



#### RESEARCH PAPER

### Driving Educational Institutions: A Case Study on Instructional Leadership in a Public School of Sindh, Pakistan

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Pir Suhail Ahmed Sarhandi , <sup>2</sup>Sana Mairaj Bugti and <sup>3</sup>Dr. Firdous Bugti

1. Registrar/Associate Professor, Office of Registrar, Aror University of Art, Architecture, Design & Heritage, Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Teacher Education, The Sheikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur, Sindh, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur Mir's, Sindh, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author:** registrar@aror.edu.pk

#### ABSTRACT

Leadership serves as a catalyst that significantly improves educational outcomes. Twenty first century principals are considered as instructional leaders. Instructional leadership is a crucial approach in educational management that aims to enhance teaching and learning within schools. It emphasizes the principal's responsibilities in establishing academic objectives, directing curriculum design, monitoring student learning progress, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the dimension of instructional leadership at a public school in district Khairpur. The philosophical view of this research comprised of constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. A principal and a senior teacher were purposively selected as samples of the study. The data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The collected data was analyzed thematically which yielded three major themes 1) Vision/Mission of the school, 2) Managing the instructional program and 3) Creating positive school climate. The study recommends that future studies may explore other dimensions of instructional leadership from the perspective of different models by acceding the population and by using different methodology.

**KEYWORDS** Leadership, Instructional Leader, Instructional Leadership, Instructional Practices, Dimensions of Instructional Leadership

#### Introduction

Leadership serves as a catalyst that significantly improves educational outcomes (Nadeem, 2024). It is an ability through which any system can make progress (Munna, 2023). Kilag et al. (2013) depicted that school leadership ranks as the second most influential factor that shapes student learning, after classroom teaching. Moreover, it is assumed that the leadership only concerns with the administrative and managerial task whereas it is more related to the quality of school organization and students' learning achievements. Effective school leadership will surely unleash the potential capacities that exist in stakeholders of school organization (Vaszkun & Sziráki, 2023). School leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape and ensuring the success of all the stakeholders of the institute. At the heart of effective school leadership lies the concept of "instructional leadership," which emphasizes the crucial responsibility of school administrators to focus on the core activities of teaching and learning (Alanoglu, 2022).

The core practices to lead the foundation of effective school leadership primarily focus on building vision, developing people, redesigning organization, and managing teaching programs (Bei & Alias, 2024). All successful school leaders employ a similar set of fundamental leadership practices that mainly focus on motivating staff and enhancing teachers' performance (Alanoglu, 2022). School leadership lead emphasis on the systematic planning to plan different techniques for improvement and motivation of teaching staff (Nawab, 2011). However, school leaders maintain consistent practices but

adapt their application based on specific contexts. The effectiveness of leadership depends on how well leaders combine established practices to suit their unique situations (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). This adaptability is crucial for leadership success across different school environments. Supriyadi and Hatmojo, (2020) portrayed that successful school leadership is indirectly associated with students' learning achievement by positively influencing teachers' performance. Leaders can shape the teachers' perception of their working environment by motivating and appreciating them. These improved perceptions subsequently enhance their performance and ultimately increase student learning achievement (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Based on the emerging concept of principals as instructional leaders the aim of the study was to explore the dimensions of Instructional Leadership in a public school of district Khairpur.

## **Literature Review**

### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership enables leaders to advance by enhancing both individual and collective abilities for effective teaching and learning. From a school-level viewpoint, instructional leadership primarily associated to principals, senior teachers, and non-teaching staff who are charged with leadership focused specifically on teaching and learning (Szeto, 2019). Instructional leadership fosters a shared sense of purpose, alignment, role clarity, and the capability to promote necessary improvements in student learning, as it encompasses a wide array of behaviours; no single leadership position or school leader can entirely fulfil the complete leadership function (Supriyadi & Hatmojo, 2020). The concept of instructional leadership has been recognized as a major factor in enhancing students' learning outcomes and inspiring teachers (Bush & Glover, 2014). Instructional leadership is defined as principals' direction and actions towards instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000). In broader perspective it includes all the managerial as well as leading behaviours that promote the growth of students learning in school (Hallinger et al., 2020). The narrow interpretation claims that instructional leadership is a separate concept from management and focuses on the actions that directly relates to teaching and learning process, noticeable behaviours and classroom supervision (Bush & Glover, 2014). The principals of 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered as instructional leaders (Louis et al., 2010). Cuban's (1988) depiction of the principal as an instructional leader illustrated the administrator as being deeply involved in educational activities. This portrayal emphasized the principal's dedication to creating a vision and bringing it to life. The principal fulfils the role of an instructional leader by setting school objectives, aligning the curriculum, fostering a safe learning environment, and overseeing classroom instruction (Maponya, 2015).

Principals, as educational leaders, are compelled to take on multiple responsibilities within schools. Research on school leadership sometimes characterizes a principal's role based on the interactions between leaders and their followers (Louis et al., 2010). Haris et al. (2017) indicates that effective principals should also be proficient instructional leaders that needs to be familiar of various areas such as curriculum development, instructional effectiveness, classroom supervision, staff development, and teacher assessment. Yasser and Amal (2015) concurs with this comprehensive and holistic perspective of a principal's responsibilities; however, he broadens this holistic interpretation of leadership and management to encompass an active and collaborative leadership style, where the principal engages with teachers to cultivate the school environment in alignment with shared objectives, collaboration among teachers, opportunities for teacher learning, teacher confidence, teacher dedication, and student achievement. Additionally, Hallinger (2011) highlights the major role for principals is to ensure the supportive system for teachers to promote instructional practices in classroom. His study also identifies that controlling, coordinating, and developing curriculum are the key aspects of principals' instructional leadership. Moreover, Noor and Nawab (2022)

depicted that modification in classroom level can bring the improvement in instructional classroom practices that aim to enhance students' academic achievement which ultimately develops the learning culture of institution.

### **Practices to promote Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leaders possess a deep understanding of the effective use of teaching methods across all grade levels. They recognize the needs and characteristics of the students within their schools. This comprehensive knowledge of instructional practices is a key trait that sets strong leaders apart from those who are less effective (Szeto, 2019). Instructional leadership is a crucial approach in educational management that aims to enhance teaching and learning within schools. It emphasizes the principal's responsibilities in establishing academic objectives, directing curriculum design, monitoring student learning progress, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere. Instructional leaders prioritize collaboration with teachers, offering constructive feedback to improve their teaching skills and support their professional growth. They also ensure and analyze students' performance to identify the key areas for improvement and implement the set interventions. These leaders aim to raise the academic standard and students' achievement across the school community by prioritizing instructional quality.

Leithwood (2021) pinpointed several instructional leadership practices such as establishing and setting goals, providing personalized support and promoting intellectual simulation to foster students' performance. Likewise, Robinson et al. (2008) indicated the three dimensions of instructional leadership practices that works to create and communicate the visions of institution, providing different resources and offer support to students along with this it helps to observe and assess teachers. Collectively, these studies imply a significant part of instructional leadership for teacher professional learning and student achievement. Instructional leadership practices are positively associated with growth culture and professional development of teachers. Instructional leadership practices that promoted a culture of continuous learning and provided professional development opportunities were positively associated with teacher learning and improvement.

Furthermore, Richards et al., (2018) observed that instructional leadership promoting coaching and feedback led to the development of the teachers. Robinson et al. (2008) research offers insights into the possible ways that will assist in the growth and development of teachers as they stress in that the support to the teachers is promoting their professional development. Liou and Daly (2014) have established that leadership for instruction for empowering teachers to participate in decision-making and grant decision-making authority to teachers was influential in increasing teacher learning and development. Instructional leadership support the teachers and encourage them to share information on their growth as professionals forging positive relationships between instructional leaders and teachers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The model that defines and measures the instructional role of the principal was proposed by Hallinger and Murphy. It commonly became famous with the name PIMRS framework which stands for the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger & Wang, 2013). This model highlights three different dimensions of instructional leadership role of principal. The first is defining a school mission, followed by, management of the instructional program and the third is developing a healthy school learning environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Defining a school mission includes two primary functions. firstly, it's highly important to formulate and set true school goals. Secondly it is equally important to

communicate those school goals to the staff and students at the school. This dimension elaborates that the role of principal is collectively working with the staff to meet the academic requirements of the students. Hence according to this dimension, the instructive leadership role of principal is to ensure that a proper school mission exists which is also communicated within the school. The second dimension is management of the instructional program which stands on three main leadership functions: coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instructions and monitoring student progress. Hence this dimension emphasizes the key leadership role of principal in managing coordination and control of the school system (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). Creating a healthy, positive and interactive environment in the school is the third and the most impactful dimension of instructive leadership role of principal. Protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development and maintaining high visibility are key functions of this dimension. Through fulfilment of these functions a successful academic hub, which ensures learning, empowerment and improvement, can be created.

Following the model of instructional leadership by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), PIMRS was used in current research to determine the principals' perception on instructional leadership in educational context. As this theoretical framework based on exploration of the three major dimensions of instructional leadership (Figure 1)

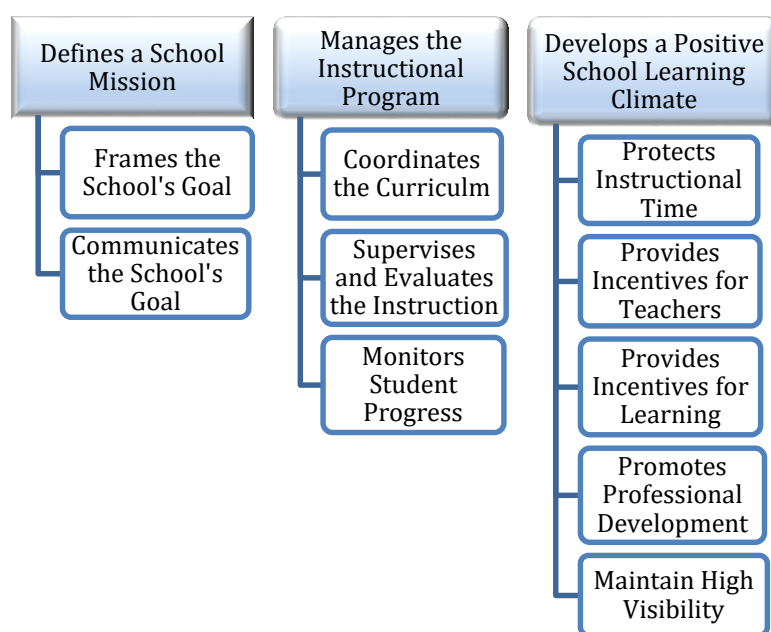


Figure 1. Three major dimensions of instructional leadership

## Material and Methods

### Research Philosophy

Ontology is the metaphysical concept of philosophy that believes that whatever exists has its purpose. Otoo (2020) defined ontology as the philosophical research based on existing things and their relation. It focuses on the principles of the social processes being examined and, on the belief, (Scotland, 2012). Constructivist ontology examines researchers' beliefs about the nature of existence that is and being constructed by individuals based on their experiences (Bryman, 2016). The current study focused on exploring the dimensions of instructional leadership at school level by conducting a case study of a public school in district Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan, therefore lies in the category of constructivist ontology. Secondly, the philosophy of epistemology concerns the question

of how we come to know, what we know (Scotland, 2012). Otoo (2020) defined epistemology as the description of how a person knows about the reality or truth that is considered knowledge. Interpretivist/Constructivist epistemology deals with the diverse interpreted realities of individuals (Bryman, 2016). This research study lies in the category of interpretivist/constructivist epistemology because through diverse experience the school principal construct knowledge about instructional leadership and its practices.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Primary data is considered first-hand data. It is collected from any source, mostly through surveys, interviews, case studies, and focused group discussions (Ajayi, 2017). In this study, primary data was collected from a school principal by using a semi-structured interview protocol with nine open-ended questions and probed to get more detailed answers. The tool was face validated by an expert. The interview lasted for 30 to 40 minutes and recorded by taking notes (ANNEXURE-A).

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The collected data from interview was initially recorded by taking notes, afterwards it was transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcribed data. The thematic analysis enables the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the patterns of meaning from data on participants' experiences related to the research questions.

### **Research Sampling**

The sampling procedure aims to get a representative sample for the study (Collins, 2017). For this case study, purposive sampling technique was adopted as Campbell et al., (2020) depicts that the logic and power of purposive sampling is based on the selection of information-rich cases for research. Coombs (2022) highlights three types of case study: single case study, multiple case study and, intrinsic case study. Single case study focusses on illustration of single bounded issue, multiple case study investigates various cases of an issue whereas intrinsic case study aims to explore uniqueness in a case itself (Crewell & Poth, 2018). Hence, an intrinsic case study was the best choice for this research because it explores the uniqueness in the case and provide an in-depth insight in a particular issue. So, the sample size of the current study was a principal and a senior teacher at a public school in district Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants of the study were informed about the motive of the research and their consent was taken before data collection. The collected data was used only for research purpose and the identity of the participants was kept confidential (Bhandari, 2023).

### **Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of instructional leadership at school level. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and it generated three major themes which highlights the three chief dimensions of instructional leadership.

### **Vision and Mission of School**

Vision and mission are forward-looking statements that capture the aim and core objectives to attain it. Without the vision and mission statements one can't define the

purpose of guiding institutional actions and goals. As principal shared her views on defining, formulating and communicating of vision/mission statement that:

*We don't have any statement of vision/mission but as far as our system is concerned, I have the vision to promote the quality education to our students at each level and I also communicate this to teachers in meetings. (Principal)*

Additionally, the senior teacher also pointed out that she was not aware of vision/mission statement as she mentioned that:

*Maybe it lies somewhere in documentation or school record, but I am not aware of formulation of vision or mission statement. (Head Teacher)*

According to data obtained from the principal and a senior teacher, the vision and mission statement for school was neither identified nor shared with the stakeholders of the schools but as per principal idea she had a vision and mission for school in her mind on which she planned her actions to attain some specific goals to promote the quality education.

### **Managing the instructional program**

The instructional leader prioritizes supervising and monitoring the instructions. It's all about having a continuous monitoring system to evaluate the effective instructional practices. The respondents exhibited their experiences as below:

*I am habitual to have a round of all school to ensure that either the instructional process is in progress or not. During this, sometimes I go into the class and observe the lesson for 5 to 10 mints otherwise I mostly observe the teaching and learning process from the corridor during the round. (Principal)*

*...for coordinating the curriculum practices and monitoring the course content we have an inspection day on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. On this day the inspection team visits the classes and monitors the progress of teachers that how much syllabus has been covered. (Principal)*

*As the inspection day is done on every 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, I had the meeting fixed for every 30<sup>th</sup> of the month with all the teachers. Meetings' agenda is to have the reflection on the inspection day. (Principal)*

*We have a distribution chart in which we mention our daily activities, it's like we collect the evidence of our teaching from lesson planning to the assessment tools and strategies we use in the class and this distribution chart is assessed by the inspection team on every 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. (Senior Teacher)*

*We get the feedback on the distribution chart and on the activities, we plan for different lessons from the inspection team in a meeting which is held on every 30<sup>th</sup> of the month. (Senior Teacher)*

According to the principal she regularly has a round of the school to ensure the smooth learning and pacing environment. She also monitors the curriculum practices by having an inspection day every month and a meeting to give feedback to the teachers. By supporting the statements of principal, the senior teacher also mentioned that after the inspection day, a meeting is called to get the reflection on status of completion of the curriculum and teaching practices. She further mentioned that teachers used to record and share their daily activity in daily diary according to the distribution chart, that reflects their progress and discussed and analyzed deeply in the meeting.

## Creating a positive School Climate

Instructional leaders create a positive school climate that motivates the teachers and students towards learning. Positive school climate will also provide incentives for the teachers to enhance their professional development. Motivating teachers and students plays a crucial role in promoting effective school culture. The principal and the senior teacher share numerous aspects to enrich their school climate and commented:

*We have the ACR system, Annual Confidential Report, which is categories in different grades like A-1, A, B, & C, these grades are given as per their performance throughout the year. So, positive remarks in ACR motivates the teachers and helps in their promotion. (Principal)*

*Students are awarded annually with trophies for securing high grades, sometimes teachers also award the students on their behalf for good progress in courses for the year. Additionally, I give monetary rewards to some selected students based on their incredible performance. We also declare the 'Best Student of the Year' who secures the highest marks overall the school. We also give a monitor sash to two students of the class based on their responsive and confident behavior. (Principal)*

*Respect is the motivating factor for me. Our principal is so kind, polite and a leading lady. She always greets and regard every teacher with highly positive attitude. I believe that this quality of our principal motivates every teacher to promote teamwork to identify the weak areas and work enthusiastically to strengthen them. She always starts her meeting with appreciative words for the teachers which really signifies the element of respect and her greatness. (Senior Teacher)*

According to the senior teacher's statements, she was very satisfied with the school culture set by their principal. Additionally, the principal highlights the strategies and techniques through which she motivates her teachers and students.

## Discussion

The researcher found a proper system of instruction leadership where the performance of the teachers was evaluated regularly on each 25<sup>th</sup> date by conducting the inspection monthly. The main purpose behind the inspection was to examine the covered syllabus by the specific teachers. Additionally, a follow up meeting with the concerned teachers was also conducted frequently on the 30<sup>th</sup> of each of the month to discuss and share the progress and observation of that inspection day. In this way smooth and systematic progress of instructional leadership was being practiced in the school. The above scenario though sound smooth but it has few flaws; like the teachers were not provided with the scheme of studies that show them the timeline of completion of the syllabus as there was no any criteria on the basis of which any teacher may be declared successful or not, in reference to completion of instructional practices as mentioned in the study of Maponya (2015), teachers must be provided proper scheme of studies. Apart from that the researcher found that teachers were given only verbal appreciation and sometimes certificates on their performance however no monetary rewards were given to the teachers. The principal was continuously using the same technique to reward teachers' performance which can be ineffective as the study of Nawab (2011) emphasis to use different strategies to motivate the teachers as they enhance their performance. Due to this reason the efforts made by the principal goes in vain.

The most surprising insight found by the researcher was the positive school learning climate with the smooth and regular instructional practices in a public school without any formal instructions and vigilance of higher authorities. Like the principals, teachers as well as the students were always ready for any surprise visit because their

work always remains complete due to continuous evaluation as supported by the findings of Hallinger and Lee (2013) that continuous evaluation of any instructional practice performance promote positive school culture.

The unique insight found by the researcher that the teachers were involved in professional development activities without even knowing, as the principal was of the view that her teachers are not involve in professional development activities, because she believes that the professional development means to have the training, workshop or any other activity which occurs outside the school premises. Whereas professional development are the activities which continuously involve the teachers in such activities that enhance and polish their professional skills Richards et al. (2018). Thus, by having meetings, inspection day, providing feedback, monitoring and evaluations teachers' curriculum practices the principal ensures the involvement of teachers to enhance their professional development without realizing.

### **Conclusion**

It was observed that the area where the school lacks was the formulation and awareness of the vision and mission of the school. According to Bei and Alias (2024) vision and mission statement is the backbone of organization. All stakeholders therefore must aware for vision and mission of the school. Beside the study found the lack of distribution (weekly, monthly, quarterly) of syllabus/scheme of studies that create a confusion on what pace teachers must complete the content of their subjects. Due to this reason some of the teachers completed the courses hastily, on the other hand some remain sluggish. Maponya (2015) has given the importance of curriculum development with proper scheme of studies in refence to a proper guideline for the teachers to plan their work and manage the time accordingly. Additionally research study revealed that at school level though informal professional development was given to the teachers within a limited capacity, however a formal and comprehensive professional development opportunities be provided to the teachers to enhance their skills and as per the demand of cutting-edge learners of 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Richards et al., (2018) supports that professional development programs equip principals and teachers with current and latest trends in education and plays a vital role in promoting instructional practices.

### **Recommendations**

- The study recommended that school principal or concerned authorities must work on the formulation of vision and mission and disseminate among the stakeholders that enable the principals as well as the teachers to define the goals to be attained and proper directions for designing instructional strategies and developing evaluation approaches necessary for successful teaching learning climate of school.
- The curriculum development responsables or policy makers should develop curriculum with proper distribution of scheme of studies in refence to a proper guideline for the teachers as they plan their work, manage the time and complete the syllabus accordingly.
- The concerned authorities should provid formal and comprehensive professional development opportunities to the teachers to enhance their skills to compete the cutting-edge learners of 21<sup>st</sup> century.



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