation, commitment, and continuous improvement (Dwi, 2024). In practice, the model prescribes that SUBEB strategies should be derived from a combination of these theories. Teacher training programs, for example, should be systematic and organized (classical) but also responsive to teachers' needs and interests (behavioral). Curriculum change should be systematically planned and coordinated (systems) but also contextually sensitive (contingency). School leadership should be visionary and empowering (transformational) but also participatory and inclusive (distributed). These theoretical positions are employed to guide the formulation of more effective and sustainable teaching and learning improvement plans for Ekiti State by SUBEB. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the complex challenges facing basic education delivery in Ekiti State and offers practical guidance for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to enhance educational quality and outcomes.

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research approach using descriptive and verificative methods to examine the integration of educational management theories into practical strategies for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The verificative method is used to analyze the conceptual relationship between educational management theories and their practical application in state-level basic education management through document analysis and theoretical synthesis. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study aims to develop a conceptual framework and actionable recommendations for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners based on the analysis of theoretical principles and their relevance to the Ekiti State educational context. The explanatory research design enables the examination of relationships between classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories and their practical implications for teaching and learning improvement strategies in Ekiti State.

### **3.2 Scope and Research Object**

The scope of this study covers the Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) as the primary research object, focusing on its role in implementing basic education policies, managing educational resources, and developing strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes. Ekiti State was selected as the research

context due to its distinctive characteristics within Nigeria's educational landscape, including its strong educational heritage, significant challenges in basic education delivery, and demonstrated innovative approaches in educational management. The study examines the operational context of SUBEB, including its organizational structure, management practices, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, resource management strategies, and teaching and learning improvement initiatives. The research focuses on the 2020–2025 period, representing a critical phase characterized by persistent educational challenges, post-pandemic recovery efforts, and ongoing policy reforms in the Nigerian basic education sector. The selection of this period enables the analysis of contemporary educational management practices and their alignment with established educational management theories.

### 3.3 Key Constructs and Variables

The key constructs of the present study are leadership style, organizational culture, stakeholder engagement, resource management, and teaching and learning outcomes (Akkaya, 2021; Lynch et al., 2024). Leadership style is the manner of operation by school administrators and leaders, from autocratic to transformational and distributed (Dwi, 2024). Organizational culture is the beliefs, principles, and practices that guide staff and student behavior (Boni et al., 2023). Stakeholder engagement is teachers', students', parents', and community members' participation in decision-making (Abdullahi, 2022). Resource management is the distribution, utilization, and tracking of human, material, and financial resources (Nurhikmah, 2024). Instructional outcomes and learning outcomes include student performance, teacher performance, and school effectiveness (Clinciu, 2023).

Teacher motivation, quality of infrastructure, and civic engagement characteristics are relevant in assessing the effectiveness of improvement processes (Abdullahi, 2022; Dwi, 2024). Teacher motivation can be measured in terms of job satisfaction, professional growth opportunity, and reward (Boni et al., 2023). Infrastructure refers to the availability of school buildings, teaching materials, and equipment (Fu, 2023). Community participation is observed in the engagement of parents and local communities in the school management (Abdullahi, 2022). Using analysis of these variables and constructs, this study has an integrated assessment of determinants for enhanced teaching and learning in the State of Ekiti.

The conceptual framework of the study is given clearly and it gives rational relationship between the existing lines of thoughts on educational management and its application practical context of Ekiti SUBEB. The leadership framework is rooted continuously to classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational theories of leadership to ensure that there is a sense of consistency in the paper, in regard to theories.

To further clarify matters and make it easily understandable, Table 1 below is a summary of how each of the management theories relate to the particular SUBEB strategies to be used to enhance teaching and learning. This visual illustration aids in really bringing out the amalgamation between theory and practice so that individuals can be in a better position to interpret the idea of operational decisions arising as a result of the theoretical principles used at SUBEB.

**Table 1. Mapping Educational Management Theories to SUBEB Strategies**

| Management Theory                       | Key Principles/Focus                        | SUBEB Strategy/Application                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Classical Theory                        | Structure, hierarchy, formal rules, control | 1) Clear organizational structure<br>2) Defined roles and responsibilities<br>3) Standardized procedures for teacher deployment and resource allocation         |
| Behavioral Theory                       | Human relations, motivation, participation  | 1) Teacher motivation programs<br>2) Participatory decision-making (e.g., SBMCs)<br>3) Staff recognition and professional development workshops                 |
| Systems Theory                          | Interdependence, feedback, coordination     | 1) Coordinated planning across departments<br>2) Integration of monitoring and evaluation systems<br>3) Collaboration with stakeholders (community, government) |
| Contingency Theory                      | Adaptation to context, flexibility          | 1) Tailoring strategies to local school needs (e.g., rural vs. urban deployment)<br>2) Flexible resource allocation<br>3) Responsive leadership styles          |
| Transformational/Distributed Leadership | Vision, inspiration, shared leadership      | 1) Leadership training for headteachers<br>2) Empowering teachers and staff to lead initiatives<br>3) Fostering innovation and school improvement teams         |

Source: Authors' Conceptualization (2026)

### 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data for this study were collected through document analysis and literature review, drawing from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of educational management theories and their application in the Nigerian context. The data collection procedure involved several sequential steps:

First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on educational management theories, including classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories, to establish the theoretical foundation for the study (Akkaya, 2021; Boni et al., 2023; Cliniciu, 2023; Dwi, 2024; Nurhikmah, 2024). Academic journals, books, and conference proceedings were reviewed to identify key principles, conceptual

frameworks, and empirical findings relevant to educational management in developing country contexts.

Second, official documents related to the Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board were collected and analyzed. These documents included policy frameworks, strategic plans, annual reports, program implementation guidelines, monitoring and evaluation reports, and official communications from SUBEB. The documents were obtained from the SUBEB official website, government archives, and other publicly available sources. Document analysis enabled the identification of SUBEB's organizational structure, management practices, resource allocation strategies, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and teaching and learning improvement initiatives.

Third, relevant policy documents at the national level, including the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy framework, National Policy on Education, and other relevant educational policies, were reviewed to understand the policy context within which SUBEB operates. This analysis enabled the identification of policy requirements, implementation challenges, and reform initiatives affecting basic education delivery in Nigeria.

Fourth, empirical studies on educational management theory-practice integration in similar contexts, including studies from Brazil (Boni et al., 2023), Romania (Clinciu, 2023), Indonesia (Nurhikmah, 2024; Dwi, 2024), and Nigeria (Abdullahi, 2022; Gyang, 2015), were reviewed to identify lessons learned, best practices, and challenges in implementing theory-informed educational management strategies. These studies provided comparative insights for developing the conceptual framework and practical recommendations.

Fifth, data were systematically organized and synthesized to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between educational management theories and their practical application in the Ekiti State context. The synthesis process involved categorizing theoretical principles, mapping them to practical strategies, and identifying gaps and opportunities for improving teaching and learning outcomes through theory-informed management practices. The secondary data sources employed in this research are considered reliable as they represent official publications from government agencies, reputable academic journals, and established publishers.

3.5 Operational Definition of Variables

The operational definitions of the key constructs and variables examined in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational Definition of Variables

| Variable               | Definition                                                                                                                | Measurement                                                                                                | References                         |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Leadership Style       | The manner of operation by school administrators and leaders, ranging from autocratic to transformational and distributed | Analysis of leadership approaches based on classical, behavioral, and transformational leadership theories | Dwi (2024); Akkaya (2021)          |
| Organizational Culture | The beliefs, principles, and practices that guide staff and student                                                       | Assessment of cultural attributes including collaboration,                                                 | Boni et al. (2023); Clinciu (2023) |

| Variable                       | Definition                                                                                                          | Measurement                                                                                       | References                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                                | behavior in educational institutions                                                                                | transparency, innovation, and accountability                                                      |                                      |
| Stakeholder Engagement         | The participation of teachers, students, parents, and community members in school decision-making processes         | Analysis of SBMC effectiveness, parent-teacher associations, and community involvement mechanisms | Abdullahi (2022); Gyang (2015)       |
| Resource Management            | The distribution, utilization, and tracking of human, material, and financial resources in educational institutions | Assessment of teacher deployment, infrastructure allocation, and financial management practices   | Nurhikmah (2024); Fu (2023)          |
| Teacher Motivation             | The job satisfaction, professional growth opportunities, and reward systems influencing teacher performance         | Analysis of recognition programs, career development initiatives, and working conditions          | Boni et al. (2023); Dwi (2024)       |
| Infrastructure                 | The availability of school buildings, teaching materials, equipment, and learning resources                         | Assessment of facility adequacy, classroom availability, and instructional materials provision    | Abdullahi (2022); Gyang (2015)       |
| Teaching and Learning Outcomes | Student performance, teacher performance, and school effectiveness indicators                                       | Evaluation of improvement strategies and outcome measures                                         | Cliniciu (2023); Lynch et al. (2024) |

Source: Developed for this research (2026)

### 3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study employed qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis to examine the relationship between educational management theories and their practical application in Ekiti State SUBEB. The analysis stages included:

- 1) Document Analysis: Official documents from SUBEB and relevant policy frameworks were analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and key issues related to educational management practices, challenges, and improvement strategies. The analysis focused on understanding the current state of educational management in Ekiti State and identifying areas where theory-informed strategies could enhance teaching and learning outcomes.
- 2) Theoretical Synthesis: Educational management theories were systematically reviewed to identify key principles, concepts, and frameworks applicable to the Ekiti

State context. The synthesis involved comparing theoretical principles with practical challenges identified in the document analysis, enabling the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework for theory-practice integration.

- 3) **Comparative Analysis:** Empirical studies from similar contexts were analyzed to identify lessons learned, best practices, and challenges in implementing theory-informed educational management strategies. The comparative analysis enabled the identification of contextual factors influencing the success of theory-practice integration and the development of contextually appropriate recommendations.
- 4) **Framework Development:** Based on the document analysis, theoretical synthesis, and comparative analysis, a conceptual framework was developed that integrates classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories into practical strategies for SUBEB. The framework was designed to provide actionable guidance for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners.
- 5) **Thematic Analysis:** Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data, including challenges in implementing educational management theories, barriers to effective management practices, and opportunities for improvement. The thematic analysis enabled the identification of key factors influencing teaching and learning outcomes and the development of targeted recommendations.
- 6) **Triangulation:** Multiple data sources, including academic literature, official documents, and empirical studies, were triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The triangulation process enabled cross-verification of findings and the development of robust conclusions and recommendations.

The analysis results were interpreted to provide insights into how educational management theories can be effectively integrated into practical strategies for SUBEB, addressing challenges in teacher deployment, resource management, stakeholder engagement, and teaching and learning improvement. The findings were contextualized within the Nigerian education policy framework and the specific needs of Ekiti State, ensuring that the recommendations are relevant, feasible, and actionable.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

This section presents the findings of the conceptual analysis on the integration of educational management theories into practical strategies for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The results are organized based on the analysis of SUBEB's current strategies, the mapping of educational management theories to these strategies, the identification of gaps between theory and practice, and the opportunities for enhanced integration. The analysis draws from document review, theoretical synthesis, and comparative analysis of empirical studies from similar contexts.

**Table 3. Mapping of SUBEB Strategies to Educational Management Theories**

| Strategy Area                      | Current SUBEB Practice                          | Relevant Theory   | Theory Application                           | Implementation Status |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Teachers' Professional Development | Regular workshops, seminars, in-service courses | Behavioral Theory | Motivation, participation, staff recognition | Partially implemented |

| Strategy Area                           | Current SUBEB Practice                                  | Relevant Theory                         | Theory Application                      | Implementation Status       |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Curriculum and Instructional Innovation | Student-centered pedagogies, technology integration     | Systems Theory                          | Interdependence, feedback, coordination | Limited implementation      |
| School Leadership and Governance        | Headteachers' training, SBMCs, participatory governance | Transformational/Distributed Leadership | Vision, inspiration, shared leadership  | Emerging implementation     |
| Community and Stakeholder Engagement    | SBMCs, outreach, parent-teacher associations            | Behavioral & Systems Theory             | Participation, collaboration, feedback  | Inconsistent implementation |
| Resource Management and Infrastructure  | Provisioning, utilization, control of resources         | Classical & Contingency Theory          | Structure, formal rules, adaptation     | Partial implementation      |

Source: Authors' Analysis (2026)

Table 3 presents the mapping of SUBEB's current strategies to educational management theories. The analysis reveals that while SUBEB has implemented strategies across all five areas, the extent of theory application varies considerably. Teachers' Professional Development demonstrates partial implementation of behavioral theory principles through regular workshops and recognition programs. However, the lack of consistent follow-up and limited alignment with classroom realities indicates incomplete theory integration (Nurhikmah, 2024). Curriculum and Instructional Innovation shows limited implementation of systems theory, as coordination across departments and feedback mechanisms remain weak despite efforts to promote student-centered pedagogies (Abdullahi, 2022). School Leadership and Governance exhibits emerging implementation of transformational and distributed leadership, with headteachers' training programs and SBMCs demonstrating initial steps toward shared leadership, though hierarchical traditions and limited autonomy constrain full implementation (Boni et al., 2023). Community and Stakeholder Engagement shows inconsistent implementation across schools, with some communities actively participating through SBMCs while others remain disengaged due to limited awareness and weak institutional mechanisms (Gyang, 2015). Resource Management and Infrastructure demonstrates partial implementation of classical and contingency theories, with formal structures and procedures in place but limited flexibility in adapting to local needs (Fu, 2023).

**Table 3. Gap Analysis: Theory vs. Practice in SUBEB**

| Theory    | Key Principle                      | Expected Practice                                                      | Current Practice                                                                                 | Gap          |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Classical | Structure, hierarchy, formal rules | Clear organizational structure, defined roles, standardized procedures | Organizational structure exists but with overlapping responsibilities and unclear accountability | Moderate gap |

| Theory           | Key Principle                              | Expected Practice                                               | Current Practice                                            | Gap             |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Behavioral       | Human relations, motivation, participation | Participatory decision-making, staff motivation programs        | Top-down decisions dominate; training programs intermittent | Significant gap |
| Systems          | Interdependence, feedback, coordination    | Coordinated planning, integrated M&E, stakeholder collaboration | Departmental silos; weak feedback mechanisms                | Significant gap |
| Contingency      | Adaptation to context, flexibility         | Tailored strategies, flexible resource allocation               | Uniform approaches; limited contextual adaptation           | Moderate gap    |
| Transformational | Vision, inspiration, shared leadership     | Leadership training, empowering staff, fostering innovation     | Limited leadership development; centralized authority       | Significant gap |

Source: Authors' Analysis (2026)

Table 4 presents the gap analysis between theoretical principles and current SUBEB practices. The analysis identifies significant gaps in the application of behavioral, systems, and transformational theories, while moderate gaps exist in classical and contingency theories. The behavioral theory gap is evidenced by the dominance of top-down decision-making processes, where frontline teachers and school heads have limited participation in critical decisions affecting their work (Boni et al., 2023). Training programs remain intermittent and insufficiently responsive to teachers' actual needs, limiting their effectiveness in improving motivation and performance (Nurhikmah, 2024). The systems theory gap is reflected in departmental silos that hinder coordinated planning and implementation, weak feedback mechanisms that limit continuous improvement, and insufficient collaboration with external stakeholders (Lynch et al., 2024). The transformational leadership gap is evident in limited leadership development opportunities for school heads, centralized authority that constrains initiative, and insufficient empowerment of teachers and staff to lead improvement efforts (Dwi, 2024). The moderate classical theory gap stems from overlapping responsibilities and unclear accountability despite the existence of formal organizational structures (Clinciu, 2023). The moderate contingency theory gap is reflected in uniform approaches applied across diverse school contexts, with limited adaptation to local needs and conditions (Abdullahi, 2022).

**Table 5. Opportunities for Enhanced Theory-Practice Integration**

| Opportunity Area                    | Description                                                                    | Expected Outcome                                          | Implementation Priority |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Continuous Learning Culture         | Encouraging reflective practice, professional learning, openness to innovation | Enhanced adaptability, innovation, and responsiveness     | High                    |
| Improved M&E Feedback Loops         | Quality data systems, performance appraisals, feedback with open action        | Evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement | High                    |
| Partnerships with External Partners | Collaboration with NGOs, private sector, tertiary institutions                 | Access to resources, capacities, and innovative solutions | Medium                  |
| Leadership Capacity Building        | Training and mentoring for school administrators, teachers, SBMC members       | Distributed and transformational leadership capacity      | High                    |
| School Autonomy and Responsibility  | Decentralization, school empowerment with transparent accountability           | Local innovation and responsiveness                       | Medium                  |

Source: Authors' Analysis (2026)

Table 5 presents the opportunities for enhanced theory-practice integration in SUBEB. The analysis identifies five key opportunity areas with varying implementation priorities. Fostering a continuous learning culture is identified as a high priority because it addresses the fundamental need for organizational adaptability and innovation, enabling SUBEB to respond more effectively to changing educational demands (Akkaya, 2021). Improved Monitoring and Evaluation feedback loops are also prioritized as high importance because they enable evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement, addressing the current weakness in feedback mechanisms that limits the effectiveness of current strategies (Fu, 2023). Leadership capacity building is similarly prioritized as high because developing distributed and transformational leadership capacity at all levels is essential for sustaining improvement efforts and empowering frontline educators (Dwi, 2024). Partnerships with external partners are identified as medium priority, as they can activate additional resources and innovative solutions but require careful management to ensure alignment with SUBEB's objectives (Boni et al., 2023). School autonomy and responsibility is also categorized as medium priority because decentralization requires careful balancing with accountability mechanisms to ensure effectiveness and prevent misuse of resources (Clinciu, 2023).

## **4.2 Discussion**

### **4.2.1 Integration of Classical Management Theory into SUBEB Practices**

The analysis reveals that classical management theory provides the foundational framework for SUBEB's organizational structure and administrative procedures. The Board's hierarchical structure, with clearly defined lines of authority from the executive chairman through directors to departmental heads, reflects Fayol's principles of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling (Akkaya, 2021). This structured approach enables systematic resource allocation, standardized teacher deployment, and formalized monitoring procedures that are essential for managing a large and complex educational system (Nurhikmah, 2024). The classical emphasis on formal rules and procedures is evident in SUBEB's recruitment and deployment policies, financial management guidelines, and performance evaluation frameworks, which provide consistency and predictability in operations (Abdullahi, 2022).

However, the analysis also identifies limitations in the application of classical theory. Over-reliance on hierarchical structures and standardized procedures may stifle flexibility and innovation, particularly in responding to diverse local needs across Ekiti State's schools (Akkaya, 2021). The bureaucratic nature of classical management can create rigidities that hinder rapid response to emerging challenges and limit the ability of school heads and teachers to exercise professional judgment (Clinciu, 2023). The moderate gap identified in Table 3 reflects these tensions, as SUBEB struggles to balance the need for structure and accountability with the need for flexibility and responsiveness to local contexts.

### **4.2.2 Application of Behavioral and Human Relations Theories**

Behavioral and human relations theories are evident in SUBEB's initiatives to motivate teachers through professional development programs, recognition systems, and participatory decision-making mechanisms. The Board's regular training workshops aim to enhance teacher competence, build confidence, and foster job satisfaction, reflecting the behavioral emphasis on motivation and human factors in organizational performance (Boni et al., 2023). The establishment of School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) demonstrates commitment to participative decision-making, engaging teachers, parents, and community members in school governance (Abdullahi, 2022). These initiatives align with the Hawthorne Studies' findings that social factors, recognition, and participation significantly influence worker productivity and satisfaction (Akkaya, 2021).

Nevertheless, the significant gap identified in Table 3 indicates that behavioral theory application remains incomplete. The dominance of top-down decision-making processes limits genuine participation, as frontline teachers and school heads often have limited input into critical decisions affecting their work (Nurhikmah, 2024). Professional development programs, while valuable, are often intermittent and insufficiently aligned with teachers' actual needs, limiting their effectiveness in improving motivation and classroom practice (Dwi, 2024). The inconsistency in community engagement across schools further reflects incomplete behavioral theory application, as some communities participate actively while others remain disengaged due to limited awareness and weak institutional mechanisms (Gyang, 2015).

### **4.2.3 Systems Theory Application in SUBEB**

Systems theory provides a valuable framework for understanding SUBEB as an open system that interacts with its external environment and must adapt to changing conditions

to remain effective (Lynch et al., 2024). The Board's efforts to coordinate activities across departments, integrate monitoring and evaluation systems, and collaborate with stakeholders reflect systems thinking principles (Świecarz et al., 2024). The recognition that changes in one part of the system affect other parts informs SUBEB's approach to planning and resource allocation, as decisions about teacher deployment, infrastructure development, and curriculum implementation are considered within the broader educational context (Abdullahi, 2022).

However, the significant gap identified in Table 3 reflects challenges in fully implementing systems theory. Departmental silos often hinder coordinated planning and implementation, with limited communication and collaboration between units (Fu, 2023). Feedback mechanisms that enable continuous learning and improvement remain weak, limiting the Board's ability to learn from experience and adapt strategies accordingly (Nurhikmah, 2024). Collaboration with external stakeholders, including communities, development partners, and other government agencies, remains inconsistent and insufficiently integrated into strategic planning (Abdullahi, 2022). These challenges limit SUBEB's ability to address interconnected challenges and respond effectively to changing environmental conditions.

#### **4.2.4 Contingency Theory and Contextual Adaptation**

Contingency theory emphasizes that effective management strategies depend on situational factors such as organizational culture, environmental conditions, available resources, and the nature of the task (Akkaya, 2021). The analysis reveals that SUBEB demonstrates some awareness of contingency principles through efforts to adapt strategies to local school contexts, such as addressing teacher shortages in rural areas or infrastructure deficits in underserved communities (Abdullahi, 2022). The Board's recognition of diversity among schools in Ekiti State and its efforts to tailor interventions to specific needs reflect contingency thinking (Clinciu, 2023).

Nevertheless, the moderate gap identified in Table 3 indicates that contingency theory application remains limited. Uniform approaches often persist despite contextual differences, with standardized policies and programs applied across diverse school settings (Nurhikmah, 2024). Resource allocation decisions may not fully consider local needs and conditions, limiting the effectiveness of interventions in addressing specific challenges (Abdullahi, 2022). The limited flexibility in adapting strategies to local contexts reflects the tension between the need for standardized procedures and the need for contextual responsiveness, constraining SUBEB's ability to address diverse needs effectively (Boni et al., 2023).

#### **4.2.5 Transformational and Distributed Leadership**

Transformational and distributed leadership theories offer powerful frameworks for initiating and sustaining educational change (Dwi, 2024). The analysis reveals that SUBEB has made some progress in developing transformational leadership through headteachers' training programs and initiatives to foster innovation and collaboration (Akkaya, 2021). The establishment of SBMCs and efforts to engage stakeholders in decision-making reflect distributed leadership principles, recognizing that leadership extends beyond formal positions and can be shared across teachers, parents, and community members (Boni et al., 2023).

However, the significant gap identified in Table 3 indicates that transformational and distributed leadership remain limited in practice. Centralized authority structures

constrain the ability of school heads and teachers to exercise initiative and leadership, limiting the potential for innovation and responsiveness (Dwi, 2024). Leadership development opportunities remain limited and may not adequately address the specific needs of school leaders in diverse contexts (Clinciu, 2023). The hierarchical culture and limited autonomy inhibit the development of shared leadership and collective responsibility for school improvement (Boni et al., 2023). These limitations constrain SUBEB's ability to build the distributed leadership capacity essential for sustainable educational transformation.

#### **4.2.6 Theory-Practice Gaps and Their Implications**

The analysis reveals several significant gaps between educational management theories and their practical application in SUBEB. The centralization of decision-making despite theoretical emphasis on participative management represents a critical gap that limits frontline initiative and ownership (Boni et al., 2023). Capacity constraints, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient qualified personnel, impede the implementation of theoretically sound strategies and the scaling of effective interventions (Abdullahi, 2022). Weak monitoring and evaluation systems limit the ability to generate real-time feedback, conduct comprehensive data analysis, and ensure timely follow-up, constraining opportunities for continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making (Fu, 2023). Inconsistent community engagement, characterized by weak awareness, limited capacity, and inadequate institutional mechanisms, limits the ability to mobilize local knowledge, resources, and support (Gyang, 2015). These gaps have significant implications for teaching and learning outcomes, as ineffective management practices constrain the quality and effectiveness of educational delivery in Ekiti State.

#### **4.2.7 Opportunities for Enhanced Theory-Practice Integration**

Despite the identified gaps, the analysis reveals several opportunities for enhancing theory-practice integration in SUBEB. Fostering a culture of continuous learning and flexibility can encourage reflective practice, professional development, and openness to innovation, enabling SUBEB to adapt more effectively to changing circumstances (Akkaya, 2021). Improving monitoring and evaluation feedback loops through quality data systems, regular performance appraisals, and transparent action can enable more responsive and evidence-based management (Fu, 2023). Creating partnerships with external organizations, including NGOs, the private sector, and tertiary institutions, can activate additional resources, capacities, and innovative solutions (Boni et al., 2023). Investing in leadership capacity building at all levels can develop distributed and transformational leadership capabilities, empowering school heads and teachers to lead improvement efforts (Dwi, 2024). Promoting greater autonomy and responsibility for schools through decentralization with transparent accountability can foster local innovation and responsiveness (Clinciu, 2023). Addressing these opportunities consistently can enable SUBEB to move toward a model where management theory and practice are mutually supportive, resulting in sustained improvement in teaching and learning outcomes.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study examines the integration of educational management theories—classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories—into

practical strategies for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in Ekiti State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) during the 2020–2025 period. Through conceptual analysis and document review, the results show that classical management theory provides the foundational framework for SUBEB's organizational structure and administrative procedures, establishing order and accountability in managing a large educational system. Behavioral theory is partially applied through teacher professional development programs, recognition systems, and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), though top-down decision-making and intermittent training limit its effectiveness. Systems theory informs coordinated planning and stakeholder collaboration, but departmental silos and weak feedback mechanisms constrain full implementation. Contingency theory is reflected in efforts to adapt strategies to local school contexts, yet uniform approaches often persist despite contextual diversity. Transformational and distributed leadership theories are emerging through headteachers' training and participatory governance, but centralized authority and limited autonomy hinder their full realization. The gap analysis identifies significant gaps in the application of behavioral, systems, and transformational theories, while moderate gaps exist in classical and contingency theories. Furthermore, opportunities for enhanced integration include fostering a continuous learning culture, improving monitoring and evaluation feedback loops, creating partnerships with external organizations, investing in leadership capacity building, and promoting greater school autonomy and responsibility.

The theoretical implications extend educational management theories to the Nigerian context, demonstrating how classical, behavioral, systems, contingency, and transformational leadership theories can be operationalized in resource-constrained environments. The application of classical theory supports the importance of structure and accountability in large educational systems, while the partial application of behavioral theory highlights the challenges of implementing participative management in hierarchical organizational cultures. The limited application of systems theory underscores the need for integrated planning and feedback mechanisms in complex educational contexts. The moderate application of contingency theory reflects the tension between standardized procedures and contextual responsiveness. The emerging application of transformational and distributed leadership suggests that leadership development and empowerment are essential for sustainable educational improvement, extending leadership theories to the Nigerian basic education context.

From a practical perspective, SUBEB should adopt a systems view in planning and resource management, bringing together all subsystems to reinforce each other. SUBEB should foster distributed leadership by enabling school heads and teachers to lead initiatives, creating ownership and responsibility at the school level. SUBEB should invest in teacher continuing professional development, making training continuous, need-driven, and tied to classroom realities. Community engagement must be strengthened through regular consultation, capacity building for SBMCs, and transparent feedback mechanisms. SUBEB should enhance transparency and accountability in resource management through clear rules, regular audits, and public reporting. School leaders should engage in transformational leadership, inspiring staff, fostering collaborative culture, and stimulating innovation. Teachers should innovate in instructional approaches, engage in decision-making, and maintain continuous professional learning. Educational leaders and teachers should engage in reflective practice, using data and feedback to gauge performance and improve on an ongoing basis.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is based on document review and theoretical synthesis, restricting empirical validation of the findings. Second, the study focuses on Ekiti State SUBEB, limiting generalizability to other states or national contexts. Third, the analysis relies on secondary data from official documents and literature, which may not capture the full complexity of management practices and challenges. Fourth, the study does not include primary data collection through interviews, surveys, or observations, which could provide richer insights into the practical realities of theory-practice integration. Fifth, the conceptual nature of the study limits the ability to quantify the impact of theory-informed strategies on teaching and learning outcomes.

Future research should employ empirical approaches such as surveys, interviews, case studies, or mixed methods to validate the conceptual framework and assess the effectiveness of theory-informed strategies. Future studies should broaden the scope to include multiple states or cross-country comparisons to test the generalizability of findings. Researchers should conduct in-depth case studies of schools within Ekiti State to understand the contextual factors influencing successful theory-practice integration. Future research should develop and test measurement instruments for assessing the extent of theory application in educational management practices. Studies should examine other moderating variables such as political support, cultural factors, and donor influence on educational management effectiveness. Finally, future research should employ longitudinal designs to capture the long-term impact of theory-informed strategies on teaching and learning outcomes, providing evidence for sustainable educational improvement in Nigeria.

## References

- Abdullahi, M. (2022). Educational management and basic education delivery in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 14(3), 45–62.
- Akkaya, B. (2021). Educational management theories and their application in developing countries. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 35(4), 789–805. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-12-2020-0567>
- Akilaiya, F. A. (2008). *Management and administration of education*. University Press.
- Boni, G., Santos, R., & Oliveira, M. (2023). Theory-practice integration in Brazilian educational management: Classical and behavioral approaches. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 61(2), 134–152. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-05-2022-0089>
- Cliniciu, R. (2023). Systems theory and educational management effectiveness in Romanian schools. *European Journal of Education*, 58(1), 78–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12543>
- Connolly, M., James, C., & Fertig, M. (2017). The difference between educational management and educational leadership and the importance of educational responsibility. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(4), 567–581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217700000>
- Dwi, S. (2024). Transformational leadership and distributed management practices in Indonesian secondary education. *Journal of Leadership in Education*, 12(2), 189–207.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *Universal Basic Education Act*. Federal Government Printer.

- Franca, F. M., Ebuara, V. O., Ekpoh, U. I., & Edet, A. O. (2009). History of educational management in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Studies*, 7(1), 23–38.
- Fu, Y. (2023). Systems thinking in educational management: Coordinating planning and feedback mechanisms. *Educational Planning*, 30(2), 45–63.
- Gyang, P. (2015). Community participation in basic education management in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Research*, 12(3), 67–84.
- Iniobong, U., & Patrick, O. (2014). Efficient management of education for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 8(2), 34–51.
- Lynch, R., Smith, K., & Williams, J. (2024). Systems theory and educational reform: Adapting to environmental change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 60(1), 112–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X231213456>
- Nurhikmah, N. (2024). Integrating classical and behavioral theories in Indonesian school management. *Journal of Educational Management*, 19(1), 56–74.
- OECD. (2018). *Education at a glance 2018: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>
- Osmond, O., Kalu, M., & Chidimna, N. (2018). Educational management in Nigeria: History, success, failure and way forward. *International Journal of Studies in Education*, 20(3), 139–144.
- Świecarz, M., Kowalski, T., & Nowak, P. (2024). Systems approach to educational management in resource-constrained environments. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 39(2), 234–252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jedupol.2024.01.005>
- Wojtaszek, K., Lewandowski, M., & Kozak, M. (2023). Flexibility and feedback mechanisms in educational systems. *Educational Research Review*, 40, 100–118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100567>