School Heads as Instructional Leaders: Enhancing Educational Outcomes at Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates secondary school educators' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices employed by school heads, acknowledging the critical role such practices play in enhancing institutional effectiveness and student academic achievement. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study adopted a descriptive survey approach to address its objectives. A sample of 165 secondary school teachers from Karachi was selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS Version 22, employing frequency distributions, percentage analysis, and standard deviation. The findings indicate that teachers were generally satisfied with the instructional leadership practices of their school heads. Most participants emphasized the importance of the head-teachers' roles in providing instructional resources, safeguarding instructional time, maintaining visibility within the school environment, and offering opportunities for professional development. Moreover, participants perceived their school heads as effectively fulfilling these responsibilities. It is recommended that school heads continue to prioritize providing instructional resources and expand professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' professional growth and instructional focus.

INTRODUCTION

Instructional leadership refers to the guidance, materials, and assistance administrators give teachers to improve teaching and learning (Tan, 2012). In order to enhance and accomplish the school's goals, instructional leadership involves guiding and motivating instructors to practice and modify the curriculum (Naseer, et al., 2018). It involves understanding expectations, communicating goals, and persuading educators to contribute to academic success. The variety of tasks that make up instructional leadership was characterized by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2001), and it included helping teachers directly, developing curricula and evaluating them, staff development, and group work.

According to Andrews and Soder (1987), the principal's responsibilities in instructional tasks include staff development matter, um development, and the implementation of the instructional program. It is evident from the principles and definitions that instructional leadership is a multifaceted and intricate construct. Combining the most widely studied and referenced dimensions and various variables into a single comprehensive construct of instructional leadership is challenging and crucial (Azhar, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). It is creating an all-encompassing instructional leadership paradigm that best suits a national and a global setting (Nawaz, et al., 2024; Khan, Hussain & Ahmad, 2023). The practice of instructional leadership remains scarce in educational institutions throughout Pakistan. Instructional leadership stands as a critical factor since it makes teaching and learning the top priorities of school functions (Chapman, 2004). The fundamental quality of instructional leaders is their ability to create natural environments that support the school's efficacy (Edmonds, 1982; Marks & Printy, 2003). It is generally true that school principals' choice of instructional strategies is based on their aptitude for and familiarity with teaching duties (Anderson, 2004).

The growth of teaching and learning finds support from a leadership approach known as instructional leadership. Other expressions for this concept include learner-centered leadership, pedagogical leadership lea, leadership for learning, and student-centered leadership (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024; Khoso, et al., 2024). School administrators execute these targeted, concentrated efforts to build excellent teaching outcomes and learning growth under instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003). The enhancement of instruction is the core reason for practicing instructional leadership (Fatima, Khan & Kousar, 2024; Huda, Khan & Afzal,

2024; Farooq, et al., 2021). Supervisors have long-established learning targets and instructional goals that drive students toward educational excellence (Imran, Zaidi, & Khanzada, 2023). The delivery of instructional recommendations and guidance for enhancing instruction is a leadership style that supports productive teaching methods and student learning achievement (Enueme & Egwunyenga, 2008). The techniques of instructional leadership involve creating student learning goals and supporting these objectives while monitoring progress and protecting classroom time for developing curricula, providing instructional help, and fostering teacher development. Researchers describe the impact of instructional leadership as indirect because this form of leadership does not provide direct teaching and learning services to students as classroom pedagogy does. The research investigated how school leaders in Karachi, Pakistan, taught their staff through instructional leadership techniques according to their teachers.

Research Objectives

➢ To examine teachers' perceptions about their school heads instructional leadership practices at the public secondary schools of Karachi, Pakistan.

➢ To assess the teacher's perceptions about their school heads instructional leadership practices from their demographics perspective at public secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan.

Research Questions

➢ What are the teachers' perceptions about their school heads instructional leadership practices at the public secondary schools of Karachi, Pakistan?

➢ What are the teacher's perceptions about their school heads instructional leadership practices from their demographics perspective at public secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan.

Literature Review

Instructional Leadership

Hallinger (2005) established a definition for instructional leadership: school leaders conduct planned interactions with their teachers to enhance their teaching capabilities. As Pansiri (2008) explains, the principal or headmaster fulfills this definition. As a change agent, this position promotes a positive culture and establishes raised standards for teachers and students (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024; Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023). The position monitors curriculum development alongside its management and oversight responsibilities for

developing instructional approaches. Through its establishment of communication channels, teachers can interact with instructors to develop superior training standards.

Various research projects have been executed to establish the validity of instructional leadership as a practice. As an illustration, Blasé and Blasé (2002) state that instructional leadership requires engaging in conversation with educators to foster self-reflection and the enhancement of teachers' capabilities as well as their professionalism. In addition, they argue that to provide effective instructional leadership, administrators or principals need to establish connections with teachers through various channels. Included in this category are activities such as instructing, guiding, providing guidance, providing criticism, shedding light on the way forward, expressing viewpoints, and expressing gratitude for the achievements and magnificence of teachers. In the meantime, Mansor, Mansor and Roslan, (2019) asserts that administrators and principals are overburdened with duties and obligations, which causes them to appear less focused, creative, and demanding when it comes to formulating and implementing programs that are intended to encourage students' academic achievement. Sultan, Karuppannan and Rumpod, (2022) suggest that principals and head teachers have the potential to exert either a direct or indirect influence on the academic achievement of students (Imran & Akhtar, 2023).

Some schools can function well even when the head teacher or principal is not present in the classrooms. Such changes occur for established reasons (Hafeez, Khan & Jabeen, 2024; Irshad, Khan & Mahmood, 2024; Khan, Sarfraz & Afzal, 2019). The execution of instructional leadership strategies focuses on creating school objectives while teaching students about high achievement standards, ranging classrooms for success, and distributing funds to supervise teaching methods to measure student progress and support a positive learning environment. Principals and head teachers obtain fundamental control over classroom teaching quality through their leadership actions (Ahmad, Ali & Sewani, 2021). A principal's standard instruction leadership duties involve implementing technology into educational practices, fostering professional conduct, and using data for educational decisions. The duties of the school leader encompass creating educational goals, furnishing educational materials, and overseeing curriculum requirements while performing monitoring tasks to assess teacher development and progress. Multiple research studies have established that principal

instructional leadership creates high-quality schools that produce stellar students (Hallinger, 2003; Zakariah, Ghani & Radzi, (2023).

Instructional Resources Provider

Leadership competence requires individuals to execute planning, coordination, and resource management with exactness and efficiency. The analysis investigates how well the principal organizes staff leader execution while stimulating their inspiration for better school performance (Bush, 2018). Effective school administrators understand student academic expansion while acknowledging that assessment results fall short of illustrating the whole education (Ahmad, et al., 2024; Mohammad, et al., 2024). Educational system components receive complete member evaluation while staff carry out their daily work and resolve new issues. Multiple daily work challenges occur because the institution handles numerous diverse tasks. A visionary leader dedicated to quality, diverse education delivery for students must have excellent communication abilities to pursue school directorship (Shoaib, et al., 2024; Zainab, et al., 2023). The new focus on educational responsibilities gives principals essential responsibility to connect their standard-based plans with proper execution across school sites. Teaching alongside learning procedures is substantially affected by the persistent standards that the state government has established. The school administrator's crucial impact on standards-based change implementation exists without adequate research into student views regarding their roles in supporting student success (Derrington & Campbell, 2018).

Schools run by principals whose teacher's rate highly as instructional leaders produced substantially better results than educational institutions under the management of principals with standard levels of instructional leadership. Academic achievement remains superior when teachers perceive their school leadership administrator as effective in instructional leadership rather than average (Aburizaizah, Kim & Fuller, 2016). Successful implementation of educational system changes demands that school administrators possess the necessary managerial skills, effective supervision methods, and instructional competencies. The program structure integrates a core subject, the management training curriculum. School administration roles and responsibilities have undergone fundamental changes in past times. Instructional leaders became the essential figures in educational institutions, except for managers and administrators, throughout the early 1980s. Educators conducted their activities while

prioritizing effective learning as their primary goal. The early 2000s significantly changed school managers' roles as instructional leaders because experts revealed that effective schools usually implement this leadership structure under their school heads (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Maintaining Visible Presence

Exceptional learning and test results are the result of exceptional instruction. Inadequate test results suggest inadequate instruction. Instructors and students are compressed, and we lose sight of the essence of education when a more intricate concept is allocated less time, money, space, and value. Being present means active engagement with learners' and groups' mental, emotional, and physical functions within their education environment. Being present as an educator requires responding to patients with both deliberate consideration and compassionate actions. Reflective instruction necessitates presence rather than a collection of behaviors or abilities. Self-awareness, trust, compassion, and interpersonal relationships are essential. This essay aims to establish the significance of presence in the education of students and instructors. In order to establish a theoretical foundation for teacher education and professional development, we define and examine presence in teaching. In light of the current educational climate, characterized by positivism, uniformity, and quantification, what is the appropriate stance for a discourse that prioritizes the subjective, qualitative experiences of the individuals who reside in schools? The formation of authentic learning experiences, classroom life interactions, affective and cognitive exchanges between students and instructors, and a welcoming school climate are all at risk due to contemporary educational trends. According to research, the capacity to trust what they know, motivation, engagement, and student achievement are all influenced by teacher-student connections (Ahmad, Ali & Sewani, 2021).

Sarmad, Iqbal, Ali, and ul Haq (2018) this research suggests that the character of these relationships is crucial for acquiring knowledge. This interaction necessitates the teacher's cognitive, physical, emotional, and relational capabilitie (Hanif, et al., 2021; Hanif, Naveed & Rehman, 2020)s. Presence is seldom explicitly taught in teacher education programs, included on certification lists, or discussed by pre- and in-service supervisors, despite its critical role in learning and teaching (Garrison & Rud, 1995). This teacher understood and addressed our learning requirements, strengths, and experiences. The pupil experiences observation and comprehension in an emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual sense (Kayani, et al., 2023;

Khan, et al., 2021). It is the excitement of self-discovery within the context of the broader world rather than the apprehension of losing oneself in the process.

Protecting Instructional Time

Enough time should be allotted in schools for instruction and learning. Several factors, including tardiness, unforeseen closings of schools, issues with inadequate facilities, absences from instructors and students, ineffective classroom management techniques, excessive test-taking time, teacher attrition, and retention issues, can bring this on. Attendance and scheduling: By ensuring that teachers and students arrive at school on time and adhere to other timetables, teachers and students can teach for longer. Khattak et al. (2011) School administrators can extend instructional time by keeping an eye on teachers while they are in the classroom, enforcing rules about teacher and student attendance, scheduling frequent inspection visits, and boosting school commitment through an incentive program. If educators have access to continual professional development opportunities, mentorship, and surveys regarding job satisfaction, they can reduce absenteeism and increase motivation. Efficient preventative and intervention strategies enable teachers to build learning environments where instructional time and time on task become more productive. Teachers utilize these strategies to achieve effective classroom management: 1) teacher-directed activities enhance structure; 2) expectations require communication, teaching, and observing as well as reinforcement; 3) direct student engagement and interaction; and 4) positive behavior rewards and negative behavior diverts (Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2021). The activities contribute to producing both positive learning results and effective instructional processes.

Pre-service teachers who receive evidence-driven training about pedagogical expertise, content mastery, and educational interaction techniques enhance both instruction duration and quality. Due to low self-efficacy, teaching time may be wasted when teachers need more support to teach and apply classroom management techniques. Because of this, educators must acquire the abilities necessary to manage a classroom well before they begin employment. These abilities are demonstrated by a teacher who teaches fluidly, provides students with various learning opportunities (such as), and gives them time during classes to reflect, process information, and reply (Ahmad, Thomas & Hamid, 2020).

Professional Development

Professionals consider PD as a foundational element that improves teaching excellence and academic achievements for students. The fundamental task of instructional leadership performed by school heads facilitates the delivery of purposeful professional learning opportunities to teachers. School administrators following instructional leadership principles go beyond management roles to create instructional advancement by teaching teachers enhanced pedagogical approaches and reflective practices and classroom strategy development. The key aspect of instructional leadership according to Hallinger (2005) involves fostering a constructive learning environment together with active participation in the professional advancement of teachers. This leadership approach delivers PD as a fundamental component which actively integrates into the strategic process of school enhancement (Ahmad, Ali & Sewani, 2021).

Study results demonstrate how effective instructional leaders dedicate themselves to professional development by defining objectives and financing educational methods and developing environments which combine teamwork and ongoing enhancement. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) demonstrate that leaders who lead through instruction give better attention to prolonged job-embedded professional development which supports instruction along with school improvement plans (Hanif, et al., 2021; Hanif, Naveed & Rehman, 2020). As leaders focus on collective efficacy they create an environment of professional learning communities (PLCs) which includes peer observations and collaborative inquiry supported by their position as school head. As a leader the role extends to showing exemplary practices and giving guidance to staff members to use data for instructional improvement through collaborative conversations (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) the level of success PD achieves depends heavily on the way it integrates with the overall instructional structure and the school environment. The high-quality professional development model proposed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) includes content-focused activities combined with active learning and collaborative sessions which instructional leaders need to actively promote (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024; Imran, Sultana, & Ahmed, 2023). Service leaders should involve themselves in teacher need assessments by conducting observations while using student outcomes and

constructive discussions to develop targeted professional development. Instructional leaders use professional development as a platform to develop teachers into capable instructors against the backdrop of their responsibilities. Instructional leaders should empower staff members to take charge of workshops while mentoring colleagues and joining essential decisions about curriculum and instruction content. The development enhances teacher growth and promotes teacher ownership to maintain teaching practice improvement standards (Guskey, 2002).

Effective instructional leaders operate as the connection points which transfer external professional learning resources to meet the requirements of their schools. Naseer, Haq, and Farooq (2018) their schools receive targeted training programs which they secure through partnerships with external experts and education departments and universities. PD initiatives need their assessment and evaluation from these leaders to verify that the programs deliver improved instructional methods. The existence of strong instructional leaders serves as a critical factor that enables transformative professional development because leaders maintain focus on student success through development plans and feedback systems (Timperley, 2011).

Methodology

The research design contains sections detailing the instrument and methods in addition to the population, sample size, sample procedure, design, data collection, and data analysis. Secondary school instructors who work in District Korangi Karachi formed the study population, which was examined using a straightforward descriptive survey approach for data collection (Shah, et al., 2025; (Rehan, et al., 2024; Imran, et al., 2023). A research sample of secondary school instructors received an assessment survey about their understanding of school heads leading through instruction using simple random sampling. The research included secondary school educators working in Karachi District Korangi of Pakistan, both male and female. The selection of 165 secondary school instructors from Korangi District included both male and female participants. The assessment of educators' views about school leaders' instructional leadership activities relied on the instructional leadership questionnaire (ILQ), which contains twenty survey items. Akram, Kiran, together with İLĞAN (2017), developed this instrument. Two hundred questionnaires were given out to educational staff members. The participants were required to thoroughly read the statements before selecting their choices on the five-point Likert scale. The research questionnaire was divided into two sections. The gender,

qualifications, and experience of teachers were asked about in the first section of the questionnaire. In the second part, they were inquired about their opinions regarding their school head instructional leadership approach as school heads in Karachi, Pakistan. One hundred sixty-five instructors participated in the study, although a few declined to join, whereas missing responses were eliminated from the analyzed data. The participation rate stood at 82.5%. The scale's reliability was 0.768 based on a pilot study conducted beforehand. The full-scale reliability appears in Table 1:

Table 1:   Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.857	20

Analysis of Data

The gathered data entered SPSS version 22 for frequency and percentage evaluation. Descriptive statistics combined with frequency analysis and percentage distributions were used to research the obtained data.

Findings

Demographics

Table 2 presents various demographic groups and corresponding information regarding the research participants. As can be seen in the chart, the results of this study reveal that 55 percent of female instructors and 45 percent of male teachers participated in the study. To add insult to injury, a sizeable percentage of educators, precisely 54 percent, had between one and ten years of experience working in education. Furthermore, most educators, precisely 51 percent, held a doctorate.

Table 2:   Demographics of Study

Demographics		Frequency.	Percent.
Gender	Male	75	45%
	Female	90	55%
	Total	165	100%
	1-10 years	90	54%
	11-20 years	55	34%

Experience	21 years and above	20	12%
	Total	165	100%
	Graduation	84	51%
	Masters	63	38%
Qualification	M Phil.	18	11%
	Total	165	100%

Table 3:   Instructional Resources Provider (IRP)

S. No	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	IRP1	165	4.540	0.889
2.	IRP2	165	4.644	0.922
3.	IRP3	165	4.577	0.904
4.	IRP4	165	4.454	0.899
5.	IRP5	165	4.346	0.871
	Overall Instructional Resources Provider	165	4.512	0.902

This information is presented in Table 3, which displays the teachers' perspectives regarding their perception about their school head as instructional resources provider for teachers in the school to carry out their daily classroom activities at public secondary schools. Participants in the study gave the question, referred to as "IRP-2," the highest possible score of 4.644, followed by IRP-3 (4.577), IRP-1 (4.540), IRP-4 (4.454), and IRP-5 (4.346), which comes after this. From the respondents' point of view, the total mean score for their school head as an instructional resources provider of teachers in school heads instructional leadership was 4.512.

Table 4:   Maintaining Visible Presence (MVP)

S. No	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	MVP1	165	4.326	0.893
2.	MVP2	165	4.436	0.904
3.	MVP3	165	4.422	0.887
4.	MVP4	165	4.334	0.879
5.	MVP5	165	4.278	0.844
	Overall Maintaining Visible Presence	165	4.359	0.869

Table 4 presents the evaluation of secondary school teachers who assessed their school head visibility during teaching activities in Karachi, Pakistan. The survey data indicates that MVP-2 achieved the highest average rating of 4.436 from teachers before MVP-3 with 4.422 while MVP-4 received 4.334 and MVP-1 scored 4.326 and MVP-5 came at 4.278. The educators judged their high-level administrator's teaching supervision frequency in Karachi secondary schools to receive an average rating of 4.359.

Table 5: Professional Development (PD)

S. No	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	PD_1	165	4.344	0.933
2.	PD_2	165	4.542	0.924
3.	PD_3	165	4.546	0.917
4.	PD_4	165	4.446	0.903
5.	PD_5	165	4.367	0.924
Professional Development Overall		**165**	**4.449**	**0.929**

Table 5 demonstrates secondary school teacher's perception about professional development opportunities provided by their school head at the secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan. Teachers put the PD_3 at the highest level with an average score of 4.546, followed by "PD_2" (4.542), PD_4 (4.446), PD_5 (4.367) and PD_1 with a mean score of 4.344 obtained from participants regarding their perception about professional development opportunities provided by their school head at secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan. Overall, teacher's perception about professional development opportunities provided by their school head at the secondary level was at 4.449.

Table 6: Protect Instructional Time (PIT)

S. No	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	PIT_1	165	4.456	0.885
2.	PIT_2	165	4.450	0.884
3.	PIT_3	165	4.612	0.905
4.	PIT_4	165	4.442	0.893
5.	PIT_5	165	4.348	0.889

Protect Instructional Time Overall	165	4.461	0.914

Table 6 shows the results of the teachers about their school head regarding protecting their instructional time during teaching in the classroom at secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan. Teachers put PIT_3 at the highest level with a mean score of 4.612, followed by PIT_1 having mean scores (4.456), PIT_2 (4.450), PIT_4 (4.442) and PIT_5 (4.348) at the lowest level by secondary school teachers. Overall, teachers in Karachi, Pakistan, thought that their school head protect their instructional time in instructional leadership practices at the secondary level, with a mean score of 4.461.

Table 7:   Factor wise Instructional Leadership

S. No	Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Instructional Resources Provider	165	4.512	0.903
2.	Maintaining Visible Presence	165	4.359	0.869`
3.	Professional Development	165	4.449	0.929
4.	Protect Instructional Time	165	4.461	0.914
5.	Instructional Leadership Overall	165	4.445	0.923

Table 7 shows the views secondary school educators hold about the instructional leadership activities undertaken by their school principal. Secondary school educators perceived "instructional resources provider" as the most crucial role for their school heads delivering 4.512 points on average. School managers received an average rating of 4.461 on their ability to defend instructional time for teachers yet their methods to provide professional development earned a mean of 4.449. The practice of school leaders being noticeably present in the facility earned teachers the lowest rating with 4.359 at secondary level educational institutions in Karachi Pakistan. Nevertheless teachers displayed considerable contentment with their current school leaders' instructional leadership practices because their mean score reached 4.445.

Discussion

Considering the demographics of the respondents, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion was female public secondary teachers (55%), with work experience ranging from 1 to 10 years (54%) and a majority qualifying for Graduation (51%). The survey findings indicated that public secondary school educators demonstrated perceptions regarding the instructional leadership practices of their school administrators (Hafeez, Khan & Jabeen, 2024; Irshad, Khan

& Mahmood, 2024; Khan, Sarfraz & Afzal, 2019). The outcomes of the educators: Most teachers indicated that they viewed their school head as an effective provider of instructional resources. Most educators agreed that secondary school head teacher's possessed authority in managing their institutions, ensuring the availability of instructional resources, maintaining a prominent presence, safeguarding instructional time, and fostering professional development. The research analysis showed that teachers boost their instructional quality when they make full utilization of classroom resources. At the secondary level, the educator employs his unique abilities to convey knowledge to the students. Instructional leadership serves as the pivotal element in facilitating the achievement of learning objectives, effectively opening the pathways to success. Akram, Kiran, and Illegan (2017) concluded that inadequate communication from school leadership transforms straightforward information into complex terminology, ultimately leading to ineffective learning. It serves as a crucial element that enables students to attain comprehension. To enhance student achievement, it is imperative to employ effective instructional leadership strategies that foster a positive learning environment within the school. Hallinger (2005) concluded that teachers who effectively deliver lesson content are recognized for achieving positive outcomes by providing appropriate instructional resources. The professional development of educators in instructional practices significantly influences students' academic performance, motivation, and confidence (Walker & Hallinger 2015). School leaders facilitating professional development opportunities for their educators tend to yield superior outcomes within their institutions and significantly improve students' academic achievements. The study's findings indicated that all four dimensions of instructional leadership namely, providing instructional resources, safeguarding instructional time, maintaining high visibility, and facilitating professional development opportunities for educators demonstrated a significant correlation with students' academic performance (Derrington & Campbell, 2018). The findings align with the research conducted by Bush (2018), indicating a significant correlation between school head instructional leadership and student achievement.

Recommendations

The proposed recommendations emerge from the study findings together with its conclusions.

➢ Instructional leadership practices from school heads generate student learning growth through allocated educational resources to teachers. All school heads should give their teachers

suitable instructional resources to boost teacher motivation together with student academic performance.

➢ The research results established that classroom teaching performance improves when school leaders visit classrooms frequently thus protecting instructional intervals. Every school administrator must focus on teaching activities while protecting instructor time by assigning them only operational responsibilities for education.

➢ Research findings showed that the sustained presence of school heads enables effective operation of school processes together with academic program delivery. The research supports the recommendation that school heads preserve their constant presence at schools because this action enables smooth academic activity completion.

➢ According to research findings professional teacher development stands as an essential responsibility which falls directly under school leader responsibilities. The role of school leaders comprises offering development opportunities to teachers which prompt them to implement seminars and workshops that build knowledge and enhance technological competencies.

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