

Promoting Institutional Effectiveness: Development and Evaluation of an Instructional Leadership Training Program for the Leaders of School Education

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Abstract

Teaching and learning are what everyone should focus on in any institution. This should not only be with teachers, academic coordinators, heads of the departments, and members of internal quality assurance cell but also of Principals and Vice Principals, and they should exhibit an exceptionally high level of detailed knowledge about the craft of teaching. Principals as instructional leaders should be aware of the latest pedagogical practices, their effectiveness and should encourage and facilitate the implementation of such practices in the institutions. People should get expected support in solving problems of instructional practice from their peers and supervisors, and problems in design or implementation of instruction should be shared and discussed (even with supervisors) rather than hidden from view. The Principals are no more mere administrators; they should be taking crucial decisions about the instructional process and are accountable for the quality of instruction. Here arises the need of grooming the Principals of higher secondary educational institutions differently and Instructional Leadership Program is the answer to this.

KEYWORDS: Instructional Leadership, Principals, Pedagogical Beliefs, Pedagogical Practices

Introduction

The idea that Principals should serve as instructional leaders—not just as generic managers—in their schools is widely subscribed to among educators. In practice, though, few Principals act as genuine instructional leaders. Their days are filled with activities of management, scheduling, reporting, and handling relations with parents and community, dealing with the multiple crises and special situations that are inevitable in Educational institutions. Most Principals spend relatively little time in classrooms and even less analyzing instruction with teachers. They may arrange time for teachers' meetings and professional development, but they rarely provide intellectual leadership for development and innovations in teaching skill. This situation will not surprise anyone familiar with the structure of educational institutions and the career opportunities available to educators ready to expand their responsibilities beyond the individual classroom.

Their primary attention generally is on the administrative competencies and devoting little time or attention to questions of learning, curriculum, and professional development. Time on the job as a vice principal or a principal deepens the gulf. Principals' time is filled with many demands on them for administrative functions. Like most people, they also tend to gravitate toward doing what they know how to do, unsure what to look at or how to intervene when they visit classrooms. Principals tend to visit rarely, perhaps only to make required formal evaluations. With their knowledge of teaching growing outdated, they delegate questions of instruction and professional development to others. This pattern of distancing from instruction and

learning has been further increased by various movements for teacher empowerment. These have seemed to argue that pedagogy is the professional purview of the individual teacher and that intervention of a supervisor, Vice Principal or Principal is an intrusion on the teacher's professional judgment and prerogatives. Teacher service conditions often tend to protect teachers from arbitrary judgments by Principals and others. This trend, combined with a traditional view that evaluation and support are two distinct functions, discourages Principals from taking a lead role in shaping a focused culture of instruction within their institutions.

We have to create environment that will set its sights in a different direction in order to create and sustain successful and effective institution. Not only the academic results should improve, but there should also be a remarkable professional spirit among the teachers, Principals, and administrative staff members of the institution. With this intention, the researcher decided to develop and try out a training module for fostering the instructional leadership skills of leaders of higher education.

Need and Significance of the Study: The major landmarks in the history of Indian Education namely, National Policy on Education (1986, National Curriculum Framework (2005) and National Knowledge commission (2006-09) have caused the role of educational leaders, particularly the Principal, to be refocused, adjusted, and reinvented. Most of the transformational changes to the role of the Principal have been focused toward the technical core responsibility of the educational institution. Hoy and Miskel (2008) stated this technical core is the process of educational leaders focusing on the teaching and learning in the institution. This focus on teaching and learning has led to the development of a popular leadership construct called *instructional leadership*. The paramount focus of instructional leadership is to foster students' attainment of basic core skills and knowledge (Day, Leithwood, & Sammons, 2008; Fuller, Loab, Arshan, Chen, & Yi, 2007; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

Instructional leadership and its direct or indirect effects on student achievement, teacher job performance and job satisfaction has been a popular area of study by researchers in the field of educational leadership (Leithwood, 2005). The accountability requirements of government policies have placed significant pressures upon public educational leadership, from the national level to state level institutions down to the higher education level to school site Principal. Thus, these pressures have caused further interest in instructional leadership and its impact on certain variables related to institutional effectiveness including student achievement, teacher job performance and job satisfaction (Timer, 2003). According to Harris, Cavanagh, Reynolds, and Giddings (2004), contemporary views of educational leadership are increasingly focused on two aspects of the role of school Principals: the effective qualities of school leaders and the attention given to pedagogy within the institution of higher education. Harris et al. states that effective leadership of teacher instruction and student learning is contingent on the professional orientation of the Principal.

The proposed study will be a timely taken action in this regard. Current research will extensively look at what effective educational institutions do in regards to leadership practices and what pedagogical or curricular instructional practices are fostered and applied in such institutions by Principals and teachers.

Aims and Objectives Of The Study

The purpose of the study was

1. To develop an ***Instructional Leadership Training Program*** for the leaders of Educational institutions and to test its effectiveness with respect to its influence on
 - the pedagogical beliefs of Principals/Vice Principals
 - the instructional leadership behaviors of Principals/Vice Principals.

The study sought to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. To study the perceived effectiveness of the instructional leadership training program according to the academic leaders of the experimental group;
2. To compare the perceptions of academic leaders of the experimental group and the control group about their own instructional leadership behaviors before and after the implementation of Instructional Leadership Training Program;
3. To compare the beliefs of academic leaders of the experimental group and the control group about pedagogical practices before and after the implementation of the Instructional Leadership Training Program;

Research Questions and Hypotheses of the Study

In pursuit of the objectives, the following **research questions** were raised:

- R1.** What is the perceived effectiveness of the Instructional Leadership Training Program according to the participant academic leaders?

The following **null hypotheses** were formulated:

H₀₁. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the academic leaders from experimental group and control group about their instructional leadership behaviors (as indicated by the difference in their pre-test and post-test scores on *Instructional Leadership Behavior Scale*)

H₀₂. There is no significant difference in the pedagogical beliefs scores of the academic leaders from experimental group and control group (as indicated by the difference in their pre-test and post-test scores on *Principals' Pedagogical Beliefs Scale*)

Research Design

The present study is a mixed method research with embedded quasi experimental research design with an experimental group and a control group of school Principals/Vice Principals seeking to assess the effectiveness of ***Instructional Leadership Program*** in enhancing the institutional effectiveness.

The qualitative part of the study assessed the perceived effectiveness of the training module through focus group interviews of the academic leaders and teachers and sought to answer the research questions of the study. The methodology for data collection included participant observation and grounded theory approach. The quantitative part of the study was a two group's pre-test post-test quasi experimental research design which can be represented as follows:

O₁	X	O₂
O₃	C	O₄

Participants: The educational institutes were randomly selected and divided into experimental group and control group. The experimental group consisted of 10 academic leaders (Principal/ Vice Principal /Supervisor). Control group consisted of 8 academic leaders (Principal/ Vice Principal /Supervisor)

Instruments: The researcher developed the following tools:

a. *Principals' Instructional Leadership Behavior Scale*

The researcher used the Instructional Leadership Behaviour Scale to assess the leadership practices adopted by the leaders of participant educational institutes. There are in all 49 questions in the final scale. The participants were to Tick \checkmark against that response that was CLOSEST to the response they would usually have to the given situations. To assess the responses objectively, the researcher also prepared the scoring key. The questions carried different weightage in terms of scores: ranging from 4 to 1, 4 being the highest for the most desirable instructional practice for effective instructional leadership.

b. *Principals' Pedagogical Beliefs Scale*

Principals Pedagogical Beliefs Scale was used by the researcher to assess perceptions of the leaders of participant educational institutes towards their own pedagogical beliefs.

There are in all 40 questions in the final scale. The participants were to Tick (X) against that response that was CLOSEST to the response they would usually have to the given situations. To assess the responses objectively, the researcher also prepared the scoring key. The questions carried different weightage in terms of scores: ranging from 5 to 1, 5 being the highest for the most desirable pedagogical beliefs resulting in effective instructional leadership practices.

c. *Instructional Leadership Training Module*

In order to develop the above Instructional Leadership Training Module and conduct the workshops, the researcher hired a Mumbai based premier leadership training company, School of Leadership Coaching (SLC), imparting 'Coaching Skills' for leaders across various high performance organizations including Multinational corporations, Family owned businesses, SMEs and non-profit institution. The training Program was planned to be implemented in four phases i.e. diagnose, develop, deliver and deploy, with 2 - 3 weeks gap between each workshop so as to provide the participants adequate time required to carry out the Action Learning Project in their respective institutions.

Data Collection: The sequence of the program is presented below:



The **Instructional Leadership Training Program** for instructional leaders was conducted on three days i.e. 26th Nov, 9th Dec, 2013 & 4th Jan, 2014, with 2 – 3 weeks gap between each workshop so as to provide adequate time to the participants to carry out the Action Learning Project in their respective institutions. On the first day, the pre-tests were administered and on the last day, post tests were administered.

Answering Research Questions of the Study

For the sake of convenience, the research questionnaire repeated below:

R1. What is the perceived effectiveness of the Instructional Leadership Training Program according to the academic leaders from the experimental group?

Most of the heads greatly appreciated the experiences that encouraged them to actively seek out new ways that were outside their comfort zone, to evolve and develop their competency in handling situations faced by them at personal at professional level. They reflected on how the activities like Eliciting Values and Beliefs, Partnership Exercise & Feel Like A Star, helped them to realize how they sometimes took people for granted and judged them, when there was always some aspect they could have appreciated them on.

Many of the heads especially appreciated the SBIR, ASK-HOW Framework for the skills like soliciting and giving feedback, different styles of communication to be used according to the situation for maintaining and developing healthy relationship. All most all of them literally swore by the effectiveness of exercises like Johari Window, Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model and the 6A Framework and affirmed that these activities were literally eye openers to them and that now they were able to disclose themselves more freely and openly to their fellow workers.

However, most of them also said that the blueprint for creating coaching culture at their institution, which was prepared by them, couldn't be implemented as planned due lot of issues such as, busy schedule, pre-planned compulsory institutional activities and scarcity of time. They were also particularly unhappy about the fact that the present education and education management system almost compels them to be more like Administrators than Instructional Leaders.

Testing of Hypotheses in the Present Study

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the academic leaders from experimental group and control group about their instructional leadership behaviors (as indicated by the difference in their pre-test and post-test scores on Instructional Leadership Behavior Scale)

The following table presents the results of the t test used to find out the significant difference between the means of pre-test and post-test instructional leadership behaviour scale scores of the participants.

Table 1.

Significance of the Difference between the Means Instructional Leadership Behaviour Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	N = 18	N	Mean	SD	df	Table Value		t value	LOS
						0.05	0.01		

Instructional Leadership Behaviour	Control Group	8	1.5	2.26	16	2.583	2.921	2.93	0.01
	Expt. Group	10	14.9	14.25					

From the above table, it could be observed that the calculated t value is 2.93 which is higher than the table value at 0.05 and 0.01 levels. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level of significance.

Interpretation: There is significant difference in the perceptions of academic leaders from experimental group and control groups about their own instructional leadership behaviors.

Discussion: Instructional Leadership Training Programs such as these focusing on bringing the shift in mind-set go a long way in developing and promoting instructional leadership awareness amongst the academic leaders.

Testing of Hypothesis H₀₂

H₀₂. *There is no significant difference in the pedagogical beliefs scores of the academic leaders from experimental group and control group (as indicated by the difference in their pretest and posttest scores on Principals' Pedagogical Beliefs Scale)*

t test was used to find out the significant difference between the means of pre-test and post-test of Instructional Leaders' Pedagogical Beliefs scores of the participants. The following table presents the results of the t test.

Table 2.

Significance of the Difference between the Means of Pedagogical Beliefs Scores of Instructional Leaders of the Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	N = 18	N	Mean	SD	df	Table Value		t value	LOS
						0.05	0.01		
Instructional Leaders' Pedagogical Beliefs	Control Group	8	2	1.74	16	2.583	2.921	16.84	0.01 level
	Expt .Group	10	12.60	0.42					

From the above table, it could be observed that the calculated t value is 16.84 and the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01 level of significance.

Interpretation: There is significant difference in the pedagogical beliefs of the academic leaders from experimental group and control groups.

Discussion: Instructional Leadership Training Programs such as these that comprise practical activities that compel one to introspect deeply and genuinely decode their leadership styles and practices thus bringing a healthy change in the belief system of the participants. Since the program learnings are practical and feasible it makes it

easier for the academic leaders to apply them to enhance their Instructional Leadership Practices in their day to day professional lives.

Findings of the Study: The verification of the hypotheses revealed that

1. There is significant difference in the perceptions of academic leaders from experimental group and control groups about their own instructional leadership behaviors.
2. There is significant difference in the pedagogical beliefs of the academic leaders from experimental group and control groups.

Conclusion: Though there are few challenges along the way, such as working around rigid timetable, curriculum and continues assessments, institutional heads and teachers can work together and support each other to overcome these challenges as they did in this case. Based on the above findings researcher can confidently say that when the heads of the institutions are made capable of providing leadership and coaching in instruction it definitely motivates the teachers to put in their best efforts to make teaching-learning not just effective but also enjoyable for learners resulting in better learning outcomes.

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