



Pedagogical Leadership in Primary School: A Comparative Analysis between the Perceptions of Head Teachers and Teachers

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Abstract

Leadership plays significant role in providing congenial learning environment, effectively using instructional time and enhancing students' learning outcomes. This quantitative research study aimed to compare the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers about pedagogical leadership in improving teaching-learning outcomes of students. This study used descriptive survey research design to test the hypothesis and to achieve the objectives of the study. By using stratified random sampling method, researchers selected 500 head teachers and 1000 teachers from government primary schools of District Dir Lower. A short version of PIMRS developed by Hallinger (2013) was adopted for collection of data from the respondents. The findings revealed a significant differences between the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding defining school mission, managing instructional time and positive school climate. A significant difference was also found between the perceptions of head teachers and teachers regarding the overall pedagogical leadership role of school head teachers. The study recommended that a series of continuous professional development programmes may be initiated to enrich the pedagogical leadership role of primary school head teachers.

Keywords: Pedagogical Leadership, Defining School Mission, Managing Instructional Time, Positive School Climate

Introduction

Primary education serves as the foundation of the educational system and is a crucial sector in the development of educational institutions in any nation. It plays an important role in shaping the overall educational framework globally (Ahmad, Thomas & Hamid, 2020; Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2021). However, primary schools in Pakistan face challenges due to ineffective administration, management, and leadership practices (Ahmad, Ali, & Sewani, 2021; Bashir & Khalil, 2017; Gulistan, 2015; Khan, 2012), which are major factors contributing to teaching and poor student learning outcomes in these schools (NEP, 2017; NEPF, 2018).

The role of the head teacher as a pedagogical leader is vital for enhancing education, fostering school development, and improving the teaching and learning process at the primary school level. Pedagogical leadership can play a significant role in strengthening teachers' capabilities, enhancing key competencies, and establishing a more conducive environment for teaching learning process (Niqab *et al.*, 2014). The pedagogical leadership of school leaders has a

positive impact on teachers' professional development and practices, as well as on students' academic performance (Ahmad et al., 2021; Day et al., 2016; Salo et al., 2015). Head teachers in government schools face the challenging task of managing institutions that are often those institutions which have insufficient resources, lack of trained and qualified teaching staff, with outdated governance systems and limited freedom (Ashfaq *et al.*, 2018). Their leadership holds having the capacity to bring considerable changes in their schools (Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021).

Effective pedagogical leadership in schools is essential for enhancing teacher performance, school culture, and key educational outcomes (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Research suggests that certain leadership behaviors exhibited by headteachers can promote positive teacher attitudes, job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and overall performance of teachers as well students (Kwan, 2020; Sun & Leithwood, 2015).

Previous studies have recommended that future research may explore the practices of pedagogical leadership and to context of specific factors influencing their implementation across various school environments (Salo *et al.*, 2015; Hallinger, Wang, Chen, & Liare, 2015; Pan, Nyau, & Cheng, 2017). The research mentioned earlier indicated that instructional leadership practices enhance teachers' classroom teaching effectiveness in diverse contexts. The purpose of this research is to fill the gaps in educational leadership studies, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. By exploring head teachers' and teachers' perspectives regarding pedagogical leadership, this study provides insights into the cultural aspects of how leadership is practiced and its impact on key teacher outcomes in challenging public education settings. This study sought to compare and analyze the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers in local settings. The results and recommendations of this study offer improvements related to head teacher pedagogical leadership as well as potential systemic reforms to enhance school leadership despite limitations in bureaucracy and resources. This study aims to broaden contextually relevant research by evaluating head teachers' pedagogical leadership through the perspectives of 1000 teachers across various government primary schools in District Dir Lower. Our survey thoroughly assessed the perceived pedagogical leadership of head teachers and teachers.

Literature Review

Educational leadership is a complex concept that includes a range of skills, traits, and actions demonstrated by leaders to improve schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). While traditional approaches primarily focused on hierarchical authority and control, modern leadership theory highlights more inclusive, collaborative behaviors that empower staff, foster cultural transformation and achieve organizational goals. (Zheng et al., 2019). Several leadership models are particularly relevant when studying head teachers, including pedagogical leadership transformational leadership, and aspects of distributed leadership (Kwan, 2020). Pedagogical leadership focuses on head teachers directly supporting and improving the quality of teaching to enhance student learning (Urick, 2016). Transformational leadership involves inspiring staff through vision creation, offering personal support and intellectual inspiration, maintaining high expectations, and demonstrating desired behaviors. Distributed leadership emphasizes the distribution of leadership roles and decision-making across multiple individuals within the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Combining elements from each of these models can provide valuable insights into how headteachers influence school outcomes through behaviors that impact those they lead.

The instructional leadership of school heads has a significant impact on teacher effectiveness, and headteachers play a vital role in school improvement through their instructional leadership

practices within the educational environment (Ahmad et al., 2020; Kraft et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2021b). The concept of instructional leadership originated in elementary schools in the United States and has since become a global model for effective teaching practices at the school level (Ahmad et al., 2021a; Walker & Qian, 2020; Kraft et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2005).

Empirical research, reinforces the idea that head teacher leadership plays a crucial role in shaping key attitudes, experiences, and effectiveness among teachers. Studies in Turkey and Pakistan have shown that democratic and participatory leadership styles are positively linked to higher teacher job satisfaction (Zheng *et al.*, 2019). In Canadian schools, both transformational and pedagogical leadership practices exhibited by head teachers have been directly associated with increased teacher motivation (Kwan, 2020). Additionally, faculty commitment, trust, and self-efficacy have been shown to be connected to leadership behaviors that focus on providing individual and cultural support (Harris *et al.*, 2013).

While there is extensive research on educational leadership in Western contexts, studies from South Asia offer culturally distinct perspectives on the role of head teachers in school administration (Harris et al., 2013; Kwan, 2020). In South Asia, school heads are typically seen as holding bureaucratic positions, but many aspire to adopt more progressive practices. They often struggle to balance authoritarian leadership with participative styles. In rural areas of Pakistan, where resources are limited and control is minimal, head teachers have made improvements by focusing on people-oriented behaviors, emphasizing relational leadership over traditional, task-oriented approaches. Transformational and pedagogical leadership practices have been linked to more favorable perceptions of head teachers, especially those who manage to offer administrative support and autonomy in the organization, despite facing systemic challenges. The existing literature suggests that leadership practices are influenced by how faculty perceive their heads, with collaboration and communication emerging as key factors in shaping teachers' views (Harris et al., 2013).

Head teachers in government primary school can foster inclusive school cultures by encouraging teacher input in decision-making and maintaining open communication, which leads to greater respect and appreciation. Demonstrating an understanding of staff, celebrating achievements, and providing thoughtful motivation are all behaviors associated with a more supportive staff. (Harris et al., 2013). Pedagogical leadership practices, such as securing resources, conducting fair teacher evaluations, promoting professional development, and offering direct guidance on managing classroom environments, are linked to improved effectiveness (Rigby, 2014). While bureaucratic constraints may limit head teachers, those who adopt shared leadership practices and involve staff in decision-making have seen additional improvements in schools facing challenges, such as those in rural areas of Pakistan.

These findings help explore the connections between specific head teacher practices and teachers' perceptions in government primary schools in district Dir Lower. Effective school leadership plays a crucial role in fostering teaching and learning environments that improve student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). Research has examined the leadership practices of head teachers in public primary schools in Punjab, Pakistan, from the teachers' perspective. One such study investigated the relationship between autocratic leadership style and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Bahadar et al., 2023).

In the context of Pakistan, there are few recent studies focusing on head teachers' perspectives. One study examined the instructional leadership practices of primary school headteachers and their impact on teacher effectiveness (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021). Similarly, another study

explored secondary school teachers' perceptions and their effects on teachers' professional development in Karachi (Ahmad, Ali, et al., 2021). The impact of teachers' instructional approaches on their competencies was also investigated (Ahmad, Sewani, et al., 2021). Challenges related to instructional supervision faced by primary school head teachers were explored in a separate study (Arif et al., 2023). A recent study looked into the difficulties female principals encounter in Lahore public colleges while practicing instructional and transformational leadership (Aman et al., 2021). Additionally, another study focused on head teachers' training needs for ensuring quality education at the secondary level (Hussain et al., 2021).

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding defining school mission
2. To compare the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding managing instructional time
3. To compare the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding developing positive school climate
4. To compare the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding pedagogical leadership in District Dir Lower

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding defining school mission.
2. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding managing instructional time.
3. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding developing positive school climate.
4. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding pedagogical leadership in District Dir Lower.

Research Methodology

This quantitative study uses a survey-based descriptive research design to assess the pedagogical leadership of head teachers as perceived by primary school teachers in District Dir Lower. Descriptive designs are useful for examining the characteristics of individuals, groups, or situations without manipulating variables (Curtis *et al.*, 2016). Since the pedagogical leadership involves summarizing based on teacher perspectives, the descriptive survey method aligns well with the research objectives. The study involves 500 head teachers and 1000 of government primary schools of District Dir Lower. The head teachers and teachers selected through random sampling from government primary schools in District Dir Lower of, all of which are governed by the District Education Department. The sample includes both male and female teachers working under their current head teacher. Data collection is conducted using a short form an adopted quantitative survey principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) developed by Hallinger (2013) consisting of 22 statements based on five-point rating scale ranging from "Almost Always" to "Almost Never" which highly valid and reliable. The researchers following an extensive review of literature on educational leadership practices and styles. The perceptions evaluated include the head teacher's ability to define school mission, managing instructional time and developing a positive school climate. After receiving clearance from the District Education Authorities and school head teachers, the selected schools were personally visited to administer the surveys. Participants were informed about the

purpose of the study, and written consent was obtained, emphasizing voluntary and confidential participation. The questionnaires were distributed and collected, with all 1500 participants. The completed surveys were compiled and coded numerically for analysis using SPSS version 21. Statistical analysis began by examining sample characteristics through descriptive analysis of demographic data. Mean scores were calculated for all leadership abilities. The findings were summarized in frequency tables, descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations for each statement.

Findings of the Study

Table 01 Demographic information of primary school Head Teachers and Teachers

Variables	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents' Designation	Head Teachers	500	33.3
	Teachers	1000	66.7
Respondents' Gender	Male	966	64.4
	Female	534	35.6
Respondents' Age	Greater than 40 years	668	44.6
	Less than 40 years	832	55.4
School Location	Urban	360	24.0
	Rural	1140	76.0
School Type	Boys	966	64.4
	Girls	534	35.6

Table 1 showed the sample profile of head teachers and teachers of government primary school of District Dir Lower. Out of 1500 respondents there are 500 (33.3%) head teachers and 1000 (66.7%) teachers. From these respondents there are 966 (64.4%) are of male and the remaining 534 (35.6%) are female. Out of 1500 respondents 668 (44.6%) have greater than 40 years of age, while 832 (55.4%) respondents have less than 40 years age. 360 (24.0%) respondents responded the school location as urban, while the other 1140 (76.0%) responded their school location as rural. From these respondents 966 (64.4%) responded school type as boys' school, while the remaining 534 (35.6%) responded school type as girls' school.

Table 02 Differences in the Perceptions of Primary School Head Teachers and Teachers Regarding Defining School Mission

Respondents	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Head Teachers	500	4.24	.640	.0286	6.32	.001
Teachers	1000	3.97	.846	.0267		

Level of Significance = .05 df =1498

The table 2 revealed the differences in opinions of primary school teachers and head teachers regarding defining school mission. The descriptive and inferential statistics values showed that a significant difference occurred between primary school teachers and head teachers' perceptions regarding defining school mission. Head teachers perceived that they define the school mission while teachers perceived differently from their heads. The table gleaned that a significant difference existed between the perceptions of primary school teachers and head teachers about defining school mission.

Table 03 Differences in the perceptions of Primary School Head Teachers and Teachers Regarding Managing Instructional Time

Respondents	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Head Teachers	499	4.36	.624	.0279	11.28	.001
Teachers	997	3.87	.876	.0277		

Level of Significance = .05 df =1494

The table 3 displayed the differences in views of primary school teachers and head teachers regarding managing the instructional time in school. The descriptive and inferential statistics values showed that a significant difference occurred between primary school teachers and head teachers' perceptions regarding managing instructional time. Head teachers perceived that they manage the instructional time properly in their school, while teachers perceived differently from their head teachers. The table showed that a significant difference occurred between the perceptions of primary school teachers and head teachers about managing instructional time in schools.

Table 04 Differences in the perceptions of Primary School Head Teachers and Teachers Regarding Developing a Positive School Climate

Respondents	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Head Teachers	498	4.33	.618	.0277	12.63	.001
Teachers	999	3.80	.837	.0265		

Level of Significance = .05 df =1495

The table 4 revealed the differences in views of primary school teachers and head teachers regarding developing a positive climate in school. The descriptive and inferential statistics values showed that a significant difference occurred between primary school teachers and head teachers' perceptions regarding developing a positive school climate. Head teachers perceived that they develop positive school climate in their school, while teachers perceived differently from their head teachers. The table showed that a significant difference occurred between the perceptions of primary school teachers and head teachers about creating a positive climate in their schools.

Table 05 Differences in the perceptions of Primary School Head Teachers and Teachers Regarding Overall Pedagogical Leadership

Respondents	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Head Teachers	497	4.31	.483	.0216	11.52	.001
Teachers	996	3.88	.761	.0241		

Level of Significance = .05 df =1491

The table 5 revealed the differences in views of primary school teachers and head teachers regarding all constructs of pedagogical leadership. The descriptive and inferential statistics values showed that a significant difference occurred between primary school teachers and head teachers' perceptions regarding all constructs related to pedagogical leadership. Head teachers perceived that they define school mission, manage instructional time and develop a positive school climate in their school, while teachers perceived differently from their head teachers. The table showed that a significant difference occurred between the perceptions of primary

school teachers and head teachers about regarding overall constructs related to pedagogical leadership.

Discussion

Different type of leadership models consisting transformational leadership, distributed leadership and pedagogical leadership having a greater importance in shaping school goals, teachers' behaviors and students learning out comes (Kwan, 2020). But most of the application of leadership models falls in the western contexts. This present study moves towards local context in which the perceptions of 1500 respondents consisting of 500 head teachers and 1000 teachers regarding pedagogical leadership styles were compared with each other in District Dir Lower. The findings of current study related to defining school mission revealed that head teachers perceived that they define the school mission. On the other hand, the teachers in these schools perceived that their head teachers do not communicate the school goals to community members and do not set easy and understandable goals which are helpful in achieving school mission

Similarly, the study results depicted that the head teachers perceived that they manage the instructional time properly, while the teachers perceived differently. Teachers believed that head teachers do not properly review the curriculum and also do not properly coordinating the curriculum. The findings also revealed that the head teachers perceived that they develop positive school climate, while the teachers perceived differently that the head teacher do not create professional development opportunities for teachers as well, they do not participate actively in other relevant activities in the school. The overall findings of this current study showed significant differences in the opinions of primary school head teachers and teachers regarding pedagogical leadership of primary school head teachers.

The findings of current study were testified by the previous results of research studies conducted at national and international levels. These studies confirmed that significant differences were found in the perceptions of schools' heads and teachers regarding pedagogical leadership of school heads. Bada, Ariffin, and Nordin (2020) found that there is significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of principal's instructional leadership behavior among the principal in Nigeria. Smith (2007) found that there is significant difference in the teachers and principals' perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrated instructional management practices regarding pedagogical leadership Saint Louis University.

However, there are some studies which results are not align with the results of current study. These studies found that no significant differences were found between the perceptions of head teachers and teachers about pedagogical leadership. Dahal (2020) found that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers and school heads on the basis of gender and subject they teach regarding pedagogical leadership Nepal. Whitehouse and Vinitwatanakhun (2018) study found there is no significant difference in the perceptions teachers and their principals regarding pedagogical leadership practices at Huahin Vitthayalai School in Thailand.

Conclusions

The purpose of pedagogical leadership deals with enhancing teaching and providing detailed supervision that would help teachers to develop and improve their professional knowledge, skills, and abilities. The findings of this study revealed a significant difference of teachers' perception about their head teachers' pedagogical leadership practices. Specifically, out of the three dimensions of pedagogical leadership, the results show that "defining the school

missions” has the significant difference. This means that head teachers perceive that the set their annual mission for school, while the teacher perceive that they do not properly define the school mission to them. Similarly, results showed significant differences of head teachers’ and teachers’ perception of pedagogical leadership, show that a significant difference exists in the dimension related to “managing the instructional time”. The implication of this result is that head teachers’ and teachers perceive the head teachers’ pedagogical role related instructional time differently. These results suggest that there is need for more training of head teachers to be professionally developed. The head teachers need to arrange special meeting to their teaching staff in order to manage the instructional time properly in their school to enhance students learning. Additionally, the pedagogical leadership dimension which relates to “developing positive school learning climate” also have significant difference between the perceptions of head teachers’ and teachers’ perceptions. This indicates that the head teachers are poorly rated when it comes to developing a positive learning climate. The poor rating of the head teachers in this aspect is more on the inability of the heads to provide incentives for teachers and promoting professional development. For instance, most of the teachers rated their school principals low on questions related to “acknowledgement of teachers’ outstanding performance by writing (letters of recommendations) to their personal files” and “setting aside time to discuss in-service programs during staff meetings”. These evidences suggest that school heads need to improve on providing incentives for teachers and promoting their professional development. This is because when teachers’ performance is acknowledged and professional development encouraged by the school heads, it would improve teachers’ effectiveness, thereby achieving the desired learning outcomes of students.

Recommendations

Keeping in view the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommendations for the study.

Head teacher may properly address innovative education at all levels by monitoring different teaching strategies and practices. Without such kind of assistance from all concerned authorities, a positive school culture cannot be promoted. In order to advance the school, this study highlights the importance of school heads to participate and attend numerous trainings. Head teachers may encourage their teachers by giving different types of awards for bringing advancement in school. Government may take different measures to conduct workshops and seminars on the importance of pedagogical leadership in order to develop leadership qualities in school heads. The school heads may set an observation schedule to observe their subordinate teachers’ during teaching learning process in school. The school heads may ensure protection, policy coordination, and communication and take suitable measures for safe and secure environment in school. There may be some arrangements for supplementary training for heads in which may offer emotional and influential support during times of anxiety and depression. School heads may provide opportunities to teaching staff in some decision-making process in order to promote teamwork. Head teachers should more regularly acknowledge teacher activities both privately and publicly through current structures like staff meetings. It is suggested that the concerned government official recognize primary school teachers' and head teachers' performance in improving leadership behaviors as curriculum implementers, protecting instructional time, and monitoring students' progress, so that teachers in government primary schools throughout country may be motivated to work for their schools and students.

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