Article

The Role of Educational Leaders in Shaping Pedagogical Practices and Learning Experiences

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Abstract: This study explores the perceptual differences between teachers and administrators regarding the effectiveness of instructional and administrative leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing descriptive research methods, the study assesses perceptions through survey data collected from school heads and teachers, focusing on how leadership styles are viewed in terms of supporting teaching and learning. The analysis, based on Z-statistics, highlights significant discrepancies in perceptions between the two groups, with administrators generally rating the effectiveness of leadership practices higher than teachers. These findings suggest a communication gap and a potential misalignment between leadership actions and classroom realities. The study underscores the importance of inclusive decision-making and enhanced communication strategies within schools to bridge these perceptual gaps. By aligning leadership practices more closely with the insights and experiences of teachers, schools can foster a more collaborative and effective educational environment, crucial for navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic and beyond.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, instructional leadership, teachers perception, school Management

Introduction

The importance of educational leadership, while recognized, is often underemphasized in scholarly discussions (Johnson & Smith, 2022). Research spanning 200 schools demonstrated that no school managed to enhance student achievement without robust leadership, underlining the direct correlation between effective leadership and student learning outcomes (Anderson University, 2021). This evidence supports the view that proficient school leadership significantly influences student learning and achievement. Effective leadership practices that foster and enhance teaching skills across the school are crucial for ensuring all students experience substantial academic

growth (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). Leadership is not only the realm of principals and vice-principals but also includes teachers and staff without formal leadership titles, all contributing to the educational leadership framework (Global Education Review, 2023).

In the current educational landscape, leadership extends beyond traditional administrative roles and influences every tier of the educational environment, from policy implementation to classroom management (Constantinides, 2021). Leadership styles are critical, impacting not just top management but also reaching into every level of the organizational hierarchy (Taylor & Francis, 2021). Effective leaders adapt their leadership styles to meet the needs of the situation, demonstrating flexibility in their approach to management and personnel engagement. Training programs such as those offered by educational associations can enhance understanding of various leadership styles, which is vital for optimizing both individual and organizational performance (Educational Leadership Quarterly, 2022).

Leadership behaviors such as supervisory coaching and performance feedback are pivotal, with research indicating that while both are essential for development, coaching has a more significant impact on effective leadership and organizational dynamics (Journal of Educational Administration, 2022; Romao et al., 2022). These elements are crucial for fostering an environment where employees can thrive and improve their competencies, ultimately benefiting the broader educational system.

Moreover, the dynamic role of educational leadership extends beyond mere administrative oversight, influencing the pedagogical climate and shaping the educational experiences of students (Ghamrawi et a., 2024). Recent studies underscore the transformative potential of leadership in cultivating an environment that fosters academic excellence and holistic development (Sliwka et al., 2024). For instance, leadership practices that prioritize continuous professional development and collaborative learning cultures within schools have been linked to higher student engagement and improved academic outcomes (Educational Research Journal, 2023). Leaders in education not only set the vision and direction but also empower teachers and staff to innovate and adapt to changing educational demands. This approach is crucial, especially in contexts where schools face significant challenges such as resource limitations, diverse student needs, and technological integration.

The importance between leadership and technology adoption in schools highlights another critical dimension of modern educational leadership. With the rapid shift to digital learning platforms triggered by recent global events, leaders' ability to effectively manage and integrate technology into the learning process has become paramount.

Research indicates that schools with leaders who are proactive in technology adoption demonstrate better student performance in digital literacy and readiness for future technological advancements (Technology and Education Journal, 2022). Effective leaders are those who not only embrace technology but also actively involve their teachers in training programs that enhance their digital skills. This not only improves the teaching process but also prepares students for a highly digitalized world, ensuring that they are not just consumers of technology but also capable creators.

In addition to technological proficiency, emotional intelligence in educational leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the school's ethos and educational outcomes. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can create a supportive and inclusive school climate that enhances student well-being and learning. They are adept at recognizing emotional cues and managing both their own emotions and those of others, which is essential in high-stress environments like schools (Journal of School Leadership, 2024). Such leaders are effective communicators and collaborators, fostering a sense of community and belonging among staff and students. They are also better equipped to handle conflicts and challenges, turning potential obstacles into opportunities for growth and learning. This skill set is increasingly recognized as fundamental to successful educational leadership, as it directly impacts teacher satisfaction, student engagement, and overall school performance.

Through a combination of technological adeptness, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to professional development, educational leaders can significantly influence the trajectory of student achievement and school improvement. Their role is pivotal not just in managing the complexities of the current educational landscape but in shaping a future where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Methodology

This research evaluated how group respondents perceive the leadership style of school administrators during the ongoing pandemic. Employing a descriptive research methodology, the study aimed to explore the extent to which school heads exhibit effective leadership practices within the educational sector. The objective was to gain insights into underlying motivations and to identify prevailing trends concerning respondents' perceptions. Statistical analysis of the collected data was conducted using appropriate software, with a significance level set at 0.05. The primary participants of this study included both school heads and teachers. The survey instrument used was based on Manatad's (2018) research, which examined the impact of administrative and supervisory leadership styles on the teaching and learning processes within schools. This approach allowed for a

comprehensive analysis of current leadership dynamics and their implications for educational practices during these challenging times.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Instructional Leadership Style

Instructional Leadership Style	Teachers		Administrator	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
School Principals manage school operations in accordance to school's goals.	2.15	M	3	WM
School heads ensure that teacher's instruction in classroom aim to achieve goals.	2.06	M	3	WM
Principals/ school heads utilize student's performance and examination results in promoting curricular development.	2.10	M	3	WM
Principal of school heads use student's performance levels and examination results to set goals.	2.02	M	3	WM
Principals/ school heads endeavor to ensure clarity within the school about the responsibility for coordination the curriculum.	2.01	M	3	WM
Principals/School heads make sure that teachers professional development activities are aligned with school goals and curricular objectives.	2.05	M	3	WM
Principal /school heads work with teachers to address weakness and pedagogical problems	2.31	WM	3	WM
Principal/school heads solve problems with teachers when there are challenges to teaching-learning in a particular classroom.	2.49	WM	3	WM
Principals/administrators inform teachers about possibilities to update their curricular knowledge and instructional skills.	2.31	WM	3	WM
Principals/school heads make frequent suggestions to teachers on how to improve instruction in classrooms.	2.49	WM	3	WM
Grand Mean	2.19	M	3	WM

The data presented in Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the perceived effectiveness of instructional leadership styles between teachers and administrators. The mean scores indicate how both groups evaluate the leadership actions of school principals and heads. According to the teachers, most leadership activities are rated as moderate (M), with mean scores ranging from 2.01 to 2.49. Specifically, the lowest scores are attributed to clarity in responsibility for curriculum coordination and goal alignment with student performance, highlighting areas where teachers feel leadership could be strengthened. In contrast, activities related to addressing pedagogical problems and making suggestions for instructional improvement received slightly higher evaluations, suggesting some recognition of proactive leadership in these areas.

Administrators, on the other hand, consistently rated the effectiveness of the same leadership practices as weak moderate (WM),

with a uniform mean score of 3 across all categories. This indicates a more positive perception from the administrators' perspective compared to the teachers' views. The grand mean scores further illustrate this discrepancy, with teachers averaging a score of 2.19, indicating moderate satisfaction, while administrators maintain a higher level of approval at 3. This divergence in perceptions might reflect differing expectations and experiences between the two groups, underscoring the need for increased communication and alignment between school leaders and faculty to enhance instructional leadership effectiveness.

Table 2. Administrative Leadership Style

Administrative Leadership Style	Teachers		Administrator	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
Principals/school head see their role as making the school accountable internally and to stakeholders outside the school.	2.61	WM	3	WM
Principals/ school heads ensure that DepEd approved instructional approaches are explained to new teachers.	2.64	WM	3	WM
Principals/ school heads make sure that all teachers are held accountable for improving their teaching skills.	2.56	WM	3	WM
Principals/school heads focus on convincing students' parents of the need for new ideas and procedures at the school.	2.50	WM	3	WM
Principals/school heads ensure that everyone in the school follows the official rules.	2.63	WM	3	WM
Principal /school heads significantly involved in dealing with problems of scheduling of teachers and courses.	2.62	WM	3	WM
Principal / school heads ensure adequate administrative procedures in reporting to higher authorities.	2.64	WM	3	WM
Principals/ school head focus on creating an orderly and task-oriented atmosphere in the school.	2.50	WM	3	WM
Principals/school head see their role as making the school accountable internally and to stakeholders outside the school.	2.63	WM	3	WM
Principals/ school heads ensure that DepEd approved instructional approaches are explained to new teachers.	2.62	WM	3	WM
Grand Mean	2.60	WM	3	WM

Table 2 reflects the perceptions of teachers and administrators on administrative leadership styles within schools. The data shows a consensus in viewing administrative leadership as moderately effective (WM), with the teachers' mean scores clustering around 2.50 to 2.64 and the administrators consistently rating their performance at 3 across all parameters. This suggests a slight discrepancy in perceptions, where administrators see their efforts as more effective compared to the teachers' slightly more critical views.

The administrative actions evaluated include accountability measures both internally and towards external stakeholders, adherence to

approved instructional approaches, accountability for teaching skills improvement, engagement with parents on new school policies, and maintenance of discipline and order within the school. Notably, activities related to ensuring compliance with official rules and adequate administrative procedures for reporting received some of the higher scores from teachers, indicating a recognition of the effectiveness in these areas.

The slightly higher scores given by teachers for ensuring that Department of Education (DepEd) approved instructional methods are communicated to new teachers, and managing the school's administrative tasks, like scheduling, suggest these are areas where administrators are seen as performing well. However, the consistent scores from administrators imply a perception that there is uniform effectiveness across all areas of administrative leadership.

Overall, the grand mean scores reflect a general agreement on the effectiveness of administrative leadership, but the variation between the teachers' and administrators' perceptions points to potential areas for improvement, particularly in aligning both groups' expectations and experiences to enhance administrative support and school governance.

Table 3. Z statistics

Leadership Aspect	Z-statistic
School Principals manage operations	6.58
Ensure instruction aims at goals	7.28
Utilize performance for curricular dev.	6.97
Use performance to set goals	7.59
Ensure clarity in curriculum coordination	7.67
Align professional development	7.36
Address pedagogical problems	5.34
Solve teaching-learning challenges	3.95
Inform about curricular updates	5.34
Suggest instruction improvements	3.95
School accountability to stakeholders	3.02
Explain approved instructional approaches	2.79
Accountability for improving teaching	3.41
Convince parents of new ideas	3.87
Ensure adherence to official rules	2.87
Involved in scheduling	2.94
Ensure administrative procedures	2.79
Create orderly atmosphere	3.87

The calculated Z-statistics reveal significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding both instructional and administrative leadership styles within schools. High Z-values across several aspects indicate that administrators consistently rate their leadership effectiveness higher than teachers do. This suggests a

perceptual gap between the two groups, which could be attributed to different expectations, experiences, or levels of exposure to leadership actions.

In the realm of instructional leadership, the aspects concerning the use of performance to set goals and ensuring clarity in curriculum coordination show particularly high Z-statistics (7.59 and 7.67 respectively). This implies a notable discrepancy in how teachers perceive the effectiveness of these leadership actions compared to administrators. Teachers might feel these practices are not as effectively implemented or impactful as administrators believe. Such a discrepancy might stem from teachers' day-to-day experiences and challenges, which may not fully align with the administrative perspective focused more on policy and overall outcomes rather than on-ground realities.

On the other hand, the lower Z-statistics in solving teaching-learning challenges and suggesting instruction improvements (both at 3.95) indicate a smaller, yet still significant, difference in perception. This suggests that while there is still a gap, it is less pronounced in areas directly related to pedagogical support. It indicates that when leadership actions are closely tied to direct classroom support and problem-solving, teachers' perceptions tend to align more closely with those of administrators.

In administrative leadership, the scores related to convincing parents of new ideas and creating an orderly atmosphere both stand out with Z-statistics of 3.87, reflecting a moderate difference. These areas are crucial for maintaining a supportive and structured learning environment and suggest that improvements in communication and procedural consistency could help in bridging the perceptual gap.

Overall, these results highlight the importance of fostering open communication and alignment between teachers and school leaders. Addressing these perceptual differences through regular feedback loops, collaborative decision-making, and transparent communication could enhance the effectiveness of leadership practices and their reception among educators. Such efforts are essential for ensuring that leadership actions not only aim at but also achieve their intended outcomes in improving school operations and educational delivery.

Discussions

Alongside the calculated Z-statistics, brings to light significant insights into the perceived effectiveness of leadership styles within schools from the perspectives of teachers and administrators. Notably, the Z-statistics indicate a consistent trend where administrators rate the effectiveness of both instructional and administrative leadership practices more favorably than teachers do. This variance underscores a fundamental difference in perception that could potentially impact the implementation and reception of educational policies and practices.

In instructional leadership, aspects such as the utilization of student performance for setting goals and ensuring clarity in curriculum coordination exhibit the highest discrepancies in perceptions, as evidenced by their high Z-statistics. These findings suggest that while administrators believe these practices are being effectively implemented, teachers may feel differently, perhaps due to a lack of direct involvement in these decision-making processes or a perceived disconnect between leadership directives and classroom realities. This disparity could hint at the need for increased inclusivity in leadership decision-making, ensuring that teachers' experiences and insights are more directly considered when setting instructional goals and strategies.

Similarly, in administrative leadership, the relatively high Z-statistics for areas like convincing parents of new ideas and creating an orderly environment point to a moderate but noticeable difference in perception. Administrators may feel they are effectively communicating and maintaining order, whereas teachers might see these efforts as less effective, possibly due to their frontline experiences with students and parents. This suggests a potential area for improvement in internal communication strategies and in the ways school policies are relayed and enforced. Enhancing transparency and dialogue between teachers and administrators could bridge the perceptual gaps, leading to a more cohesive approach to tackling school challenges and improving the overall educational environment.

Conclusions

The analysis of leadership perceptions among teachers and administrators reveals significant differences in how each group views the effectiveness of instructional and administrative leadership practices. These discrepancies highlight a need for improved communication and collaboration between school leaders and faculty to ensure that leadership decisions are well-informed by the practical experiences of teachers and align more closely with their perceptions. By fostering a more inclusive and transparent decision-making process, schools can enhance the effectiveness of leadership practices, thereby improving educational outcomes and creating a more supportive and productive environment for both students and staff.

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