



Influence of School Heads Leadership Competencies on Instructional Environment of School in Malakand Division

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Abstract:

This study looks at how school leaders competencies influences instructional environment of schools to achieve school goals. Quantitative approach with correlational design and survey method was used to collect and analyze the data to seek the answers of research questions. Through the use of cluster random sampling method, 635 secondary school teachers were randomly selected from three sampled districts i.e. Swat, Lower Dir and Malakand. The researchers utilized a highly valid and reliable self-constructed questionnaire for collection of data. Researchers successfully collected data from 545 respondents which were used for data analysis purpose. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that secondary school teachers perceived that their school heads possessed leadership skills and provide conducive instructional environment at school. The study revealed a strong positive significant association between school heads leadership competencies and school instructional environment. The study also depicted that school heads leadership competencies proved to be significant predictor of school environment. The higher the leadership competencies of school heads associated with the positive provision of school instructional environment. The study recommended that seminars, workshops and refresher courses may prove to be effective strategies to develop the leadership competencies of school heads and also organizing and providing a congenial and pleasant environment for teaching-learning process at school.

Keywords: Leadership Competencies, Technical Competencies, Conceptual Competencies, Interpersonal Competencies, School Instructional Environment

Introduction

Effective leadership is critical to school improvement (Bush, 2008). School leadership plays significant role in the achievement of school goals. A competent and skillful leader plays crucial role in providing safe and congenial environment for quality instruction and performance accountability to enhance students' academic achievement. Leadership competencies ensure the smooth running of effective school management (Ambon *et al.*, 2025). Due to poor leadership and administrative skills, school heads may not be able to achieve the desired outcomes. Different researchers have mentioned different leadership competencies needed for school heads to run the affairs of schools effectively and achieve the school goals efficiently (Moore & Rudd, 2004). School heads require a set of key leadership competencies to navigate the school goals. As these leadership competencies have a positive influence on learning environment, job satisfaction, job performance, institutional effectiveness, and school outcomes (Celdran, 2020; Goleman, 1998; Lumbanraja & Pangaribun, 2022; Mahfouz *et al.*, 2019; Northouse, 2021; Robbins *et al.*, 2001).

Leadership competencies are essential for a school head to establish an organizational culture, create a conducive learning environment, and rightly channelize the team members' efforts to achieve school goals (Mduwile & Komariah, 2021). According to Abbas and Asghar (2010) noted that school heads need leadership competencies to effectively perform their administrative and instructional duties, effectively solve teachers and students problems. It has been noted that most of the school problems are caused by a lack of leadership and administrative competencies. Among these competencies technical competencies, human competencies, problem solving, effective decision-making, effective communication, conceptual competencies, information communication literacy are very common and important which every school head must possess. Like other leaders in the organizations, school leaders also require innovative and creative leadership and administrative skills to effectively perform their roles and responsibilities. These leadership competencies included technical competencies, interpersonal or human competencies, time management, decision-making, strategic planning, conceptual competencies, team building, collaboration, effective communication, problem-solving, adaptability and so on (Northouse, 2021; Katz, 1955, 2009; Robbins & Judge, 2005). However, the literature review showed that technical, human and conceptual competencies are the fundamental leadership competencies which every school head must possess to manage the academic and administrative responsibilities effectively and efficiently (Munir et al., 2024).

Leadership is a multifaceted task, therefore, it requires multifarious competencies and to keep a balance among these competencies is a challenging task for school head. Technical competencies consisted of the required skills to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Technical skills are integral for school heads which is related with knowledge, appreciation of and application of procedures, methods, strategies and process of education. Along with these, technical competencies also include non-instructional technical abilities at school like financial literacy, accounting literacy, purchasing, school plant and security and protection. In the same way, different roles and responsibilities performed by school heads like instructional leadership, administrative skills and managerial roles to effectively deal with the emerging problems at school. Similarly, innovative ideas, creativity, integration and using information technologies, writing skills also fall under the technical competencies (Mduwile & Komariah, 2021). Therefore, all these competencies are needed by the school heads to effectively deal with challenging problems. Interpersonal or human competencies are required to school heads to have their impact on and affect to interpret the school activities to school personnel, setting the goals for the school, articulate the school vision among the school staff, assign tasks and responsibilities to staff members, motivate the team members to achieve school goals, up-keeping the cooperative relationships, inculcating a spirit of team among the staff, and gaining the cooperation from the community members to participate actively in the school activities (Mduwile & Komariah, 2021). Similarly interpersonal competencies also assist school heads to build collaborate, cooperative and strong and trustworthy relationship within and outside the school community for school success (Cabigao, 2019). To maintain a balance between authority and empathy, decisiveness and diplomacy ensure that all these efforts are for fostering a positive school climate for instructional process, and maintain an effective communication channels between school and community (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). Interpersonal competencies also assist school heads to perform instructional leadership role to guide and support school teachers in their pedagogical practices, developing their professional skills, performing assigned tasks and responsibilities, managing classrooms for instruction, and guiding students is central to diving academic achievement. Leadership competences also enable school heads to emphasize on their instructional leadership role through which they can deeply understand the curriculum, adopting effective assessment strategies, integrating latest teaching technologies, and ensuring the efficient achievement of school goals. Through these leadership competencies school heads can

be empowered to lead with excellence and foster thriving instructional environment at school (Rahardja et al., 2018; Bernardino, 2020). Furthermore, leadership competencies can enable school heads to foster and create a positive instructional environment, driving instructional improvement and ultimately enhance students' academic achievement (Nor, 2014). Conceptual competencies are concerned with conceptual capabilities that enable school heads to capture the complex situations and handle successful and innovative solutions. These skills also assist school heads to address hard situations with an innovative and progressive strategies. Conceptual competencies help school heads to implement abstract ideas into real and concrete situation. These skills also help school heads to play with abstract ideas and implement these in school to solve problems effectively and efficiently. These skills assist school heads in concept mapping to execute their strategies and plans for the effective school outcomes. These skills help school heads to follow and implement their educational philosophies in real sense, so that, they may enable to achieve their school goals. Conceptual skills enable school heads to be effective and efficient in their school settings. Conceptual competencies enable school heads to turn their vision into reality (Moore & Rudd, 2004). Conceptual skills help school heads to formulate long term strategic plans. Instructional environment of school is concerned with the environment in which teaching and learning takes place. The environment where teachers can teach effectively and students can learn efficiently without any disruption. If the working environment is conducive, then both principal and teacher will perform their responsibilities in effective and efficient manner and ultimately school goals will be achieved. If the environment is not congenial and pleasant then principal and teacher will not be able to perform their duties effectively which consequently affect the learning of the students. Therefore, it is also imperative for school principal to provide a friendly, pleasant and congenial working environment to both teachers and students where teachers can teach effectively and students can learn efficiently. Zaman (2021) revealed that secondary school principals possessed leadership competencies and provide good learning environment for teaching-learning process. Further, he found that principals' leadership competencies have no significant impact on school academic environment. Principals' leadership competencies have not proved to be significant predictor of school environment. This study focused on developing the multifaceted leadership competencies for school heads to continuously develop and refine their leadership competencies to meet the multi-tasking responsibilities of educational leadership. Leadership competencies act as a catalyst for school heads for effective policy making, efficient school management and solution of administrative and instructional problems (Ambo et al., 2025). Keeping in mind the need and importance of leadership competencies for school heads and its possible influence on fostering an instructional environment at school, this study seek to obtain the answers of following research questions:

Research Question 1: Is there any significant relationship between leadership competencies of secondary school heads perceived and instructional environment?

Research Question 2: Is there any significant influence of leadership competencies of secondary school heads perceived and instructional environment?

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: School heads leadership competencies has no significant relationship with instructional environment of school.

H₀₂: School heads leadership competencies has no significant impact on instructional environment of school.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the quantitative approach with correlational design and survey method for collection and analysis of data. The population of study consisted of all (8481) secondary school teachers working in the three districts of Malakand division during the academic year 2024-25. These districts included Malakand, Dir Lower and Swat. By using cluster sampling technique (635) secondary school teachers were randomly selected from the sample districts with 30% of the population from three sampled districts. The researchers used self-constructed questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of some demographical variables related to teachers. The second part of the questionnaire consisted 24 Likert type items related with three leadership competencies of school heads i.e. technical, conceptual and human. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of four constructs which were further divided into 33 Likert type items. The items ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The respondents teachers were asked to rate the competency level of their school heads and the instructional environment of school. The researchers validated the questionnaire through a panel of experts who had sufficient experience in teaching-learning process at school level and hold PhD degrees in the field of education. The experts were requested to critically analyze the questionnaire and gave useful suggestions for its improvement and refinement. They provided useful suggestions to improve the items. The researchers refined the final questionnaire on the basis of the suggestions provided by the experts. After finalizing the questionnaire, it was administered for pilot testing. The final draft of the questionnaire was piloted to a sample of 30 secondary school teachers. The sampled teachers were requested to fill the questionnaire and also point out the ambiguities in the questionnaire. After filling the questionnaires, the sampled teachers returned the filled questionnaires without pointing any ambiguity. The data collected through pilot test were used for establishing the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and the value of α were found to be 0.95 for school heads leadership competencies and 0.92 for school instructional environment. The values of alpha revealed that the questionnaire was highly reliable. After establishing the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers prepared 635 survey packets consisted of questionnaire, consent letter and self-addressed envelope. The researchers distributed the survey packets among the secondary school teachers in the sampled schools in three sampled districts. After again and again reminding to the teachers and personal visits, the researchers finally succeeded to collect 545 usable questionnaires for data analysis purpose.

Results

Table 01 Perceived school heads leadership competencies from teachers' perspectives

Leadership Competencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Conceptual Competencies	4.05	.65	3
Human Competencies	4.09	.62	2
Technical Competencies	4.13	.63	1
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation Scores	4.08	.59	

The above table revealed that secondary school teachers perceived that their school heads possess leadership competencies. They perceived that secondary school heads possess conceptual competencies, human competencies and technical competencies. Their level of leadership competencies were found sufficiently above average level of observance.

Table 02 Perceived school instructional environment from teachers' perspectives

Constructs of School Environment	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Vision and mission of school	4.13	.69	2
Communication and collaboration	4.12	.62	3
Relationship with colleagues	4.15	.70	1
School organization and management	4.08	.61	4
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation Scores	4.11	.59	

The above table depicted that secondary school teachers perceived that school heads provided conducive instructional environment at school. They established the vision and mission of the school, so that their staff can execute it in the practical situation and strive for achieve it. They can openly communicate with staff members and through collaboration they strive for the achievement of school goals. They maintained trustworthy relationship with teachers and school personnel. They organize and provide the resources to the staff in the school and through the process of planning, organizing, controlling and controlling strive for the achievement of school goals.

Table 03 Relationship between school heads leadership competencies and school instructional environment from teachers' perspectives

Study Variables	n	M	Std. Deviation	r	p
School Heads Leadership Competencies	545	4.08	.59		
School Instructional Environment	545	4.11	.59	.85	.000

The above table explained the relationship between school heads leadership competencies and school instructional environment. The value of r revealed that both the variables were strongly significantly correlated with each other. School heads leadership competencies was strongly associated with school instructional environment. This implies that if a school head possess leadership competencies then the head can provide a safe, congenial and conducive instructional environment at school.

Table 04 Regression coefficients of school heads leadership competencies on school instructional environment

Model 1			
Variables	B	β	SE
Constant	.638		.096
Leadership Competencies	.852	.846	.023
R^2	.84		
ΔR^2	.71		

In the above table, the researchers examined the influence of school heads leadership competencies on school instructional environment from teachers' perspectives. The strong value of R^2 depicted that leadership competencies had strongly significant impact on school instructional environment. This revealed that these two variables were strongly influenced each other. The table also depicted that school head leadership competencies explained 71% influence on school instructional

environment. Furthermore, the value of beta revealed that school heads leadership competencies positively predicted school instructional environment.

Discussion

The study explored the positive significant association between school heads leadership competencies and school instructional environment. The high the leadership competencies level of school heads associated with the positive and conducive instructional environment at school. This implies that those school heads who possess strong leadership competencies can provide a safe, congenial and conducive instructional environment at school. The study also found that school heads leadership competencies had strongly positive significant impact on school instructional environment. Furthermore, the school heads leadership competencies positively predicted school instructional environment. Those school heads who had technical, conceptual and human skills, they can easily provide a safe, friendly, pleasant and trustworthy environment at school to staff and students. They also had the ability to provide such an enjoyable environment where teachers can teach effectively and students can learn efficiently. They had set a vision and mission for school which can be achieved through the dedication and commitment of staff members. They believed that their teachers can achieve the ultimate goals of school which is to ensure the maximum academic achievement of students. The results of this study have been confirmed by many other previous research studies. Olaifa *et al.*, (2024) found a positive significant relationship between administrative leadership competences, financial competence, communication competence, personnel competence, supervision competence and school effectiveness. Mukarromah *et al.*, (2019) concluded that managerial skills like (conceptual, technical, and human) of a headmaster effected 62%, 72% and 75% school effectiveness. Rafiq, *et al.*, (2022) found a negative significant correlation between school environments related factors and students' academic achievement. Teacher support, physical environment, timing and discipline, hygiene and sanitation, reading facility and cooperation among students, extracurricular activities, equity and moral ethics have negative significant impact on students' academic achievement. These studies focused on the significant association of leadership competencies with school environment which is similar to the results of this study.

Conclusions

The study concluded that secondary school perceived that their school heads had sufficiently maximum level of leadership competencies. They possess high level of technical, conceptual and interpersonal competencies. The teachers also perceived that the school instructional environment was found to be quite positive and pleasant for teaching-learning process. The study concluded that school heads leadership competencies positively significantly correlated with each other. The increase in leadership competencies also associated with the increase in school instructional environment. The high is the level of the school heads leadership competencies, the positive would be the school instructional environment and vice versa. The study also confirmed that school heads leadership competencies positively and significantly predicted the school instructional environment. School heads leadership competencies effected 71% school instructional environment.

Recommendations

The study recommended that school heads may be provided ample chances to improve their leadership competencies through participation in refresher courses, workshop and seminars. They may also be provided opportunities to enhance their personal, social and communicational skills, so that they can positively influence the behaviour of their subordinates for the achievement of common goals of school. The study also recommended that secondary school heads may also be

given frequent chances of trainings, so that they may be able to improve their school environment through establishing school vision and mission, establishing trustworthy relationship with staff, arrangement of continuous professional development programs, effective and open communication with stakeholders and so on.

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