



Assessing Instructional Leadership Behaviors of the Heads of Secondary Schools Dr Riffat-un-Nisa Awan*, Farhat Jabeen**, Ghazanfar Ali***

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ABSTRACT

Instructional leaders are effective principals and these leaders can lead their team towards achievement of assigned targets. Instructional leadership is directly linked to supporting and helping student learning and classroom teaching. This study intends to evaluate how principals' instructional leadership behavior make a difference in the instructional process of public secondary school, as perceived by a sample of 185 teachers of Sargodha district. A questionnaire called PIMRS (Hallinger, 1982) was adopted for collection of data. Data analysis made it clear that teachers rated their heads high on all sub scales of instructional leadership and also identified some ignored dimensions in this regard. The results revealed significant gender differences in the perception of teachers about heads' instructional supervision, their being highly visible, encouraging teachers to develop professionally, and the heads efforts in providing incentives to students for their effective learning and better achievement. Findings also suggest that the opinion of experienced teachers about different dimensions of instructional leadership was more positive as compared to the newly inducted teachers. It was suggested that heads may be trained to be effective instructional leaders for improving students' achievement and performance.



Introduction

It is undeniable fact that organizations are effectively run by well-equipped leadership. A good leader is one who leads the team from the front, keeps always in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the team, instructs them in effective manner. He keeps in mind all the targets assigned by the organization and ultimately leads the team towards success. Researches in educational management area implies that administrators and head teachers who are dedicated in shaping the school environment favorable for learning can accelerate school effectiveness (Awan & Zaidi, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Good principals raise students' achievement (Dhuey & Smith, 2014) and students' achievement is no doubt the ultimate focus of every institution. Effective instructional leaders play a critical role in providing support to their colleagues and cultivating acceptance for change (Klar, 2013).

Instructional leadership can be defined as the category of leadership functions directly linked to supporting and helping student learning and classroom teaching (Murphy, 1988). According to Southworth (2002), leadership focusing on teacher behaviors for improvement of pupils' learning is instructional leadership. Many researchers focus various facets of Instructional leadership e.g., visiting classrooms, setting goals and objectives, managing classrooms and utilizing instructional time economically. The strong instructional leaders remain involved with instructional issues and curriculum implementation most of the time, work with teachers with pleasure, and remain present and visible in classrooms. Instructional leadership concept has been a focus of researchers for last five decades and is not being faded away (Hallinger, 2005) due

to its importance and relevance.

Eisner (2002) proposes that minimum 1/3 of principals' time should be spent in classrooms. According to Bartell cited in Cotton (2003) exceptional principals should do their utmost efforts to encourage, facilitate, support, reward, motivate, and recognize good teaching (p.44). Providing feedback on instruction is an important element of instructional leadership in which monitoring, evaluation and coaching of teachers is done on regular basis to increase their performance. Qualitative studies have related instructional feedback from principals, particularly noted in class observations, to teacher reflection, development, and effectiveness.

The instructional role of heads is being considered phenomenal for effective schools (Peterson & Lezotte, 1991). Peterson & Lezotte explain that instructional leaders focus on the responsibilities of principals which they use in developing productive work setting for teachers and suitable learning situations for students. Heads are instructional leaders when they focus more on teaching and learning activities and spend more time in improving students learning.

Cotton (2003) described and emphasized major characteristics of instructional leadership which include, persistently seeking for high levels of student learning, launching a standard of incessant improvement, facilitating discussion of instructional issues and problems. Moreover, it also comprises observing classrooms repeatedly and giving feedback to teachers. Instructional leadership also respects teacher autonomy, protects instructional time, supports teachers' risk taking, provides opportunities and activities for staff development, supplies all available resources, such as time and materials, monitors student progress, uses data of student performance to develop plans, programs and strategies, recognizes students and teachers' achieved targets and devises appropriate, desired and model behavior. All these aspects are part and parcel of instructional leadership and are deeply concerned with the head teachers. Effective leader and competent head teachers utilize these tools for the quality education and achievement of desired targets.

Studies have been carried out on instructional role of principals (Kruger, 2003; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Southworth, 2002). The literature examined the instructional role of heads in improving learning and teaching in public sector secondary schools from different dimensions (Naz, Awan, & Nasreen, 2009) and found it undeniable. The progress of school depends on the shoulders of principals. Keeping this reality in view this study intends to evaluate the role of heads as instructional leaders in public secondary schools of district Sargodha as perceived and viewed by the teachers.

Objectives

The fundamental objective of current study was to explore the principals' instructional leadership behaviors (in terms of a. defining the school mission, b. developing the school learning climate and c. managing the instructional program) in public sector secondary schools of Sargodha district, as perceived by the teachers. Moreover the group difference of principals' instructional leadership, on the basis of gender, and experience were also examined.

Methodology

The design of present study was descriptive. The questionnaire used to collect data was *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (Hallinger, 1982), having 50 items on 10 subscales. The questionnaire measured ten functions of three domains of instructional leaders (see figure 1). The data were collected from District Sargodha. Fifty schools were selected randomly and the sample for this research study was 200 teachers (4 teachers from each school) who were selected conveniently. The return rate was eighty five percent as the researchers received 169 questionnaires back. The tool used in this study has been used by the researchers in more than 250 studies in thirty different countries and had been found valid and reliable (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this study was calculated and presented in table 1.

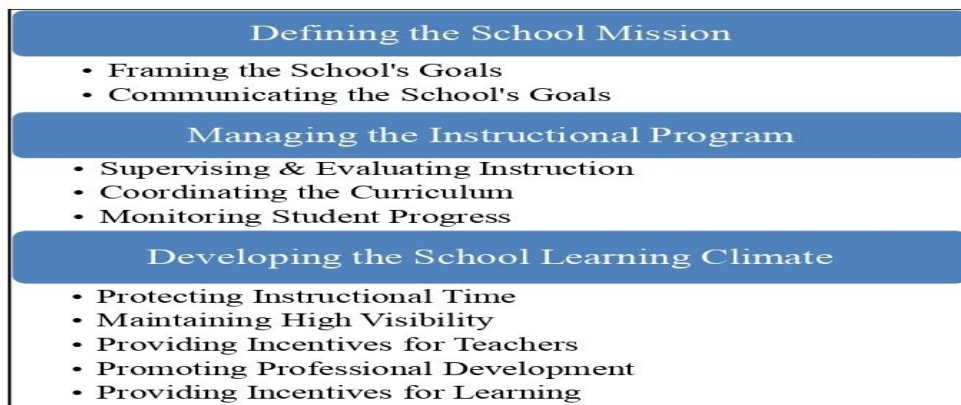


Figure 1 *Instructional Leadership Framework by Hallinger and Murphy, (1985)*

Results

Analysis of Variance and *t* test were employed to analyze the data with SPSS. Only the significant results were reported here in terms of experience of the teachers.

Table 1

Mean analysis of factors of instructional leadership

SN	Name of Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability Coefficients
1	Framing Goals	18.83	5.41	.897
2	Communicating Goals	18.54	4.99	.840
3	Supervising Instruction	19.02	4.77	.845
4	Curriculum Coordination	19.85	4.44	.843
5	Monitoring Progress	20.18	4.43	.812
6	Instructional Time	19.60	4.43	.841
7	High Visibility	19.01	4.77	.859
8	Teachers' Incentives	19.44	5.09	.850
9	Professional Development	19.36	4.53	.855
10	Students' Incentives	19.64	4.83	.874

The mean values in table 1 indicate that the principals scored high on all sub scales of Instructional Leadership as minimum value for all scales was 5 and maximum was 25. The highest mean value 20.18 indicates that the principals monitor the progress of students on priority bases. The lowest mean values (18.54 & 18.83) indicate that the principals had comparatively less role in framing the goals of the schools and communicating those goals to the teachers and students. The above table also explains the cronbach alpha values of all factors which are all more than .80 and are in acceptable range.

Table 2

Mean and SD for weaker area of Instructional Leaders

Factors	Functions	Mean	SD
1	Securing staff input on goal development	3.61	1.35
	use of students' performance data for developing academic goals	3.67	1.32
2	Visible display of the schools' academic goals	3.61	1.25
	reference of school's goals in students assemblies	3.69	1.34
3	Feedback of strengths of teachers in instructional practices	3.60	1.25
4	Responsibility for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels	3.76	1.29
5	Discussion of academic results for curricular strengths and weaknesses.	3.95	1.24
	Informing teachers about performance in the written form	3.86	1.36
6	Limiting interruptions in instructional time	3.83	1.18
	Students are not called to the office during instructional time	3.89	1.23
7	Talking informally with students and teachers during break time	3.64	1.19
	Providing direct instruction to classes	3.59	1.37
8	Reinforcing superior performance by teachers in staff, meetings etc.	3.83	1.39
	Complimenting teachers privately for their performance	3.69	1.36
9	Leading or attending teacher in-service activities	3.79	1.22
	sharing ideas or information from in-service activities	3.74	1.24
10	Recognize students work with formal reward	3.74	1.10

Table 2 reflects the ignored functions of heads in teaching and learning. All those items whose mean was lesser than the average score of that particular factor were discussed here. All the mean values reported in the table were much higher than the mid-point which was 3 and it suggested that all these instructional functions were being practiced but with relatively less emphasis. Many heads

were not making need assessment and there was less input from teachers' side in developing the goals. Heads were neglecting the display of academic goals in schools and were ignoring the discussion of mission and goals in school assemblies. School heads and principals were identifying the weaknesses of teachers but were ignoring the feedback on strengths in teachers' instructional practices. Coordination of curriculum across grade levels was not clear. Academic results of the students were not always discussed with the teachers both verbally and in written form. Heads were less thoughtful of saving students' instructional time as they used to call students in the office during classes. There was less informal talk of heads with teachers and students during breaks and recess and heads were not involved directly in classroom teaching. Superior performance of teachers was less acknowledged. Heads were less involved in attending in-service activities concerned with instruction. There were less formal rewards for the students for their superior performance.

Table 3

Gender Difference for all factors of instructional leadership

N	Factors	Gender	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig.	S	Mean Diff	
10	Framing Goals	Male	9	3.8	1.0	.383	.7	.03	.064	
		Femal	3	0	05					
	e	Communicating Goals	Male	7	3.7	1.1	-1.231	.2	20	-.190
			Femal	6	3	.73				
		e	Male	9	3.6	1.0				
			Femal	3	2	48				
10	Supervising Instruction	Male	7	3.8	.92	-1.949	.0	53	-.285	
		Femal	6	1	8					
	e	Curriculum Coordination	Male	9	3.6	.98	.061	.9	51	.008
			Femal	3	8	3				
		e	Male	7	3.9	.90				
			Femal	6	6	0				
10	Students' Progress	Male	9	3.9	.89	-.680	.4	98	-.093	
		Femal	3	9	9					
	e	Instructional Time	Male	7	4.0	.87	.467	.6	41	.064
			Femal	6	9	3				
		e	Male	9	3.9	.92				
			Femal	3	5	9				
10	Remaining highly Visible	Male	7	3.8	.83	-3.072	.0	02	-.443	
		Femal	6	8	5					
	e	Teachers' Incentives	Male	9	3.6	1.0	-1.672	.0	96	-.262
			Femal	3	0	23				
		e	Male	7	4.0	.80				
			Femal	6	4	6				
10	Professional Development	Male	9	3.7	.97	-2.660	.0	09	-.366	
		Femal	3	1	9					
	e	Students' Incentives	Male	7	4.0	.76	-3.987	.0	00	-.571
			Femal	6	7	7				
		e	Male	9	3.6	1.1				
			Femal	3	7	22				
0		Male	7	4.2	.60					
		Femal	6	4	6					

Table 3 indicated that *t*-value was significant for Maintaining high Visibility $t(167) = -3.072$, $p = 0.002$, Professional Development $t(167) = -2.660$, $p = 0.009$, and Providing Incentives for Learning $t(167) = -3.987$, $p = 0.000$. It was determined that there existed significant gender differences in teachers' views and females were having positive views for these three factors about their heads. It was also evident from the results that female heads were focusing more on instruction as compared to their male counterparts securing high mean in seven of the above mentioned factors.

Table 4*One way ANOVA comparing instructional leadership by experience of teachers*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Instructional Supervision	Between Groups	20.300	4	5.075	6.272	.000
	Within Groups	132.697	164	.809		
	Total	152.998	168			
Curriculum Coordination	Between Groups	9.645	4	2.411	3.220	.014
	Within Groups	122.807	164	.749		
	Total	132.452	168			
Instructional Time	Between Groups	24.509	4	6.127	9.360	.000
	Within Groups	107.357	164	.655		
	Total	131.866	168			
Overall Instructional Leadership	Between Groups	5.601	4	1.400	2.735	.031
	Within Groups	83.962	164	.512		
	Total	89.562	168			

The above table indicates that F -values were significant for Instructional Supervision $F(4,164) = 5.075$, $p = 0.000$, Curriculum Coordination $F(4,164) = 3.220$, $p = 0.014$, protecting instructional time $F(4,164) = 9.360$, $p = 0.000$, and overall Instructional Leadership $F(4,164) = 2.735$, $p = 0.031$.

Table 5*LSD Post Hoc test for instructional leadership by experience of teachers*

Factors	(I) Experience	(J) Experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Instructional Supervision	5-9	2-4	.743*	.003
	More than 15	10-15	.637*	.006
	More than 15	2-4	.850*	.000
Curriculum Coordination	5-9	2-4	.629*	.000
	More than 15	2-4	.525*	.006
	More than 15	10-15	.408*	.031
Instructional Time	5-9	2-4	.750*	.000
	10-15	2-4	.770*	.000
	More than 15	2-4	1.043*	.000
Overall Instructional Leadership	5-9	2-4	.401*	.010
	More than 15	2-4	.466*	.003

LSD test revealed significant differences in the perception of more experienced teachers as compared to newly inducted teachers with less experience. Experienced teachers explained that their heads focus more on instructional activities.

Findings

- Overall heads were practicing instructional leadership in their schools as perceived by their teachers. Teachers specified that the principals were monitoring the progress of students on priority basis; they were coordinating the curriculum, and were giving time to instructional activities. The heads were keen in encouraging the professional development of their teachers and were offering incentives to the teachers and students.
- Instructional functions being relatively less emphasized were; less input from teachers' side in developing the goals, neglecting the display and discussion of academic goals in schools, identifying the weaknesses of teachers but ignoring the feedback on strengths, being less thoughtful of saving students' instructional time, less informal talk of heads with students and teachers during breaks, no direct involvement in classroom teaching, not acknowledging superior performance of teachers, being less involved in in-service activities and less formal rewards for the students for their superior performance.
- There were significant gender differences in the perception of teachers and females were having positive views for their heads about instructional supervision and evaluation. They remain highly visible and were endorsing professional development opportunities. Female heads were also providing incentives to the students for their learning and achievement. It was evident that females were better instructional leaders in comparison with male heads.
- More experience teachers thought differently and more positively about their heads instructional leadership as compared to the newly inducted teachers/less experienced teachers. Experienced teachers explained that their heads were giving more attention to instructional activities.

Discussion

The findings exposed that heads were practicing instructional leadership in their schools. They were aware about their instructional role and were keen about bringing improvement in schools. Gurley, et al., (2016) gave the same findings regarding the views of teachers about their heads. This study was done in public schools so this finding is contrary to another study (Naz et al., 2009) depicting that private schools were more concerned for instructional improvement, whereas public schools' head teachers were quite careless for instructional improvement. In a study in Singapore middle management teams were playing more active roles in curriculum implementation and classroom instruction, as compared to the school principals (Ng, et al., 2015). Shake (2019) also states that school principals show inadequate direct involvement in instructional leadership at schools. Likewise Hornig, et al., (2010) asserts that principals spent only about ten percent of their time in instruction related tasks, such as doing classroom observations, and other broader instructional activities. Graczewski, et al., (2009) found an association between aspects of instructional leadership and effective professional development. Hallinger (2005) concludes that instructional leaders were leading through defining the mission of schools and were managing institutions by increasing alignment of activities with the mission and goals (p. 229), whereas this study reflects that heads were having very little role in framing and setting school goals.

Although all these instructional functions were being practiced but some were performed with relatively less emphasis so weaker areas of heads in teaching and learning were also specified. Findings suggest that there was no need assessment and less input from teachers' side in developing the goals, which is quite understandable as plans and policies in Pakistan are made at top level and middle level and lower level management is only responsible for implementation of those policies (Govt. of Pakistan, 2017) but ignoring the display of academic goals in schools and discussion in school assemblies is a severe negligence which needs attention of policy makers. Identification of the weaknesses of teachers for the purpose of rectification and improvement is good but providing the feedback on strengths in the form of acknowledgement and giving incentives for the superior performance of teachers, is equally important which ultimately increases motivation. Research gives the evidence that incentives do work and motivates the employees to produce exceptional outcomes (Eberts, Hollenbeck, & Stone, 2000). Heads' informal talk with teachers and students during breaks is a big tool for building a culture of trust which helps in making environment conducive for learning. A positive relationship between management, teachers and students, allows students to feel safe and get engaged in the process of learning (Young, Jean, & Citro, 2018) Heads were not directly involved in classroom teaching and this hinders in having first-hand knowledge of many issues and problems being faced by the students and teachers. This finding coincide with Kruger (2003) who asserts that the principals' direct involvement in instructional matters was almost non-existent, but they were influencing the culture of teaching and learning. Another study explained two big effective areas of instructional leadership; conversation of the heads with the teachers to encourage reflective practices, and supporting teachers professional growth and development (Blase & Blase, 2000). This study makes it clear that heads were encouraging professional development of teachers but they were not leading the in-service activities and were less involved in professional development activities themselves. There were less formal rewards for the students for their superior performance, perhaps because of deficiency of funds or for other unknown reasons.

There were significant gender differences in the perception of teachers. It was evident that female heads were comparatively better instructional leaders. Female heads were being considered better in instructional supervision, being visible, creating developmental opportunities professionally, and in provision of incentives to the students. They used to discuss academic results of the students, with the teachers to identify weaknesses of students and of curriculum. In a study by Hallinger, Dongyu, and Wang (2016) significant gender differences were confirmed in instructional leadership of heads of 28 studies which had used PIMRS. Same was the case of a study by Shaked et al., (2018) who found gender differences in two dimensions of instructional leadership. The results of this meta-analytical research revealed that female principals were involved in more dynamic instructional leadership roles than male principals. Literature is reporting these findings persistently, that female

principals are obtaining consistently higher ratings on scales of instructional leadership when comparisons are made with male heads (Ali, 2013; Hallinger et al., 2016).

There were significant differences in teachers' perception of experienced teachers about their heads instructional role as compared to newly inducted teachers. Experienced teachers elucidated that their heads were giving more attention to students work and spending more time in supervising instructional activities. They were encouraging the teachers to utilize their time for practicing new methodologies and skills, and were giving them feedback after evaluating instructional practices. This result contradicts (Ali, 2013; Hallinger et al., 2016) who concluded no significant differences in the employees' views for different demographics. Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) study which evaluated the merits and drawbacks of instructional leadership, determined that employees with varied experience had differing perception about instructional leadership. On the contrary a study by Despres (2007) found that most of the teachers had same type of experience with their principals. A study conducted by (Carrier, 2014) established similar conclusions about instructional leadership effectiveness. He found out that most of the head and teachers opined that heads did not play any significant role in improving learning and teaching based on experience, gender and qualification. Similarly Ng (2013) concludes that the teachers belonging to different schools at different positions had different perception about contribution of instructional leadership in the development of schools. Researches also reveal the fact that the principals trying to engage in instructional leadership were experiencing barriers about budgeting and staffing (Gawlik, 2018) Terosky (2016) asserts that instructional leadership require time and planning for heads and staff, and needs teacher empowerment.

Conclusion

The study results help in conclusion that generally heads were focusing instructional activities in public secondary schools of Sargodha. Female were better instructional heads in their role for improving instructional process in schools. It was also established that more experienced teachers were pleased with their heads role as instructional leaders. School principals were having direct contact with teachers, students and were monitoring teaching process by watching and observing the classrooms. Although, they were thoughtful of developing schools by executing school goals through close supervision of class room activities, and by encouraging both teachers and students but they were having very little role in delineating and framing school goals.

It is suggested that the policy makers should realize the importance of instructional leadership and should devise a complete plan to implement instructional leadership at all school levels. It is recommended that training workshops should be organized to inculcate the instructional behaviors among head teachers and teachers. Heads may be trained for delivering their role as instructional leader effectively and for designing instructional strategies efficiently to improve teaching and learning process.

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