

Discretionary Practices of Instructional Leaders for the Development of Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Instructional leaders are those who are committed to their jobs, having devotions and tolerance of work. They are the agents of change and their discretionary practices are involved in all the matters that relate to missions and goals of their educational institutions. The study in hand is descriptive in nature and dealt with the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the learners' academic performance, improvement of schools, and teachers' professional development. The data was collected from 192 instructional leaders and 265 working teachers of six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa namely: Mansehra, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohistan, Hangu, and Torgar. For sampling, the 'simple random sampling' techniques was employed. The current role of instructional leaders was analyzed on five point likert scale and Chi Square (χ^2) as statistical tests. The data was collected through a questionnaire and was validated on 'factor analysis' and 'Cronbach's alpha'. The finding of the study indicated that the majority of instructional leaders were frail in exercising discretionary practices in establishing policies and procedures, planning curriculum, realizing school vision and targets for the learners' development; addressing high academic expectations, preceding work by coordination, collaboration, and team work, and monitoring internal and external efficiency of the staff for the educational institutions development; emphasizing on different instructional styles, inducing staff by motivation and encouragement, and strengthening staff by making them learn the latest teaching techniques for the teachers' development.

KEYWORDS: discretionary practices, academic performance, school improvement, professional development

INTRODUCTION

Discretion is the exercise of judgment, creative and imaginative ideas that promotes the institutions and produces successful outcomes (Hutchinson, Kinnie, Purcel, Rayton, & Swart, 2002). Discretion is wise and sensible approach which involves decisional power, insight and common sense (Macquarie Dictionary 2016). Without the exercise of discretion, instructional leaders neither create the educational environment nor the situations that develop the institution academically and administratively (Duyar & Normore, 2012). Owing to discretion, instructional leaders play their key role for promoting change in the institutional environment for the achievement of goals and their expected targets (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005).

Instructional leaders are the backbone of the educational institutions and their discretionary role is important for developing their institutions and giving them a new look to them by using their creative and innovative ideas (Vance, 2006). They are the central figure because of their administrative and managerial responsibilities in the institution. They are bound to follow rules and regulations but in some cases rules do not accomplish their tasks and in those cases, they have to exercise their discretion for realizing their vision into concrete actions (Bohlmark, Gronqvist, & Vlachos, 2012).

They exercise their discretionary practices in school discipline, students' progress and their achievement, school administration and management, and teaching staff promotion in their professional aptitude in teaching (NSW Ombudsman, 2012). Instructional leaders have discretion to put their influence in institutional set up, results of the students, curricular and co-curricular activities (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Discretion of instructional leaders has many dimensions that lead them towards learning environment for the learners with the effective classroom instructions (UNICEF, 2014). Discretion assists them to formulate: vision, produce educational environment, cultivate leadership qualities, develop teaching instructions, manage staff, and allocated resources (Harvey & Holland, 2012).

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Instructional leaders give emphasis to academic expectations, development of professional development and attitude of teachers, and monitoring academic instructions for the fruitful outcomes of their institutions (Lee, Walker, & Chui, 2012). They bring revolutionary change in the school environment. They concentrate on establishing school policies and procedures in the light of their discretion. They provide attractive educational environment that attract the learners, parents, and the public (Principal's Job Description [PJD], 2013). However, the discretion of the instructional leaders leads them towards positive opportunities, facilitation, and learning latest techniques for giving new look to their schools (Martins, 2007).

In educational institutions, instructional leaders are those who exercise their discretionary practices for attaining towering hopes for their institutional development and bring change by utilizing their will powers and carry out their efforts for the organizational development (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008). They have the discretion to strengthen their position in capacity building, developing creative skills, sharing their experience with the staff, and they may have their discretion to provide educational well built environment for their students (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2010).

Instructional leaders provide internal and external supervision to the staff. They make cordial relationship with the parents and the community for strengthening their role in the organization (Knapp and Feldman, 2012). Discretion has the role to induce the teaching staff for work by motivation and encouragement and in this way, they have to keep in mind to avoid negative discretionary behaviour like discouraging or insulting the staff as if they want to make their institution successful (Hamzah, Yakop, Nordin, & Rahman, 2011) because no organization can run with uncooperative and bad behaviour with the staff. So, the discretion of the instructional leaders would be to fill empty gaps by their positive discretionary behaviour. In this regard, their supervision would be effective with continue feedback, motivation, cooperation, and guidance (Zepeda, 2006).

While exercising their discretionary approaches, instructional leaders need to show trust and devotion to their responsibilities and make commitment with their staff (Seong, 2011). They are eager for their success and they carefully handle organizational matters. In this regard, their first step is to observe instructions; second, planning curriculum; third, manage daily schedule and the arrangement of periods; fourth, making good relationship with the teaching and non-teaching staff (Hornig, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009).

For the future discretion, instructional leaders need complete staff statement, their qualification, experience in specific subjects and their eyes are also on school records, registers, allocated budget and they also need parents contact numbers to share with them about their children and in this way they may handle teaching staff and students (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000).

Instructional leaders establish practices according to their discretion for the organizational first rate output. Jong and Hartog (2007) identified twelve discretionary practices which are essential for instructional leaders: i) innovation, ii) intellectual simulation, iii) stimulation of knowledge diffusion, iv) vision, v) consulting, vi) delegating, vii) organizing, viii) feedback, ix) recognition, x) reward, xi) monitoring, and xii) task assignments.

They have to play conservative, creative, strategic, organizational, interpersonal, informational and decisional roles for their organizational development. The idea to improve educational institutions is not a novice idea because it involves instructional leaders' innovation intellectual approach and vision for broadened their creative approaches (Cieslinska, 2007). They exercise their discretion to fill the managerial gaps and flaws through their professional knowledge, skills, and experience (Blau & Presser, 2013).

Instructional leaders function as the manager and administrator of their institutions. They have the responsibility to organize their institutional activities at the optimum level by exercising their discretion because discretion determines them in their decisions for achieving organizational goals.

Discretion is exercised for filling gaps. It has the influence in school policies, working conditions, and their role is in planning strategies, organizing tasks, regulating organizational work, and services for the teaching staff and nurturing students. In case of discretion, instructional leaders make decisions in the context of existing circumstances. It is effective for managing organizational structure, management, and efficiency of the staff. It is a crucial part of management for increasing the performance of the instructional leaders for supervising schools and improving instructional techniques of teaching (Nutt, 2011).

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is trying to confer discretionary powers to the instructional leaders which were exercising in the decade of 1960' and 1970'. During those days, the schools were ensured with progress and improvement (Ashfaq, 2015). Now the instructional leaders have no discretionary powers as if they exercise them but the political hold and the interference of influential people not let them to exercise these powers.

The government wants to bring reforms in the education sector and on the other hand the instructional leaders have limited discretionary dimensions in their hands. During the time of admission, instructional leaders remain under pressure. They are bound to give admission to all the students who are in the circle of high schools. Because

of this decision, a large number of weak students get opportunity of getting admission which is contrary to the merit and this decision badly affect the development of career of the institution.

The focus of the study was to analyze the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the learners' academic performance, improvement of schools, and teachers' professional development.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the learners' academic performance.
2. Explore the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the improvement of schools.
3. Analyze the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the teachers' professional development.
4. Suggest remedial measures for improvement of schools through discretionary practices by instructional leaders.

Hypothesis

The Hypotheses of the study were mentioned as under:

1. H_0 : There is significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the learners' academic performance.
 H_a : There is no significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the learners' academic performance.
2. H_0 : There is significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the improvement of schools.
 H_a : There is no significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the improvement of schools.
3. H_0 : There is significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the teachers' professional development.
 H_a : There is no significance association between discretionary practices of instructional leaders and the teachers' professional development.

METHODOLOGY

It was a descriptive study and the data was collected through a questionnaire. The study was delimited to six districts namely Mansehra, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohistan, Hangu, and Torgar. The population of the study was 279 instructional leaders and 3671 working teachers. For sampling the *simple random sampling* technique was applied. The sample of the study was 279 (100% population) and 361 (10% population). The sampling was made according to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sampling size but the turnout of the responses of instructional leaders was 192 (68.81%) and the working teachers was 265 (73.40%) and therefore the total turnout of the responses was 457 (71.40%) out 640.

The data was tabulated and analyzed on SPSS 20.0 software and the results of the study were analysed on *Chi Square*. The responses of the study were obtained through *five point likert scale* where 'SA' stands for 'strongly agreed', 'A' for 'agreed', 'UD' for 'undecided', 'D' for 'disagreed', 'SDA' for 'strongly disagreed', 'TV' for 'tabulated value', 'CV (χ^2)' for 'calculated value', 'CI' for 'confidence interval', 'Cr V' for 'critical value' and 'df' for 'degree of freedom'.

Table 1: Sample of educational institutions on highest and lowest number of schools

	Districts	Instructional Leaders		Working Teachers	
		Population	Sample	Population	Sample
Highest No of Schools	Mansehra	78	78	1022	102
	Peshawar	77	77	994	99
	Swabi	75	75	1180	118
Lowest No of Schools	Hangu	23	23	241	24
	Kohistan	23	23	158	16
	Torgar	03	03	22	02
	Total	279	279	3617	361

Source: Annual Statistical Report. District EMIS 2011-12; Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

RESULTS

Table 2: Investigating the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for learners' academic performance

S/No	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SDA	df	TV	CV (χ^2)
1	Establishing policies and procedures for the learners' development	199	5	5	248	0	3	7.815	428.383
2	Planning curriculum for the learners' facilitations	0	171	23	149	114	3	7.815	111.639
3	Polishing learners educational trends	8	176	9	138	126	4	9.488	265.549
4	Building up learners' confidence	0	237	41	5	174	3	7.815	314.562
5	Preparing them for the challenges of practical life	60	241	10	36	110	3	7.815	316.540

Cr V = 7.82 at CI = .05 level

n = 457

Table 2 reflects statement wise results:

1. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 428.383$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Establishing policies and procedures for the learners' development" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
2. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 111.639$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Planning curriculum for the learners' facilitations" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
3. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 265.549$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Polishing learners' educational trends" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
4. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 314.562$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Building up learners' confidence" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
5. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 316.540$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Preparing them for the challenges of practical life" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3: Explore the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the improvement of schools

S/No	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SDA	df	TV	CV (χ^2)
1	Planning strategies for the school management	161	189	2	90	15	4	9.488	308.547
2	Addressing high academic expectations	99	220	10	109	19	3	7.815	314.805
3	Providing educational environment	63	201	40	88	65	4	9.488	176.906
4	Making constructive measures for the organizational development	58	152	11	136	100	4	9.488	145.681
5	Observing classroom instructions	129	247	42	31	8	4	9.488	423.077
6	Involving learners in the opinion for the school development	0	203	2	118	134	3	7.815	182.764
7	Consulting with the staff for achieving the organizational goals	94	191	7	94	71	4	9.488	191.173
8	Organizing school climate for the effective school performance	56	106	39	195	61	4	9.488	173.624
9	Making continue efforts for realizing school vision and targets	0	153	12	161	131	3	7.815	126.239
10	Bringing desire change in the school environment	5	174	41	0	237	3	7.815	314.562

Cr V = 7.82 at CI = .05 level

n = 457

Table 3 indicates statement wise results of the study:

1. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 308.547$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Planning strategies for the school management" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
2. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 314.805$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Addressing high academic expectations" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

3. The calculated value ($\chi^2=176.906$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Providing educational environment" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
4. The calculated value ($\chi^2=145.681$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Making constructive measures for the organizational development" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
5. The calculated value ($\chi^2=423.077$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Observing classroom instructions" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
6. The calculated value ($\chi^2=182.764$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Involving learners in the opinion for the school development" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
7. The calculated value ($\chi^2=191.173$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Consulting with the staff for achieving the organizational goals" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
8. The calculated value ($\chi^2=173.624$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Organizing school climate for the effective school performance" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
9. The calculated value ($\chi^2=126.239$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Making continue efforts for realizing school vision and targets" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
10. The calculated value ($\chi^2=314.562$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Bringing desire change in the school environment" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4: *Analyze the discretionary practices of instructional leaders for the teachers' professional development*

S/No	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SDA	df	TV	CV (χ^2)
1	Emphasizing on different instructional styles	0	95	30	309	23	3	7.815	470.221
2	Inducing staff for work by motivation and encouragement	0	125	0	180	152	2	5.991	9.930
3	Supporting staff for their professional development	5	199	0	5	248	3	7.815	428.383
4	Strengthening staff by developing their creative skills	0	237	5	174	41	3	7.815	314.562
5	Sharing their experience with their staff	0	285	15	120	37	3	7.815	393.932
6	Making staff learn latest teaching techniques	0	95	30	309	23	3	7.815	470.221
7	Preceding work by coordination, collaboration, and teamwork	0	153	12	161	131	3	7.815	126.239
8	know well the right job for the right person and right person for the right job	56	106	39	195	61	4	9.488	173.624
9	Monitoring the internal and external efficiency of the staff	0	248	5	5	199	3	7.815	428.383
10	Providing feedback to the staff in teaching learning process	170	26	10	241	10	3	7.815	316.540

Cr V = 7.82 at CI = .05 level

n = 457

Table 4 indicates statement wise results of the study:

1. The calculated value ($\chi^2=470.221$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Emphasizing on different instructional styles" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
2. The calculated value ($\chi^2=9.930$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Inducing staff for work by motivation and encouragement" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
3. The calculated value ($\chi^2=428.383$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Supporting staff for their professional development" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

4. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 314.562$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Strengthening staff by developing their creative skills" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
5. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 393.932$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Sharing their experience with their staff" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
6. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 470.221$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Making staff learn latest teaching techniques" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
7. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 126.239$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Preceding work by coordination, collaboration, and teamwork" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
8. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 173.624$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supported the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Know well the right job for the right person and right person for the right job" was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected.
9. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 428.383$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Monitoring the internal and the external efficiency of the staff" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.
10. The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 316.540$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics did not support the statement. Therefore, the null hypothesis statement, "Providing feedback to the staff in teaching learning process" was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

In the light of the findings, it was revealed that the majority of instructional leaders were feeble in exercising their discretionary practices for the learners' development. Principal's Job Description [PJD], (2013) elaborate that instructional leaders bring revolutionary change in the school environment. They concentrate on establishing school policies and procedures. They provide educational environment that attract the learners, parents, and the public but on actual grounds the present study exposed that neither the instructional leaders had the plan to establish policies and procedures for bringing revolutionary change in the educational institutions environment nor they had provided the environment that attract the learners where learners become gay to get admission but in schools there was an awesome environment.

Hong, Klasik, and Loeb, (2009) state that instructional leaders observe classroom instructions and plan curriculum and the current study also supported that instructional leaders observed classroom instructions but they were found inefficient in planning curriculum for the learners' facilitations.

Nutt (2011) identify that instructional leaders plan strategies for school management, organize school climate for the effective performance, and improve instructional techniques of teaching and the current study found that instructional leaders planned strategies for the school management and organized school climate but they were found less competent to improve the instructional techniques of the teachers for developing their professional roles in their educational institutions.

Hamzah, Yakop, Nordin, and Rahman, (2011) point out that discretion of instructional leaders has the role to induce the teaching staff for work by motivation and encouragement but the study found that there were a few instructional leaders who motivated and encouraged their staff for work. This statement did not support by any respondents. Often teachers usually doing their work and performing their duties but their instructional leaders neither tried to motivate nor encouraged them by award, reward, or any other incentives.

The above mention study concluded that instructional leaders must be dutiful, honest, sincere, devoted, and honest with their professions because they are the leaders of their schools. It is a fact that subordinates work when the leaders are in action and when they become careless about their work and do not exercise their discretionary practices for the educational institutions development, and then institutions ruins and it might be the great loss for the coming generations with poor quality of education.

CONCLUSION

In Pakistan and especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa context, the overall discretionary practices of the instructional leaders were unsatisfactory. As well as discretionary practices are concerned, they are the powers of the instructional leaders for the organizational management. The study revealed that instructional leaders work for the organizational development by polishing learners' educational trends. They made continue efforts to provide educational environment for the learners' achievement but besides these, they were found inefficient in establishing policies and procedures for strengthening the institutional structure, planning curriculum for the learners' facilitation in their studies, building up learners' confidence for making them brave and bold in their personal character and preparing them for the challenges in the practical life because in practical life, they have to face different sort of people and environment.

The study inferred that instructional leaders planned strategies for the improvement of schools by providing educational environment to the learners, making constructive measures for the organizational development, observing classroom instructions, consulting with the staff for achieving organizational goals, and organizing school climate for the effective school performance but their exercise of discretion were found unsatisfactory for addressing high academic expectations, consulting with the learners for the development of schools, making continue efforts for realizing school vision and bringing desire change in the school environment for the improvement in educational institutions performance.

There were a few instructional leaders who tried to hand in hand with their teachers' for their professional development and they knew well the right job for the right person and right person for the right job but their majority were deficient in exercising discretionary practices for developing teachers' professional style. They were incompetent to concentrate on their teaching staff for improving their instructional styles, induce them for work by motivation and encouragement, develop their creative skills, share their experience with them, make them learn the latest teaching techniques, monitor the internal and external efficiency of them, provide to them feedback in teaching learning process, and precede them the work by coordination, collaboration, and team work.

SUGGESTIONS

The discretionary practices are suggested for the instructional leaders are followed as under:

Establishing policies and procedures

1. Instructional leaders may establish policies and procedures for the learners' development.

Planning curriculum

2. Instructional leaders may plan curriculum for the learners' facilitations.

Address high academic expectations

3. Instructional leaders may address high academic expectations.

Involving learners in consultation

4. Instructional leaders may involve learners in the consultation for the school development.

Realizing school vision and targets

5. Instructional leaders may make continue efforts for realizing school vision and targets.

Emphasizing on different instructional styles

6. Instructional leaders may emphasize on different instructional styles.

Inducing staff by motivation and encouragement

7. Instructional leaders may induce staff for work by motivation and encouragement.

Strengthening staff by developing creative skills

8. Instructional leaders may strengthen staff by developing their creative skills.

Making staff learn latest teaching techniques

9. Instructional leaders may make staff learn latest teaching techniques.

Preceding work by coordination, collaboration, and team work

10. Instructional leaders may precede work by coordination, collaboration, and team work.

Monitoring internal and external efficiency of the staff

11. Instructional leaders may monitor the internal and external efficiency of the staff.

Providing feedback to the staff in teaching learning process

12. Instructional leaders may provide feedback to the staff in teaching learning process.

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