

## Preparing Principals to Transform their Schools: A North American Higher Education Collaboration

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There is a general consensus that strong school leadership is an essential characteristic of an effective school [Ubben and Hughes, 1987]. However, as Rossow [1990] notes, research studies have taken different approaches in attempting to delineate which aspects of leadership have the most influence on a school's effectiveness. While some studies have focused on the contextual areas of leadership, others have concentrated on the personality traits of leaders. In this case, the transformational leadership model was the basis of examining the leadership actions of Mexican educational leaders. The transformational leadership ideas are credited to James McGregor Burns [1978] as he applies them to the political arena. The theory came into effect after the work of Bernard Bass [1985] in which three major types of leadership are conceptualized: laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational. A transformational leadership is seen as an expansion of transactional leadership that goes beyond simple exchanges and negotiations. Transformational leadership expands its effects on follower motivation, satisfaction, and performance. The fountain of transformational leadership is in the personal values and beliefs of leaders [Hoy and Miskel, 2005]. Transformational leadership occurs where the leader takes a visionary position and inspires people to follow [Avolio, 2005].

James MacGregor Burns is commonly credited with formulating the ideas of transactional and transformational leadership and applying them to the political arena. The basic framework for the theory was designed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio in 1985. They identified a full-range of leadership continuum that identifies leaders' transformational and transactional behaviors. Following is the description of each transformational and transactional factor as discussed by Bass and Avolio. Transactional leadership refers to the exchange of rewards for services rendered. It has three components: Contingent reward leadership, Active management-by-exception and Passive management-by-exception. The following description is provided by Hoy and Miskel (2005):

Transactional Factors	Description
Contingent reward leadership	The leader clarifies roles and tasks requirements and provides followers with rewards contingent on the follower's performance.
Active management-by-exception	The leader maintains high levels of vigilance to ensure that standards are met.
Passive management-by-exception	The leader waits to take action to intervene until problems become serious.

Transformational leadership is seen when leaders: (1) stimulate others to view their work from new perspectives; (2) involving others in the mission and vision of the team and organization; (3) develop others to higher levels of ability and potential, and (4) motivate others to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the group (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership. Transformational leaders engage others in superior results by using one or more of the “Four I’s”:

Transformational Factors	Description
Idealized influence	Leaders are role models, consider the needs of others, share risks, and are consistent, do the right thing by demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct. They are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers want to emulate leaders.
Inspirational motivation	By providing meaning and challenge, the leader inspires others to lead. Team spirit, enthusiasm, and optimism are clearly communicated along with demonstrated commitment to goals and shared vision.
Intellectual stimulation	The leader stimulates others to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.
Individualized consideration	The leader pays attention to each individual’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor. New opportunities are created along with a two-way exchange communication.

Several research studies have shown that transformational leader as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio are more effective and satisfying as leaders than transactional, although a transformational leader do use transactional behaviors.

In terms of organizational culture and decision making, it has been found that a transformational culture is likely to demonstrate openness while a transactional culture shows evidence of a consummate bureaucracy in which almost each behavior is regulated by negotiations (Bass, 1994). The school cultures that embrace transformative leadership actions are pro innovation; acceptance of others individual values and needs, rewarding environments filled with enthusiasm and collegiality.

## Purpose of the Research Work

The major purpose of the study is to enhance school leaders knowledge base and practices on transforming leadership through a structured and systematic principal preparation process to help convert principals from inspectors to transformational leaders who can identify and articulate a vision; foster acceptance of group goals; convey high performance expectations; provide appropriate models, intellectual stimulation, and individual support; and promote a strong school culture.

## Objectives of the Research Work

In order to accomplish the main purpose, the following research objectives must be accomplished:

1. To train school leaders on transformative actions and behaviors that would favor an influencing relationship between inspired, energetic leaders and followers who have a mutual commitment to a mission that includes a belief in empowering the members of an organization to effect lasting change.
2. To professionally develop school leaders and teachers on becoming empowered to be active participants in educational improvement and school decision making and on fostering empowering environments through transformational reforms.
3. To outline transformational leadership proficiencies designed to help Mexican special education school administrators become learner centered in leadership style, climate setting, curriculum and instruction, diversity, communication, and professional development.
4. To instill suggestions for ways in which transformational leadership can facilitate change and for implementing a more collective design for school governance.
5. To provide guidance on the formation of a sustainable learning community that would be the supporting platform for the development and growth of transformational leadership

The secondary objectives that lead this research study are:

1. To analyze and identify the preferred leadership behaviors and actions of principals in Mexican special education schools,
2. To describe the schools' organizational climates in order to infuse transformational leadership elements that would strengthen the environment,
3. To examine the relationships between principals' preferred leadership behaviors and actions and the characteristics of transformational leadership,
4. To explore the relationship between the preferred leadership behavior and action in successful schools and the teachers' perceptions of the school leader behaviors and actions and the organizational climates in the schools..
5. To determine and understand differences between teachers and principal's perception of their transformational leadership actions.

## Professional Development Model

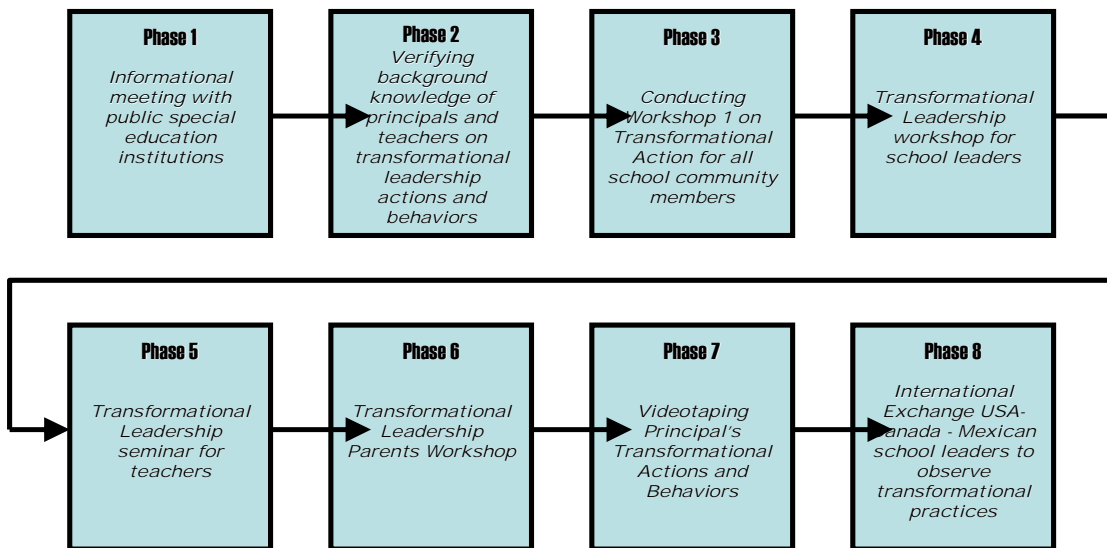
The professional development plan includes five phases: (1) building a knowledge base, (2) observing models and examples, (3) reflecting on current practices, (4) changing practice, and (5) gaining and sharing expertise.

Phase	What	How
I	Building a knowledge base	Based on data collected and analyzed previously, the researchers will train school leaders, teachers and school community on transformational leadership principles through systematic workshops, seminars, and focus groups.
II	Observing models and examples	School leaders will observe successful practitioners in and out of their school environments. The principals will be asked to implement at least two transformational actions observed.
III	Reflecting on current practices	School leaders and teachers will keep a leadership actions log and time for reflection will be protected during the research process.
IV	Changing practice	Based on the research contract previously agreed upon, school leaders and teachers will show evidence on their change practices, behaviors and actions.
V	Gaining and sharing expertise	Exchange of knowledge and expertise between international and regional school leaders will be provided by technological devices such as tele and video conferences as well as face-to-face collaborations and discussions.

## Research Phases

The following flow map illustrates the sequences of events delineated and organized to implement this research study. For each event, different entities took responsibility and action. A total of eight phases are planned that involve informational meetings, teachers and administrators' workshops, community training, and international exchanges.

## Research Phases Transforming Leadership for Today and Tomorrow's Schools



### Research Site Description

The system of Special Education of the State of Nuevo Leon has 73 Center for Multiple Attention (7,494 students) that lead to the development of specific skills required by students with diverse disabilities. The system also offers 201 Supporting Units to regular education inclusion classroom (28,478 students). The Department of Special Education of Nuevo Leon serves a total population of 35,972 students. The Centros de Atención Múltiple (Centers for Multiple Attention) give attention to 7,494 students. The system is administered by 274 directors (principals) and 3,694 special education teachers.

The promotion system of a school administrator is based on an accumulative method of points to years of experience, graduate work, and professional development. The bachelor degree in Special education is the only requisite to become director or a teacher of a special education center. The educational system of Mexico does not require completion of specialized graduate work on school administration, leadership or related areas in order to become a school leader for primary and secondary institutions.

## Research Design

Action research will be used as the research design. Mills [2000] states that Action Research is a systematic inquiry done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about – and subsequently improve – the ways their particular educational setting operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. Action Research has gained support in education because it (1) encourages change in the schools, (2) fosters a democratic (i.e., involvement of many individuals) approach to education, (3) empowers individuals through collaboration on projects, (4) positions teachers and other educators as learners who seek to narrow the gap between practice and their vision of education, (5) encourages educators to reflect on their practices, and (6) promotes a process of testing new ideas. The study will follow the practical Action Research model by Schmuck (1997). Its purpose is to research a specific school situation (educational leadership) with a view toward improving practice.

### Activities and Expected Participants

Activities	Expected Participants	Possible Dates
<u>Phase 1</u> informational meeting and selection of special education institutions	Northeastern Illinois University and Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación	May 2007 (phase completed)
<u>Phase 2</u> Checking on principals and teachers background knowledge on transformational leadership	Northeastern Illinois University, Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación, and University of Sherbrooke	Data was collected from 63 principals and 110 teachers in May 2007. More leaders and teachers need to be included across the state of Nuevo Leon.
<u>Phase 3</u> A 16-hours workshop on transformational leadership model and theory for all school community members. Five training sessions of 2 days, 50 participants per training.	Northeastern Illinois University and Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación	March and April 2008.
<u>Phase 4</u> A 3-day training for school leaders of 70 special education schools. Three training sessions of 3 days, 25 participants per workshop.	Northeastern Illinois University	May 2008
<u>Phase 5</u> A 3-day training for teachers of 70 special education schools. Four training sessions of 3 days, 50 participants per workshop.	Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación, and University of Sherbrooke	May 2008

<u>Phase 6</u> A 2-day training for parents. Four training sessions of 2 days, 50 parents per training session.	Northeastern Illinois University and Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación	June 2008
<u>Phase 7</u> Videotaping 70 principals transformational behaviors and actions on site.	Northeastern Illinois University, Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación, and University of Sherbrooke	June 2008
<u>Phase 8</u> International exchange of school leaders (USA-Canada- Mexico)	Northeastern Illinois University, Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación, and University of Sherbrooke	July 2008

## Participating Institutions

### La Faculté d'éducation de l'Université de Sherbrooke

Regroupant six départements et plus de cent professeurs chercheurs, la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université de Sherbrooke offre la formation initiale et continue menant à toutes les professions de l'éducation dans la société québécoise. Il s'agit ici des formations menant à du travail dans les services de garde des enfants, à l'enseignement préscolaire, primaire, secondaire général et professionnel, en adaptation sociale et scolaire au primaire et au secondaire, enseignement collégial et universitaire. De plus, les professionnels comme les conseillers en orientation, les psychoéducateurs, les gestionnaires de l'éducation dans le système scolaire et dans les entreprises sont aussi formés ici. La Faculté est aussi très active par rapport à la formation à la recherche en sciences de l'éducation ; elle offre ainsi des formations en recherche menant aux grades de maîtrise et de doctorat. Chaque année, près de cinq cents étudiants reçoivent un diplôme de 1<sup>er</sup>, 2<sup>e</sup> ou 3<sup>e</sup> cycle de la Faculté. Celle-ci accueille également plusieurs centres de recherche : le Centre de recherche sur l'intervention éducative, le Centre de recherche sur l'enseignement des sciences, le Centre de recherche sur les inadaptations graves de l'enfance, le Groupe de recherche sur l'adaptation scolaire. L'Université de Sherbrooke est une université en région qui se distingue dans les divers palmarès des universités au Canada par la qualité de sa recherche, de ses services aux étudiants et des relations entre les étudiants et les professeurs.

### Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación

La Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación es una institución de educación superior de carácter público en Méjico que se encarga de capacitar maestros para los niveles primarios y secundarios. Fue fundada en Julio 14 de 1976 ofreciendo grados de licenciatura en educación. En 1986, la institución incorporo el grado de maestría en

educación. Cerca de 800 estudiantes de posgrado provenientes de públicas del estado de Nuevo León se especializan en Psicopedagogía o Administración Educativa. La Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación posee varios campos universitarios en diferentes condados y municipios de Nuevo León. La institución usa las modalidades presenciales y a distancia.

### Northeastern Illinois University

Established in 1867 as the first teacher training institution in Cook County, later in 1971 granted university status and renamed Northeastern Illinois University, it is a fully accredited public university serving approximately 12,000 students in the Chicago area with more than 70 undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts, sciences, education and business. A leader in the development of special programs for adult learners and innovative non-traditional education alternatives, the university serves a population which is diverse in age, culture, language, and race.

### Participating Subjects

Sixty one school leaders and 120 teachers from Special Education school system of the State of Nuevo Leon in Mexico and that are classified as Quality School Program, were invited to participate in this research study. Seventy one percent female and 39% male with different educational background (master degree as the highest degree) and diverse years of experiences were the subjects of analysis.

### Workshop Characteristics

The workshop “Taller de Liderazgo Transformacional en el Ambito Escolar” [Transformational leadership in school environments] content was related to the renovation of educational environments through transformational leadership actions. Principals and teachers were invited to attend two training sessions of 4 hours each. Principals received the training first and the following day, teachers were trained. Both received the same type of training without any modification or adaptation.

### Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Primary school and secondary school principals and teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors were explored using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Leadership behaviors were measured with Form 5x-Short of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The MLQ measures the degree of transactional and transformational leadership exhibited by the subject. It consists of 45 questions asking subordinates to assess leader characteristics and behaviors and has been used in several research studies on transformational leadership. There were 36 leadership items measured in each MLQ—Form 5X survey. Participants rated their principals on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (frequently, if not always). Bass's transformational leadership is comprised of four dimensions. These components and a sample item from the MLQ—Form 5X were as follows: Idealized Influence (e.g., "Talks about



their most important values and beliefs"), Inspirational Motivation (e.g., "Articulates a compelling vision of the future"); Intellectual Stimulation (e.g., "Seeks different perspectives when solving problems"), and Individual Consideration (e.g., "Helps me to develop their strengths"). Transactional leadership occurs when the leader sets expectations, standards, or goals to reward or discipline a follower depending on the adequacy of a follower's performance. There are three dimensions measured in the MLQ for transactional leadership: Contingent Reward (e.g., "Rewards us when we do what we are supposed to do") and Management by Exception (active and passive forms, represented in the items "Directs my attention toward failures to meet standards" and "Fails to interfere until problems become serious," respectively). Laissez-Faire implies the absence of leadership (e.g., "Avoids making decisions"). Subscale scores are obtained by averaging the responses to the rating scales for each subscale. High scores on each subscale represent high levels and low scores represent low levels of the leadership style assessed. Total scale scores for each were obtained by adding the related sub-scores together.

The MLQ has been used extensively since its introduction by Bass in 1985 and so has the subsequent revisions by Bass & Avolio. However, there have been concerns about the validity and reliability of the instrument. In this study, only the dimensions of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire were measured. Den Hartog et al. (1997) used Cronbach's  $\alpha$  as a measure of internal consistency. An  $\alpha > .70$  is considered to be acceptable. The  $\alpha$  for transformational leadership was .95. The  $\alpha$ 's for transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership were .60 and .49 respectively and below the .70 criterion. Den Hartog et al. (1997) suggest improving internal consistency by combining passive management by exception and laissez-faire into one passive factor. In addition, Carless (1998) found the MLQ does not measure separate transformational leader behaviors. Instead, the MLQ appears to assess a single hierarchical construct of transformational leadership because subordinates answering the MLQ do not distinguish dimensions in transformational leadership behaviors. Although concerns are raised, the MLQ is considered the most well validated measure of transformational leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999).

## Data Collection

Before starting the training session, the MLQ was given to principals and teachers. They filled it out individually. It took 20' approximately. Right after completing the questionnaire, the subjects were asked to score their individual responses. They identified their transformational, transactional, or laissez faire approaches to their daily leadership actions. The trainer and researcher presented the theoretical base of transformational leadership theory developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio. The discussion also included details and explanation of the four I's of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; and the possible reasons for the differences between the ratings of school leaders and teachers in regard to these components of transformational leadership. Major quantitative analysis of the data collected from the principals and teachers is still pending. Due to time

constraints, principals and teachers separately were asked to write three leadership actions that they have undertaken at the schools. They were invited to classify those actions as either transformational and or transactional. In addition, they were invited to reflect upon two immediate transformational leadership actions that they would embark on based on the learnings of the workshop content.

### Preliminary Qualitative Analysis

The following table shows a summary of the qualitative data collected from teachers and school leaders of the special education system of Nuevo Leon, Mexico. They were asked to decide on two transformational leadership actions based on the leadership deficits expressed. Following is the “wish list’ of leadership actions and behaviors in Table 3.

**Table 1**  
***Leadership Actions and Behaviors Required by Nuevo Leon Special Education Principals as Identified by Teachers and School Leaders***

Participants	Leaders Actions and Behaviors
<b>Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To utilize the strengths and skills of the institutional faculty and staff</li> <li>● To promote new solutions to old problems.</li> <li>● To survey the school climate systematically</li> <li>● To appoint faculty and staff to committees according to their skills and abilities.</li> <li>● To review agenda items to be discuss at the School Technical Council.</li> <li>● To promote vertical and horizontal communication through surveys, questionnaires, Suggestion Box, parents’ formal and informal meetings.</li> <li>● To identify the skills and abilities of the internal personnel to design, develop, and implement any school activity</li> <li>● To invite parents to attend professional development of any type.</li> <li>● To share knowledge and experiences between and among faculty and staff members of the institute</li> <li>● Base on the education needs of the school, train and guide parents to intervene in the school life</li> <li>● To use strengths and weaknesses of the personnel for diverse internal activities</li> <li>● To create an environment of inclusion and participation of the external community to the school</li> <li>● To guide and channel parents and families to may aspects of the school life that may be affecting their children (health, psychological, etc)</li> <li>● To meet continuously in order to early detect any problem that may raise in the educational process</li> <li>● To create effective strategies that would allow increasing</li> </ul>

	<p>school and community participation and involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support professional development of teachers in order to increase their motivation level.</li> <li>• To prioritize the personnel needs according to:</li> <li>• Classroom issues (content, learning styles, parental involvement, family participation, relationship teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and teacher-student-parent)</li> <li>• To implement strategies to improve the organizational climate</li> <li>• To consolidate hygiene habits and care of the school environment taking advantage of participant's strengths.</li> <li>• To reinforce team work institutionally</li> </ul>
<b>School Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To delegate tasks and functions</li> <li>• Community work</li> <li>• To create an inclusive environment</li> <li>• Team work will produce a much effective and efficient school achievement</li> <li>• Delegating tasks and functions will generate continuity in performance</li> <li>• Recognition and detection of skills and abilities</li> <li>• School environment characterized by respect, acceptance, tolerance, harmony, human relations, clear vision and mission, quality policy making</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary work that would include coordination, effective projects, follow up actions, advisory councils, academic achievement, community recognition</li> <li>• Evaluation of programs and personnel</li> </ul>

The list of actions and behaviors brainstormed by teachers and school leaders related to administrative, management and leadership practices. The topics that emerged were associated with: decision making, conflict resolution, team building, team work, human relations, job description, diversity, school climate, organizational culture, budgeting, communication, educational facilities, planning, and curriculum content. The long list was examined from the perspective of what is needed and not on what is lacking. There is clear evidence on teachers and principals' opinions that reinforce the need for more training and preparation on school management, educational leadership, and educational administration in the studied group of special education leaders.

### Preliminary Quantitative Results

The quantitative findings are based on the scores obtained from school leaders and teachers as they filled out the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Table 2 presents the demographic data that characterized the personal and professional information given by the participating individuals.

Table 2

***Demographic Data of Special Education School Leaders***

Features	Category	Number	Mean
Gender	Male	15	
	Female	61	
Age			49.55
Years of Experience			23.64
Years in Current Position			5.7
Educational Background	Teacher (Normal)	4	
	Teacher (Specialist)	1	
	Bachelor Education	39	
	Bachelor other	2	
	Master of Education	23	
	Master School Adm.	28	
	Doctor of Education	1	
Active/Retired	Active	76	

All participating subjects are active professionals with multiple experiences and degrees. It is important to clarify that almost a 50% percent of the school leaders have graduate degrees at the master level.

The following table shows data on transformational leadership factors. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used and the findings revealed and confirmed the literature that has traditionally said that school leaders see and perceive themselves as transformational leaders. The lowest score obtained was 2 related to the factor idealized influence (attribute) which is the extent to which followers perceive leaders as being charismatic, confident, powerful, and focused on higher-order ideals and ethics (Hoy and Miskel, 2007). The school leaders of special education institutions of Nuevo Leon did not perceive themselves with those characteristics expressed in the theory.

Table 3

***Quantitative findings on transformational leadership actions based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire from special education school leaders***

Transformational Factors	Global Score	Transformational Score
Idealized influence (Attribute)	8	2
Idealized influence (Behavior)	14	3.5
Inspirational Motivation	16	4

Intellectual stimulation	14	3.5
Individual consideration	14	3.5

Table 4 shows the findings on transactional traits, actions, and behaviors identified by the school leaders of the State of Nuevo Leon. A score below 2.75 is considered, according to the theory, lacking of evidence of the presence of the factor.

Table 4

***Quantitative findings on transactional leadership based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire from special education school leaders***

Transactional Leadership	Global Score	Transactional Score
Management by exception active	5	1.25
Management by exception passive	0	0
Contingent Reward	11	2.75
Laissez Faire	0	0

It can be evidenced that school leaders of the special education institutions of the state of Nuevo Leon do not perceive themselves as transactional leaders. The absence of leadership is a reaffirmation that they know what their role is in the school community.

Tables 5 and 6 summarize the data obtained from teachers who evaluated and scored their school leaders. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, rater form, was used for that specific purpose. The MLQ presents the same number of item and wording of questions requesting perceptions of leadership behaviors, traits, actions and attributes of the school leaders.

Table 5

***Quantitative findings on transformational leadership rated by teachers and based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire scores.***

Transformational Leadership	Global Score	Transformational Scores
Idealized influence (Attribute)	8	2.0
Idealized influence (Behavior)	8	2.0
Inspirational motivation	10	2.5
Intellectual stimulation	12	3.0
Individual consideration	14	3.5

Table 6 reveals great disparities between school leaders perceptions and teachers' perceptions of their leaders. The special education school leaders perceived themselves as highly transformative. However, according to the findings in the table, teachers have a different opinion on their transformational behaviors. The scores show a different direction. In agreement with the table, teachers think that there are no transformational traits in their school leaders. The exception to this statement is on the individual consideration factor with a high score of 3.5. The high score deserves a distinct analysis based on the cultural relevance of the individual that Latino culture preserves.

Table 6

***Quantitative findings on transactional leadership data from teachers as they rated their school leaders based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire***

Transactional Factor	Global Score	Transactional Score
Management by exception active	12	3.0
Management by exception passive	14	3.5
Contingent reward	12	3.0
Laissez Faire	5	1.25

According to teachers of the special education institutions of the state of Nuevo Leon, their school leaders are clearly transactional leaders. Scores above 3.0, based on Bass and Avolio's theory, represent the presence of the transactional traits, actions, and behaviors. In this case, it was evidenced that the general perception of teachers led toward the belief that the state of Nuevo Leon special education principals are transactional leaders.

### Results and Discussion in Progress

Special education principals of the State of Nuevo Leon did not differ from other principals internationally as they perceive themselves as transformational leaders. The same is valid for teachers as they rated their leaders. The results have confirmed the findings of other studies.

The research study has completed stages 1 to 4. Four more phases are still in process. Most data have been collected from teachers and school leaders, but more data will be gathered from additional principals and teachers as the study progresses. Additional quantitative analysis of demographics and MLQ results are pending as well as the triangulation of qualitative analysis. Based on the findings, the institutions will establish the appropriate partnerships to make the principal preparation a transformational leadership reality.

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