

LEADERSHIP, TEACHER AUTONOMY, AND FLOW, AS MICRO- FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION

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***Abstract:** In a world defined by constant systemic change, schools need stability and the capacity to transform, if they want to remain functional and relevant. While there is a lot of research on organizational resilience, more attention should be given to the micro-level foundations within educational settings. This conceptual paper argues that the principals' leadership styles can foster teacher autonomy and flow, contributing to transformative organizational resilience. Teachers' decisions in the classroom, the ongoing adjustments of educational strategies, and their ability to focus and adapt support the school's ability to build on organizational resilience allowing educational institutions to adapt effectively to change. Recurrent adaptive practices at the classroom level may strengthen the school's overall capacity for transformation, creating conditions that support students' resilience. This paper proposes a conceptual model linking selected leadership styles, teacher autonomy, flow, and organizational resilience, in order to offer a management-oriented perspective on adaptive capacity in education.*

***Keywords:** organizational resilience, leadership, teacher autonomy, flow, educational management.*

***Classification JEL:** I25, M12, D91.*

***UDC:** 005.322:37.011.31 **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.53486/ser2026.33>*

1. Introduction

Change has become the biggest constant in schools (Heenan et al., 2024), influencing both how they function internally and how they respond to external demands. Any organizational change involves uncertainty and risk and educational leaders are expected to manage these challenges and support implementation processes (Issah, 2018). At the same time, society expects schools to prepare individuals who can function in rapidly changing environments. As a result, educational institutions need to continuously adapt (Bush, 2021), and their improvement depends on their ability to manage change effectively (Muijs & Harris, 2003) and to encourage teachers to take on leadership roles (Danielson, 2007). Teachers play a key role in this process, acting as catalysts for change (Harris, 2005) and contributing to the school's capacity for improvement (Chan, 2019).

Research shows that leadership is essential in shaping these dynamics. The quality of leadership styles influences both organizational performance (Anderson, 2017) and students' learning outcomes (Kilinç, 2014). However, educational leadership is no longer seen as hierarchical. It is understood as relational, collective, and purposeful, based on human interactions (Burns, 2012), vital in educational settings (Asbill & Gonzalez, 2022), where

the climate influences group performance (Goleman, 2016). Invitational leadership (IL) aims to create collaborative schools, based on relationships and growth (Purkey & Stanley, 1991; Purkey & Novak, 2015; Asbill & Gonzalez, 2022). When principals assume this leadership style, they create a learning ecosystem where every individual is seen, appreciated, and involved (Legros & Ryan, 2015). There is also a growing need for more inclusive leadership approaches that respond to the specific challenges of each school (El Mahzani et al., 2025), and educational leaders should adapt their strategies to respond to the unique challenges of every school (Dagala et al., 2024). Transformational leadership (TL) supports the development of a positive school culture, promoting student learning, and increasing teacher satisfaction (Sasan et al., 2023). TL is associated with mutual stimulation and elevation (Burns, 2012), shared visions, new ideas, and distributed responsibility (Yang, 2013).

Despite the strong focus on leadership, organizational resilience in schools cannot be explained only by leadership styles or policies. It is often defined as the ability to maintain positive functioning in challenging conditions (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003), but there is still limited research on what happens at the micro level, in classrooms, where learning actually takes place. Learning contributes to organizational resilience (Evenseth et al., 2022), yet teachers face diverse and changing situations that require constant adaptation. Since there is no single best way to design classroom practices (Pintrich, 2003), teachers must rely on their professional judgment to respond to the needs of their students. This suggests that organizational resilience may emerge from teachers' everyday work. At this micro level, teachers continuously adjust their strategies in response to the classroom complexity, in order to support and foster learning. Teacher autonomy allows for context-based decision-making, while the psychological state of flow supports sustained engagement and effective responses to challenges.

Teachers are seen as a “sleeping giant” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011, p. 4) in every school and they can be awaked if schools create a culture where teacher leadership is appreciated (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011). Distributed leadership (DL) is positively associated with leadership support, empowerment, job satisfaction, and work performance (Harris, 2005; Kamaruzaman et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2023; Tucaliuc et al., 2025). Moreover, DL encourages collaborative learning communities, whose result is school performance, fostering student academic performance (Harris, 2003).

This article adopts a conceptual perspective to explore how leadership styles, namely TL, DL, and IL, teacher autonomy, and flow interact as micro-level mechanisms that contribute to organizational resilience in educational settings. By focusing on these micro-level processes, the paper aims to offer an insight of how schools develop and sustain their capacity to adapt to change, since change in school capacity is positively related to student learning (Li & Liu, 2020). The paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews the relevant literature on TL, DL, and IL, autonomy, flow, and organizational resilience, followed by the methodology and concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review

Leadership in Educational Settings

School principals play an important role in creating environments that encourage resilience and engagement (Colignon et al., 2024) and school performance depends on the principal's

leadership style (Legros & Ryan, 2015; Labelle & Jacquin, 2018). The leadership approach encourages innovation and change (El Mahzani et al., 2025), gathering teachers around a shared vision (Labelle & Jacquin, 2018). According to Tony Bush, 2021, management should be orientated towards realizing goals, but these should be approved by the school and the community (Bush, 2021). Schools' goals and objectives are not determined locally, but from a different perspective (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). Principals should identify the leadership style that best suits their school's needs (Legros & Ryan, 2015), since leadership is critical to innovation in schools (Spillane et al., 2004), and a clear vision has the potential to lead to school development (Bush, 2021). Hence the leader becomes the pillar that ensures cohesion and fosters vision (Le Saget, 1999), in response to the changing needs of the educational context (Hallinger, 2003).

Transformational leadership (TL), first formulated by Bass (Yukl, 1999; Yang, 2013; El Mahzani et al., 2025) and conceptually introduced by James MacGregor Burns (Covey, 2007; Burns, 2012; Anderson, 2017; Li & Liu, 2020), is recognized as a leadership style that inspires and mobilizes individuals toward shared goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Sasan et al., 2023). It is characterized by influence and authority (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999), vision, intellectual stimulation, respect, innovation, and motivation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Yukl, 1999; Pounder, 2005; Dagala et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024; Jobir, 2025), while also emphasizing emotions, values, and human-centered interactions (Yukl, 1999; Heenan et al., 2024).

The core dimensions of TL, often described as the four I's are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Sasan et al., 2023). TL is the most appropriate leadership style for today's schools (Anderson, 2017), as it impacts student achievement through creating a positive school culture (Quin et al., 2015). TL tries to understand students' needs, fostering motivation (Burns, 2012; Sasan et al., 2023; Dagala et al., 2024; Khoudri, 2024) and also a culture of creative change and growth (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Li & Liu, 2020), paying close attention to every employee (Yang, 2013). It inspires "wholeness of being" (Covey, 2007, p. 10), as it is human-centered (Heenan et al., 2024) and it promotes integrity and authenticity (Covey, 2007).

In educational settings, TL creates a supportive environment (Sasan et al., 2023; Khoudri, 2024) that empowers teachers to innovate, collaborate, and actively contribute to learning processes (Kilag et al., 2024; Jobir, 2025). It is associated with teacher commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Anderson, 2017), while also fostering a learning climate oriented toward academic development and skill formation (Jobir, 2025). By encouraging shared vision, distributed responsibility, and the recognition of each individual's contribution (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Yang, 2013), TL strengthens both motivation and collaboration within the school, responding to the needs of students and supporting their motivation and engagement (Burns, 2012; Sasan et al., 2023; Dagala et al., 2024; Khoudri, 2024).

TL is particularly relevant in today's educational context, characterized by continuous change, as it enables leaders to adapt (Heenan et al., 2024) and it builds a sense of community and a positive school culture (Sasan et al., 2023). By inspiring purpose and shared values, leaders bring together the school community in pursuit of common goals (Allen et al., 2015; Dagala et al., 2024) contributing to both teacher satisfaction and student achievement (Allen et al., 2015). Moreover, TL supports the development of organizational capacities such as innovation and adaptability (Hallinger, 2003). It empowers collaboration and motivation, creating a school vision and mission (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Anderson, 2017; Sasan et al., 2023; Heenan et al., 2024), where everyone has a unique contribution to make (Bass &

Avolio, 1993). In this perspective, TL can be seen not only as a driver of performance, but also as a foundation for organizational resilience. By fostering trust, collaboration, motivation, and innovation (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Li & Liu, 2020; Sasan et al., 2023; Khoudri, 2024), it creates the conditions through which schools can respond to challenges, sustain their functioning.

Distributed leadership (DL) is positively associated with leadership support, empowerment, job satisfaction, and work performance (Harris, 2003; Harris, 2005; Kamaruzaman et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2023; Tucaliuc et al., 2025). It is viewed as a necessary alternative, since the principals' expertise is limited. Therefore, leadership should be distributed within the school (Danielson, 2007; Helterbran, 2016). In this sense, DL promotes a flexible and network-based structure (Le Saget, 1999), where values, responsibilities, and decision-making processes are collectively distributed. This shared approach fosters collaboration and professional learning, which in turn contributes to improved student outcomes (Harris, 2003) and organizational performance.

Within distributed leadership structures, teachers become active participants in school development, contributing to management decisions and influencing pedagogical practice within their professional communities (Le Saget, 1999; Harris, 2005). DL is a vital framework for addressing the complexity of modern education (Phillips et al., 2023), allowing every teacher to contribute to the school's growth and change (Kamaruzaman et al., 2020), thus leaving behind the belief that teachers are just teachers, which represents a loss of their expertise and knowledge (Helterbran, 2016). Teachers' involvement enhances motivation and commitment, while also supporting organizational learning and change through interaction and collaboration (Leithwood et al., 2009). As professional learning is embedded in social interaction rather than individual isolation (De Felice et al., 2022), DL emphasizes that meaningful educational development occurs through "action in interaction" (De Felice et al., 2022, p. 10). In this context, teachers not only improve their own practice, but also shape the practices of others, contributing to a dynamic and evolving school culture. Innovative practices, including pedagogical strategies, technological integration, and personalized learning create dynamic, student-centered learning environments (Leithwood et al., 2009; Phillips et al., 2023).

In parallel, invitational leadership (IL) offers a relational perspective on school improvement. Defined as "a viable process for improving schools" (Asbill & Gonzalez, 2022, p.14), IL focuses on creating collaborative environments grounded in trust, respect, care, optimism, and intentionality (Purkey & Stanley, 1991; Purkey, 1992; Burns & Martin, 2010; Shaw and al., 2013; Purkey & Novak, 2015). Originating in the work of William Purkey in the early 1970s (Burns & Martin, 2010; Shaw and al., 2013; Asbill & Gonzalez, 2022), IL emphasizes the importance of relational ecosystems in which individuals feel valued, responsible, and capable of growth (Purkey, 1992; Egley, 2003). Through intentional interactions, principals shape school climates that include students, teachers, and parents within a shared organizational space (Burns & Martin, 2010; Shaw and al., 2013; Legros & Ryan, 2015; Purkey & Novak, 2015), often conceptualized through the "five P's": people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Burns & Martin, 2010; Shaw and al., 2013; Legros & Ryan, 2015; Purkey & Novak, 2015).

Empirical findings suggest that invitational leadership is related to positive teacher outcomes, including trust, respect, and job satisfaction (Legros & Ryan, 2015; Asbill & Gonzalez, 2022; Younis, 2022). Inviting comes from the Latin term *invitare* (Purkey &

Stanley, 1991; Purkey & Novak, 2015), meaning “to offer something beneficial for consideration” (Purkey & Novak, 2015, p.1) and it represents the continuous interactions taking place in educational settings (Purkey & Novak, 2015). IL transforms the school environment into a more supportive and inclusive space where collaboration replaces isolation (Legros & Ryan, 2015), enabling individuals to realize their potential (Purkey & Stanley, 1991; Purkey, 1992). In this way, IL contributes to the creation of relational conditions that sustain engagement and professional growth.

Taken together, TL, DL, and IL approaches highlight that school improvement emerges from shared responsibility, vision, relational trust, and collective engagement. However, while these leadership frameworks explain how supportive organizational conditions are created, they do not fully clarify how adaptive capacity emerges in everyday classroom practice. In other words, leadership can establish vision, structure, and relational climate, but it is at the micro level that these conditions are translated into concrete educational actions. Micro-foundations show how individual-levels factors impact organizations, how the interaction of these individuals leads to outcomes (Palmié et al., 2023).

Organizational resilience depends not only on the leadership style, but also on how teachers act and react within complex classroom situations. The role played by social interactions is important in human learning (De Felice et al., 2022) and motivation stands for the mobilization of emotions to reach goals (Goleman, 2016). Therefore, the aim of this article is to shift the focus from leadership structures to micro-level mechanisms, including teacher autonomy and flow, as processes through which pedagogical classroom practices emerge and contribute to organizational resilience in educational settings.

Teacher Autonomy and Flow

Teachers play a central role in shaping both learning processes and school development, particularly when they assume leadership roles within and beyond the classroom (Danielson, 2007; Labelle & Jacquin, 2018; Soares, 2020). As holders of institutional memory and custodians of school culture (Danielson, 2007), they bring essential expertise in teaching and learning practices, directly influencing student outcomes (Kamaruzaman et al., 2020). Effective principals recognize that teacher contribution is fundamental to student success (Allen et al., 2015), creating safe and supportive learning environments that enable teachers to perform at their best (Robinson, 2006). What teachers accomplish professionally is connected to who they are as individuals (Purkey & Stanley, 1991), highlighting the importance of personal, emotional, and social dimensions in educational practice.

When schools have a positive climate, teachers are better motivated (Legros & Ryan, 2015) and they also create motivating learning environments for their students (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). “Perhaps more important, in the real world, motivation is highly valued because of its consequences: Motivation produces.” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69). Learning is the force that shapes leaders and every learning expertise is unique (Burns, 2012). Humans are emotional and social creatures and students’ performance and learning are affected by emotions and feelings (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). This sense of belonging (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007) is often reflected in transformational cultures characterized by shared purpose and a “feeling of family” (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p.116).

Within this context, teacher autonomy emerges as a key condition for effective professional functioning. TL contributes to teacher self-efficacy (Li & Liu, 2020) by empowering teachers so that they can become less dependent on their leader (Yukl, 1999).

Teacher leaders lead within and outside of the classroom (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). “From the moment a teacher walks into a classroom, he or she is a leader” (Soares, 2020, p. 97). Teachers’ expertise in teaching and learning allows them to become more committed to the school environment when principals view them as partners in the school program (Allen et al., 2015).

Grounded in emotional, social, and moral background (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007), teaching relies on motivation understood as the mobilization of emotions toward meaningful goals (Goleman, 2016). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), when the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled, individuals experience higher levels of motivation, engagement, and commitment. Autonomy supports innovation and the expression of ideas (Former et al., 2021), enabling teachers to adapt their pedagogical strategies to diverse classroom contexts. Such adaptive practices not only improve immediate learning outcomes, but also generate positive feedback loops that strengthen both individual and organizational capacity to respond to future challenges (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). In this sense, resilience in the classroom also comes from adjusting pedagogical strategies in order to find the ones which promote learning.

The concept of flow was created in the 70s (Aubé et al., 2014; Shernoff et al., 2014; Oliveira et al., 2018; Engeser et al., 2021) and according to Mihalyi Csíkszentmihályi, flow is a state of deep concentration, an activity perceived as intrinsically enjoyable (Bakker, 2005; Aubé et al., 2014; Heutte et al., 2021), though not always necessarily pleasant (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Flow means to be fully involved in the present moment, which contributes to well-being and personal satisfaction (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Schüler, 2007; Aubé et al., 2014), fostering personal growth (Bakker, 2005; Engeser et al., 2021; Heutte et al., 2021) and a sense of mastery (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Mazid et al., 2024).

This state is defined by three main elements, absorption, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation (Bakker, 2005). When in flow, teachers feel connected to their classroom (Shernoff et al., 2014) and achieve an internal state of harmony (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). The key to understanding flow is the autotelic experience, the result of an activity that produces its own intrinsic motivation (Oliveira et al., 2018). Knowledge always flows from a higher level to a lower one (Brătianu & Bejinaru, 2019), whereas teachers learn from their students’ reactions. This connection is explained through our human nature, as we are biologically programmed to find relatedness (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).

Flow is not only an individual experience, but also a relational and social phenomenon. It is closely linked to interaction and connection, as human beings are naturally oriented toward relatedness (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). In educational settings, flow can spread from one individual to another through emotional contagion (Bakker, 2005), meaning that teachers’ and students’ experiences influence each other. Teachers often derive their own flow from students’ engagement (Shernoff et al., 2014), and when in flow, they feel connected to their classroom and experience a sense of internal harmony (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Shernoff et al., 2014). “Flow is a motivating force for excellence.” (Shernoff et al., 2014, p. 212). When learning becomes enjoyable and meaningful, students are more likely to seek it (Schweinle et al., 2006), and flow becomes a source of energy that can be directed toward learning (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014).

Flow is experienced when the challenges and skills match (Bakker, 2005; Schüler, 2007; Csíkszentmihályi, 2014; Shernoff et al., 2014; Engeser et al., 2021). Also called optimal

experience or autotelic activity (Shernoff et al., 2014), flow depends on this balance, requiring autonomy and competence. In the classroom, teachers play an essential role in creating these conditions by adapting tasks to students' needs and allowing them to choose or adjust their level of challenge (Schweinle et al., 2006; Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). Teachers should make the present moment count, not the future, allowing students to choose their own level of challenge, then connect them with the right level of opportunity for learning (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). By designing meaningful instructional experiences, teachers support the development of competence and autonomy (Schweinle et al., 2006), while also reducing distractions and overstimulation in order to help students maintain focus and enter a state of flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).

Flow is related to learning, as it enhances focus, perseverance, motivation, and determination (Schüler, 2007; Shernoff et al., 2014; Mazid et al., 2024). However, schools often struggle to provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Shernoff et al., 2014), which makes the role of teachers even more important. "An obvious influence on students' engagement and flow experience is the teacher." (Shernoff et al., 2014, p. 219). Teachers who use varied instructional strategies are more likely to experience and facilitate flow (Smith, 2009 as cited in Shernoff et al., 2014), creating environments that support active and engaged learning. Each flow experience contributes to a sense of discovery and creativity, transforming the individual and supporting personal development (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Since learning is not only cognitive, but also affectively charged (Schweinle et al., 2006), it is important to create conditions that support sustained engagement and dedication. In this context, autonomy and social support act as important resources that help maintain the balance between skills and challenges, thus positively contributing to the experience of flow (Bakker, 2005).

Teacher autonomy and flow together explain how resilience is developed in everyday educational practice. Autonomy allows teachers to make decisions, adjust their strategies, and respond to the diverse needs of their students (Former et al., 2021). At the same time, flow supports deep engagement, focus, and sustained effort, enabling teachers to function in complex and dynamic classroom environments (Schüler, 2007; Aubé et al., 2014; Mazid et al., 2024). When these two processes interact, teachers are more likely to design meaningful learning experiences, regulate the level of challenge, and maintain students' engagement (Schweinle et al., 2006; Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). They add energy efficiently, not equally, in order to regulate the knowledge fields, represented as rational, emotional, and spiritual (Brătianu & Bejinaru, 2019). By creating motivating supportive learning environments, teachers provide opportunities for students to achieve competence and autonomy, while developing organizational resilience.

Micro-Foundations and Organizational Resilience

The concept of micro-foundations, introduced by Lippman and Rumelt (Palmié et al., 2023), explains how individual-level factors influence organizational outcomes through interaction and practice (Felin & Foss, 2015; Palmié et al., 2023). Although there is a lack of consensus regarding its use, the concept highlights the importance of understanding how agency, levels, and mechanisms operate together (Haack et al., 2019). Organizational resilience is not just the product of structures, but also the combination of cognitive, communicative, and behavioral processes through which individuals interpret, interact, and act. This approach is reflected in Coleman's boat, which illustrates how social facts are translated into social outcomes through individual actions and interactions (Felin & Foss, 2015; Palmié et al., 2023).

At the classroom level, learning and performance are influenced by teachers' actions and interactions. Teachers design scaffolding strategies within supportive environments to help students achieve their learning goals (Valerio, 2012). Students who think they are able to solve problems will be more motivated than those who don't (Pintrich, 2003). Motivation arises when students receive clear instructions from the teachers, but also when they feel they are accepted and seen (Price, 2012). Teachers should provide constructive feedback, create stimulating workload, and build a predictable, safe learning environment, in order to improve student outcomes (Pintrich, 2003). "When people feel better, they perform better." (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

Since there is no single right strategy to tailor classroom design (Pintrich, 2003), teachers need to address the unique needs of every community. Resilience isn't just adaptation. It creates resources that can be activated or combined in new situations (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). In the classroom, resilience results from the processes and dynamics that become visible at the micro level of everyday practice. The context may improve or hinder learning and motivation, this is why the teacher's strategies matter (Pintrich, 2003). In this sense, the classroom teacher becomes the central factor in shaping the culture of the classroom (Purkey & Stanley, 1991), while leadership is enacted through everyday interactions between people and situations (Helterbran, 2016).

Organizational resilience is commonly defined as the ability to maintain positive adjustment under challenging conditions (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007), to cope with stress, and to adapt to change (Warner & April, 2013; Dong, 2023). It is considered a multidimensional organizational capability (Duchek, 2020; Evenseth et al., 2022), involving the use of internal and external resources to resolve issues (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003), a developed trait needed to cope with daily stress and to adapt to change (Warner & April, 2013; Dong, 2023).

Resilience is also connected to engagement (Colignon et al., 2024), motivation (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003), and the ability to remain focused and productive in difficult situations (Warner & April, 2013). Moreover, it is linked to organizational learning, as learning both contributes to and results from resilience processes (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007; Evenseth et al., 2022). In this sense, resilience is not only about recovering from adversity, but also about developing new resources and capacities that can be activated in future situations (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). While leadership plays an important role in shaping school climate and supporting resilience (Hallinger, 2003; Price, 2012; Anderson, 2017; Colignon et al., 2024), it does not fully explain how resilience is enacted in practice.

Leadership influences organizational conditions, including trust, collaboration, and access to social capital (Coleman, 1990), which are associated with job satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Price, 2012). Invitational leadership, for example, creates opportunities for individuals to develop authentically within relational environments (Purkey & Novak, 2015), while effective principals foster supportive and people-oriented cultures (Burns & Martin, 2010). However, resilience emerges through the interaction of individuals within these contexts, not from leadership structures alone. Students and teachers often experience school differently (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008), and formal rules may not always reflect their actual needs (Purkey & Stanley, 1991), which underlines the importance of creating supportive learning environments where teachers can promote students' performance (Valerio, 2012).

From a micro-foundational perspective, resilience is built through everyday practices that take place in the classroom. Teachers continuously interpret situations, make decisions, and adjust their strategies in response to students' needs. These adaptive practices promote competence and growth (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007), contribute to student motivation and performance, and generate learning processes that strengthen the organization over time (Evenseth et al., 2022). Therefore, organizational resilience in schools can be understood as the result of interconnected micro-level processes, where teachers' autonomy, engagement, and adaptive practices transform available resources into sustained capacity for coping, leadership learning, and development. These micro-foundations could be interpreted as effective strategies and managerial abilities that play pivotal roles in shaping the quality of education (Groenewald et al., 2024).

3. Methodology

This study uses a conceptual research design based on an integrative review of literature in educational leadership, motivation, and organizational resilience. The paper synthesizes key theoretical perspectives, including transformational, distributed, and invitational leadership, self-determination theory, and flow theory, in order to explore the relationships between leadership, teacher autonomy, and adaptive practices. The research discussed was identified by using keywords such as transformational leadership, distributed leadership, invitational leadership, teacher autonomy and flow, organizational resilience. The outcome of this research is a conceptual model that explains educational resilience through everyday teacher practices, considered micro-foundations within the classroom.

4. Results and Discussion

This study proposes a conceptual model that explains organizational resilience in educational settings as an emergent process of three leadership styles, TL, DL, and IL, and micro-level processes. It suggests that these leadership styles play a significant role in shaping the organizational context, while creating the relational and structural conditions which enable teachers to design motivating learning environments. School leaders acknowledge that teachers are the most important components for student success (Allen et al., 2015). TL contributes by providing vision, motivation, and shared goals, thus inspiring change (Heenan et al., 2024), while DL supports participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility, allowing teachers to improve students outcomes (Harris, 2003). IL fosters trust, respect, and care, designing environments in which every individual feels valued and supported (Purkey, 1992).

However, the findings of this study highlight that organizational resilience is not located at the level of leadership alone. Rather, it emerges through micro-level processes that take place in the classroom, as individual level factors impact organizations and their interactions lead to outcomes and performance (Felin & Foss, 2015). Within this process, teacher autonomy and flow are identified as key mechanisms, since teachers are catalysts for change (Harris, 2005), while building the school's capacity for improvement (Chan, 2019). Schools have always struggled to offer meaningful and engaging learning experiences (Shernoff et al., 2014), and flow could be the answer, as teachers who adapt to the needs of the students, applying different strategies are more likely to experience higher levels of flow (Smith, 2009

as cited in Shernoff et al., 2014). In this sense, the classroom becomes the primary space where organizational resilience is built.

5. Conclusions

The main contribution of this study is the shift from viewing resilience as a structural capability to understanding it as an emergent outcome of practice. By focusing on teacher autonomy and flow, the paper highlights the role played by motivation, engagement, and support in building sustainable organizational resilience. In this perspective, teachers are not only catalysts for change (Harris, 2005), but also active agents who can contribute to the school's ability to cope with uncertainty and to evolve.

As a conceptual study, this paper has certain limitations. The proposed model requires empirical validation in different educational contexts, in order to examine the relationships between leadership, autonomy, and flow. Future research could explore these aspects using various approaches, in order to validate both the role of leadership strategies and the everyday teaching practices. These micro-level educational processes could be the simplest expression of resilience in education: "What you want to do is to give the child the freedom and the motivation to go on learning for the rest of life." (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014), thus cultivating the desire to continue learning, regardless of how the future unfolds.

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