

## **School Managers' Competence and Practices in Perspective of Instructional Leadership at Higher Secondary Schools**

Uzma Sagheer Janjua<sup>1</sup>, Sufiana Khatoon Malik<sup>2</sup> and Batool Atta<sup>3</sup>

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### **Abstract**

The present paper investigates higher secondary schools school managers' competence and practices in the contexts of Instructional Leadership (IL). This study was descriptive and survey research method was used for data collection. Population of the study consisted of school managers of higher secondary schools located in Rawalpindi (Pakistan). Researchers used "Instructional Leadership Inventory" (ILI) for data collection from respondents. The findings of the study detected significant differences among school managers with certain variations, regarding IL competence. Male school managers were found better than female school managers in IL competence. No gender differences were found among school leaders regarding practices of IL. Public and rural sector school managers were found more competent in IL competence than private and urban sector school managers, but in practice of IL, all school managers were found similar. It was concluded that school managers have instructional leadership competence with certain variations, but in IL practices there were found similar. There are implication of instructional leadership in the changing paradigm of education towards the effective role of heads as an instructional leader.

**Key Words:** *school managers, instructional leadership, secondary schools*

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<sup>1</sup> PhD. Scholar National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan, janjuauzma2014@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Education/ Acting Director Publications: National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, Pakistan, skhatoon@numl.edu.pk

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor Institute of Education AJK University Muzaffarabad, batool.atta@ajku.edu.pk

**Introduction**

Leadership is defined in diverse educational milieus as a process that influences a group of individuals to accomplish goals (Dagen & Bean, 2020; Goksoy, 2015). Effective leadership requires attaining desired objectives with the support of quality performance (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). Leaders construct positive environments in which their followers flourish (Murphy & Louis, 2018). Educational leadership scholars have asserted that managerial context, schools and wider community milieus can define and influence educational managers' leadership practices (Diamond & Spillane, 2016).

The theory of instructional leadership appeared during 1980s and 1990s. However, in recent years, a global movement stressed on instructional leadership in educational reforms and researchers, policy-makers and practitioners have been recommending that school managers should demonstrate instructional leadership across educational institutions around the world (Rigby, 2014; Hallinger & Wang 2015; Hallinger, Dongyu & Wang, 2016; Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016).

Instructional leadership is fundamental to every day's task of school managers and school managers design structures that provide opportunities for collaboration and collective decision making (Murphy & Torre, 2014; Goddard, Goddard, Sook Kim, & Miller, 2015).

Educational managers can build supportive work relationships to work with academic and non-academic staff for a positive school climate to create a vision of high expectations and can recognize the importance of professional development opportunities and developing their knowledge of curriculum and instruction in order to improve teaching and learning processes in their institutions (Jameela, 2012; Tobin, 2014; McCue, 2016; Esa, & et. al, 2017; Murakami et al., 2019).

Instructional leadership practices are directly linked to crafting the environment for effective teaching and learning and can exercise their inspiration over the instructional program while they established effective goals for the school and a communicative vision to achieve those goals for school (Fancera & Bliss., 2011; Chiedozie & Victor, 2017).

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identified various demographic variables like age, gender, professional qualification, academic qualification, years of teaching experience, experience as a teacher, job experience as an educational manager, administrative training and experience, years at current school site, and years of teaching experience influence on principals' instructional leadership behavior. Their research found the top-ranked school managers were female and the bottom-ranked group was mostly male. Shaked et al., (2018) examined gender differences of school managers enacting their instructional leadership. The study reported two main differences between male and female managers' instructional leadership. The first was source of authority cultivating their instructional leadership; and the second was integration of instructional leadership

with relationships between school managers and teaching staff. Moreover Hallinger et al., (2016) reported a small statistically significant gender effect, with female school managers consistently obtaining higher ratings on instructional leadership when compared with their male counterparts.

Similarly, Kis and Konan (2014) used the standardized mean difference (SMD) to gather teachers' views to measure the effect size of gender differences on the instructional leadership behavior of school educational managers. Orphanos, Stelios (2016) research suggest that parents perceive female school managers as more effective than males regarding various aspects of school management and leadership.

School managers as instructional leaders vary in both public and private sector schools where we can see, in public school students are more likely to demonstrate the important aspects of improved form of instruction and private schools students follow a more traditional instructional climate (Duyar et al, 2019).

Chiedozie & Victor (2017) conclude no significant difference in the mean score of school managers and teachers who apply instructional supervision practices for secondary school effectiveness. A review of researches suggest that there is found variation in instructional leadership competence and practice when educational managers were observed in the context of their gender, school status and job experience.

The investigation regarding gender differences in school leadership evolved over time focusing on how gender effects the educational manager's exercise of instructional leadership (Hallinger, Dongyu & Wang, 2016). A recent meta-analysis investigated 40 data sets that were drawn from 28 researches and it was indicated that a small but statistically significant effect of gender on instructional leadership was observed, where female educational managers found more active instructional leadership than male educational managers (Hallinger et al., 2016). In spite of these studies, there is still lack of research on gender differences among educational managers' performance in relation to instructional leadership (Kis & Konan, 2014; Shaked et al 2018).

It has been observed for last few decades, that instructional leadership is considered as the most commonly examined school leadership due to the important role of school managers in administration of schools (Gowpall, 2015; Duyar et al., 2019; Hayes & Irby, 2019). Present studies conclude that school managers' instructional leadership interactions have stronger positive influence on students' achievement as than school managers who exercise other styles of leadership interactions (Boyce & Bowers, 2017).

Hallinger (2003) model of educational managers, determines that role of school manager as instructional leader in school on the bases of certain key dimensions. These are: a) defining school's mission, b) managing the instructional programs c) promoting a positive school learning climate. Murphy (1990) presented instructional leadership model having four basic framework of instructional leadership. These are: (i) developing mission and goals in school, (ii) managing the educational production function, (iii)

promoting an academic learning climate, and (iv) developing a supportive school environment. Likewise, Coughlan (2013) discusses instructional leadership having two domains: (a) Defining school's mission and (b) Promoting positive learning climate.

### **Instructional Leadership Practices and Competence**

School managers practicing instructional leadership can create a safe and conducive learning environment through the collaboration between teachers, students and community (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015; Esa et al, 2017). Indeed, positive relationships between teachers and educational managers can produce effective environment which can support teachers for more effective teaching practices (Alsobaie, 2015; Price, 2015; Onuma (2016).

Hayes and Irby (2019) declare that instructional leadership emphasizes more on involvement of educational managers' academic activities like teachers' supervision, their professional development, support in instructional and curriculum development, and realizing teachers about the effect of such activities on improving teaching and learning process and students' performance (Hayes & Irby, 2019). The literature depicts importance and effectiveness IL related competence and practices; however, it is also evident that research lacks in assessing school managers' competence and practice in perspective of instruction leadership practices in South East Asia, especially in Pakistan.

### **Purpose of the research**

The major purpose of this research was to determine school managers' competence and practices in perspective of instructional leadership. As contextual reference for this research, instructional leadership competence and practices could be referred to as administrative activities and roles performed by the school managers as instructional leaders to improve teaching learning processes.

### **Objectives of the research**

1. To identify school managers' instructional leadership competence at higher secondary school level in certain the contexts like public, private, rural, urban, gender;
2. To determine differences in school managers' instructional leadership practices at higher secondary school level in certain the contexts like public, private, rural, urban, gender.

### **Research Question**

Q.1. to what extent instructional leadership competence and practices adopted by school managers in public and private sector differ from each other?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in school managers' instructional leadership competence in the public and private sector.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the nature of school managers' instructional leadership practices in the public and private sector.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in school managers' instructional leadership competence in rural and urban sectors.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in school managers' instructional leadership practices in rural and urban sectors.

Ho5: There are no significant gender differences among school managers in perspective of instructional leadership competence.

Ho6: There are no significant gender differences among school managers in perspective of instructional leadership practices.

#### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present paper was based on Hallinger and Murphy 1985 model of instructional leadership. It is the most widely used model for evaluating instructional leadership competence (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). This framework consists of three major dimensions: 1) defining the school mission, 2) managing the instructional program and 3) developing a positive school learning climate.

#### Methodology

##### Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was adopted to elicit information from the respondents through using 'Instructional Leadership Inventory (ILI) developed by Cassandra Erkens (2016).

## **Participants**

School managers from all higher secondary level schools, both public and private, located in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) district and Gujar-khan (Pakistan), were the population of the present study. Sample of the study consisted of 80 respondents including 41 higher secondary school (HSS) managers from the public sector and 39 school managers from private sector HSS. Among these, 33 were male and 47 were female managers. From public sector, 20 male and 21 female managers participated in the study while from private sector, 13 male and 26 female were selected through stratified sampling technique.

## **Instrument**

In this research, Cassandra Erkens's (2016) inventory titled "Instructional Leadership Inventory" (ILI) was used for data collection from respondents. It contains 21 items based on four point Likert-like Scale to assess school managers' instructional leadership competence and practice. The negative pole was given the score of 1 and 2 and positive

pole was given the score of 3 and 4. The researchers personally visited the sample higher secondary schools and requested respondents personally for the provision of their responses to collect data. Therefore, all 80 participants were offered the option to participate in the survey voluntarily and the return rate was 100%.

### Reliability and Validity

The validity of the instrument was checked through experts' opinions whereas the reliability of the instrument was checked through Cronbach alpha by using SPSS (statistical package for social Sciences).

Table 1  
*Reliability statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	21

The above table shows the Cronbach's alpha value .873 of 21 items for measuring each component indicates a high level of internal consistency for the items and number of components.

### Data Analysis

The score found by the inventory was analyzed by descriptive as well as inferential statistics. The frequency means of demographic information were calculated and different groups like, gender, sector; status, academic and professional qualification separately and service experience were presented in tables.

#### Results

##### Section -1 Respondents' Characteristic

Table 2  
*Demographic Information about Respondents*

Variables / Demographics	*f	%	*c.f
Gender			
Male	33	41.3	41.3
Female	47	58.8	100.0
Sector			
Public	41	51.3	51.3
Private	39	48.8	100.0
Status			
Rural	26	32.5	32.5
Urban	54	67.5	100.0

Academic Qualification			
M.A	34	42.5	42.5
M.Sc.	28	35.0	77.5
M.Phil.	13	16.3	93.8
PhD	5	6.3	100.0
Professional Qualification			
B.Ed.	10	12.5	12.5
M.Ed.	52	65.0	77.5
Others	12	15.0	92.5
None	6	7.5	100.0
Experience			
Less than 1-5	9	11.3	11.3
6-10	17	21.3	32.5
11-15	22	27.5	60.0
Above 15 years	32	40.0	100.0

\**f* = frequency, \**c.f* = Cumulative frequency

The table shows that the sample of the study consisted of (n = 33, 41.3%) male and (n= 47, 58.8 %) female, out of 80 respondents. The results showed that the largest group the (n= 34, 42.5 %) had education level of Masters (M.A). While there were lowest number of respondents had PhD level of education 5 (6.3%). Moreover the table illustrated that highest number of respondents having experience of above 15 years (n = 32, 40.0 %) and lowest number of respondents having experience of less than 1-5 years (n= 9, 11.3 %). For professional qualification the table depicts that the largest group the (n= 52, 65.0 %) had M.Ed. While the lowest number of respondents had no professional qualification i.e. 6 (7.5%).

## Section- 2 school managers' IL competence and practices

Table 3

Comparison of public and private sector school managers' IL competence

\* $P > .05$ . \**df* = degree of freedom

Table no. 3 depicts that there is significant difference in school managers' instructional

Component	Sector	N	Mean	S. D	t (78)	* <i>df</i>	* <i>p</i> -value
Instructional leadership Competence	Public	41	35.10	3.27	3.569	78	.001
	Private	39	32.38	3.53			
Instructional leadership practices	Public	41	24.49	2.62	-.085	78	.933
	Private	39	24.54	2.73			

leadership competence. The *p*- value is (.001) is significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis stating, " There is no significant difference in instructional leadership competence of school managers in public and private sectors", is not accepted

and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in instructional leadership competence of school managers in public and private sectors where school managers from public sector have higher mean score for IL competence than school managers from private sector (  $M= 35.10, SD= 3.27$ ) for public and with (  $M= 32.38, SD= 3.53$ )  $t(78) 3.569$ ,  $p = .001$  for private sector. These results suggested that public sector educational managers in higher secondary schools demonstrated significantly higher levels of competence regarding instructional leadership. However, regarding practices of instructional leadership, both public and private sector school managers are found equal. ( $M= 24.48, SD= 2.62$ ) in the public sector and with ( $M= 24.54, S.D=2.73$ )  $t(78) -.085$ ,  $p = .933$  in the private sector.

Table 4

*Comparison of Urban- Rural School Managers' IL Competence and Practices*

Component	Sector	N	Mean	S. D	t (78)	*df	*p-value
Instructional leadership Competence	Rural	41	36.19	2.82	4.619	78	.001
	Urban	39	32.61	3.43			
Instructional leadership practices	Rural	41	24.96	2.51	1.049	78	.297
	Urban	39	24.29	2.72			

\* $P > .05$ . \*df = degree of freedom

Table no. 4 reflects that p- value is less than .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypotheses that there is no significant difference in IL competence of rural and urban school managers is not accepted and it is concluded that there is significant difference in IL competence of rural and urban school managers. We observe means score of rural school managers ( $M= 36.19, S.D= 2.82$ )  $t(78) 4.619$ ,  $p = .001$  in contrast to urban area school managers with ( $M= 32.61, S.D= 3.43$ )  $t(78) 4.619$ ,  $p = .001$ . The results suggest that rural school managers demonstrated significantly higher levels of instructional leadership competence as compared to urban school managers. However, no significant difference in IL practices of both (rural and urban) is observed. ( $M= 24.96, SD=2.51$ )  $t(78) 1.049$ ,  $p = .297$  in rural areas and ( $M= 24.29, SD=2.72$ )  $t(78) 1.049$ ,  $p = .297$  in urban areas.

Table 5

*Comparison of the Scores for Male and Female*

Component	Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t (78)	*df	*p-value
Instructional leadership Competence	Male	33	25.09	2.35	1.649	78	.103
	Female	47	24.11	2.81			
Instructional leadership practices	Male	33	35.64	3.38	4.218	78	.001
	Female	47	32.47	3.26			

\* $P > .05$ . \*df = degree of freedom

Table no. 5 illustrates that based on independent t-test conducted, the result shows school managers competence in instructional leadership of male respondents (M= 25.09, SD= 2.35), and of female respondents (M= 24.11, SD= 2.81),  $t(78) 1.649$ ,  $p = .103$ . The p- value (.103) is not significant at significance level of .05. Therefore the hypothesis stating, "There is no significant difference in instructional leadership competence of male and female school managers is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in instructional leadership competence of male and female school managers. However, male school managers have higher mean score IL competence than female school managers. Regarding practices of instructional leadership, the result shows that p-value is less than .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypotheses that there is no significant difference in IL practices of male and female school managers is not accepted and it is concluded that there is significant differences in educational managers IL practices of male and female respondents. We observe mean score of male (M= 35.64, SD= 3.38) in contrast to female (M= 32.47, S.D=3.26)  $t(78) 4.218$ ,  $p = .001$ . The results suggested that male school managers demonstrated significantly higher levels of instructional leadership practices in their respective institutions.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the paper was to assess instructional leadership competence and practices among higher secondary school managers in public and private sector. The research question was to what extent instructional leadership competence and practices adopted by school managers in public and private sector differ from each other? Results regarding IL practices align with findings of Khan, 2012; Donkor & Asante, 2016; Medina et al, 2018. The findings of this study support the conclusions made by Daft 2005, and Naseer, Nasarullah and Ashiq, 2014; Adeyemi, 2011. Conversely, the present research result regarding IL practices are not in line with Newton & Wallin, 2013; Wallin & Newton, 2013; Klar & Brewer, 2014. These researchers perceive that rural school managers as instructional leader lead their schools through role modeling, and sometimes personally conducts professional development workshops for teachers. In terms of assessing gender wise IL competence, results show male and female school managers equal in competence, however, male school managers are found better in instructional leadership practices than female. These findings are consistent with the Hussain et al., 2018; Gumus & Akcaoglu's, 2013; Hallinger, 2013. According to Shaked & et. al. (2018) male school managers conduct their instructional leadership based on formal authority, which is being practice usually in the society, and which may lead to be more task-oriented approach. However, these findings are not consistent with Hallinger et al., 2016; Shaked et al., 2017; Medina et. al., 2018; Hou et. al. 2019 who observed that females are more active in instructional leadership than their male counterparts. This difference of finding may be denoted to cultural and contextual

differences which further needs investigation. It was reflected from the major findings of the research that public school managers are more competent than private school managers in instructional leadership. Here the findings align with the study of Hartijasti and Afzal (2016).

### **Conclusions**

It was concluded that difference in competence of instructional leadership in public and private sector may be due to the selection criteria followed in the selection of school managers in both the sectors. In public sector, school managers are usually selected after they have acquired the requisite professional, academic and teaching experience and the process of selection is rather rigorous, in addition to benefits of in-service training. Therefore, their experience and engagement in teaching before being appointed as school managers may result in their possessing in-depth knowledge about instructional leadership. In contrast, in private sector most of the owners lead the school personally and there is no specific criteria for selecting school managers. It is found that school managers still have traditional approach to practice and lead their schools. There remains a gap between the competence and the practice. It is further concluded that IL competence is observed higher in rural school managers as compare to school managers working in urban areas, however, they are found equal in IL practices. Current study observed deficiency in practice of instructional leadership among school level managers. They lack the practices required by instructional leader. The implementation of instructional leadership practices is conducive for improving teaching learning process, students' 'motivation for learning, and for improving the overall school effectiveness. Therefore, it is suggested to provide training to school managers to train them practically regarding practices of instructional leadership for execution of IL practices in school environment. Thus, the focus of the policy makers and school education departments should be on thoroughly understanding the contextual realities on implementing instructional leadership in this challenging, accountable and competitive era.

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