

Trends and Practices of Instructional Leadership in Teacher Education

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Abstract – Since time immemorial, leadership has been a key factor that determines the achievement of learning institutions (Toprak, 2020, Day et al., 2016). In the National Education Policy 2020, the distributed leadership is predicted as an instrument to change the educational system in India. In this article, the investigator has examined the current instructional leadership trends and practices in teacher education, and also identified the gaps in the existing literature. The present investigator has also examined the leadership models that determine student learning outcomes. The published literature through systematic searches of Google scholar, PubMed, education resources information centre (ERIC) and the like has been used to extract empirical evidence. The results provided evidence-based policy guidelines to teacher and school education, and this can enhance the leadership competences in instruction that are in the best interest of the society.

Keywords – Leadership, Teacher Education, Instructional Leadership

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of instructional leadership has become a conclusive concern in teacher education, defining the channels in which the educational leaders affect pedagogical practice and learning outcomes (Singh, 2024) (Pitriani, 2024). With the changing nature of the educational environment, instructional leaders are becoming more and more involved in the dynamic and additional aspects of instructional matters, curriculum development, and professional learning, rather than merely the traditional administrative functions (Adams & Yusoff, 2020) Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024). The given evolution is an indication of the increasing recognition of the fact that the role of the leader is not only to govern the institutions but also to be an active participant of the teaching process (Sanford et al., 2019). Recent discussions (Cheng, 1994) (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020) show that there has been a transition to collaborative leadership models which in this case, instructional leaders collaborate with teachers to create a sense of shared accountability to student achievement. The paper examines the current trends and practices of instructional leadership in the teaching field and evaluates how these practices influence the effectiveness of the teacher and the performance of the student in the contemporary learning setting. Through a strict examination of literature and case studies, the research clarifies the critical nature of the instructional leadership in determining the future of teacher education. Besides collaborative model, instructional leader professional development has also been the center of attention in promoting educational outcomes. The institution of higher learnings are now charged with the responsibility of moulding leaders into leaders by way of specialised programmes that focus on teaching leadership skills thus making them adept to handle the challenges of the modern education environment. Through integrating new

forms of pedagogies and leadership theories into the training, future instructional leaders will be able to learn how to effectively facilitate teachers and create meaningful learning experiences particularly with the emergence of the changing accountability frameworks. The necessity of a common leadership strategy thus deepens; all the members of the education community, such as administrators and teachers, need to realize their roles in the development of the culture of continuous improvement and shared responsibility in the achievement of students. Not only this change enhances the effectiveness of instructional leadership; it will also increase the inclusiveness and collaborative learning environment, which will positively impact both teachers and students. It is not new that leadership is considered one of the primary sources of success of the educational institutions. In the past, educational leadership was not just about administrative control but it dealt with influencing culture, policy and pedagogical orientation, and thus quality of teaching and learning. The education leadership has assumed a new form as far as a more hierarchical and principal-focused paradigm has been transformed into a collaborative, distributed, and multifaceted paradigm. This change highlights the fact that the culture of institutions is shaped by a good leader, which can affect the performance of teachers and the results of students (Toprak, 2020). The academic research on school leadership highlights its essentials in instilling common educational values, teacher growth and school enhancement sustainability (Day, Gu, and Sammons, 2016). Distributed leadership has also emerged in the National Education Policy 2020 in recent years as a reformative approach to education. The policy highlights the importance of decentralising the leadership roles and promoting cooperative interaction between various stakeholders such as teachers, administrators and community members. The focus on distributed leadership coincides with the international agreement on the fact that participative leadership has a beneficial effect on the motivation of educators and the learning results of students (Singh, 2024). At the same time, instructional leadership, which is a leadership that is targeted at the improvement of the teaching and learning activities, has become one of the main factors influencing the performance of teachers and the learning achievements of students (Pitriani, 2024). In this respect, a detailed insight into the current trends and practices of instructional leadership in teacher education programmes is crucial to developing school leaders who could cope with modern issues. (Townsend, 2011) (Karakse et al., 2024).

II. THEORETICAL BASES OF INSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP

Instructional leadership is essentially guided towards the development and improvement of teaching/learning in schools. In the most basic terms, it entails principals and other leaders expressing well-defined instructional goals,

managing instructional activities, and creating favorable learning conditions. There are many conceptual frameworks that outline instructional leadership and aligned it to different leadership approaches namely transformational, distributed and transactional leadership. Although transformational leadership is inspirational and motivating towards a change, whereas transactional leadership is concerned with the processes and exchanges in organisations, the instructional leadership is concerned with direct pedagogical improvements. The two leadership styles do not contradict each other but instead engage in how they influence each other to relate to educational achievement. The role of instructional leadership becomes especially relevant in the context of teacher education. It influences the planning, delivering, and overseeing of teacher preparation programmes and professional development programs. The leaders in such environments impact the modalities of teacher educator training, promote perpetual learning of teachers, and instill reflective modes of instruction that are necessary in high-quality teaching (Singh, 2024). Empirical research illustrates that instructional leadership's effectiveness is mediated through mechanisms such as enhancing teacher instructional practices and fostering professional learning communities that emphasize collaboration and continuous improvement (E. Dorukbai, R. Cansoy, 2020). Correspondingly, professional learning communities offer a supportive framework where instructional leadership encourages shared practices and mutual accountability, leading to improved educational outcomes (E. Pitriani, 2024). Hierarchical models of instructional leadership despite their common use are subject to criticism. The tendency of traditional models to maintain top-down authority frameworks thereby potentially limiting teacher autonomy and commitment, is one of the limitations identified and has become a common feature of extant literature. As a result, new paradigms promote distributed and sustainable leadership models that delegate power and develop a sense of collective responsibility among teachers. With the heterogeneous and sophisticated structure of education setting, the modern leadership models are more focused on the aspect of contextual responsiveness, both of which embrace the local cultural dynamics and global trends in order to customise leadership practices. This contextual sensitivity supports the applicability and effectiveness of instructional leadership in diverse educational contexts. (Toprak, 2020) (Day et al., 2016).

III. LEADERSHIP IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Transformational leadership was discussed by (Cheng, 1994, (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020) and found helping hand for teachers especially in service. This paradigm stresses the use of teachers as leaders in schools thus enhancing a common vision of quality education (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). It makes teachers train various skills, including pedagogical and leadership ones, and the aim of making students ready to face future challenges (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). (Toprak, 2020) (Day et al., 2016). On the other hand, Distributed Leadership Models as emphasis by (Singh, 2024) (Pitriani, 2024) found ample in teacher education. These models emphasize on collective decision-making and shared participation thus increasing the school effectiveness and teacher empowerment (Sachar, 2025). They deal with

issues like role ambiguity and the unwillingness of traditional structures which is highlighted as the necessity to conduct further research to understand their long-term effects (Sachar, 2025). Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional leadership practices refer to actions implemented by school administrators to enhance the experiences of teachers and students. Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional leadership practices are defined as actions undertaken by school administrators to improve the experience of teachers and students. (Adams & Yusoff, 2020) (Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024). These interventions are directed at enhancing the quality of teaching and the performance of the students by means of intensive instruction (Li, 2024). Although they are effective, they have been criticized due to their shortcomings as compared to collaborative leadership models (Bush, 2015). The instructional leadership trends despite their optimistic forecasts have their issues, and one of them is the difficulties in the complete implementation of the models, especially the obstacles to traditional hierarchies and fair involvement of educators (Sanford et al., 2019).

IV. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP MODELS

These models emphasize on collective decision-making and shared participation thus increasing the school effectiveness and teacher empowerment (Sachar, 2025). They deal with issues like role ambiguity and the unwillingness of traditional structures which is highlighted as the necessity to conduct further research to understand their long-term effects (Sachar, 2025). Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional leadership practices refer to actions implemented by school administrators to enhance the experiences of teachers and students. Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional leadership practices are defined as actions undertaken by school administrators to improve the experience of teachers and students. (Adams & Yusoff, 2020, Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024). These interventions are directed at enhancing the quality of teaching and the performance of the students by means of intensive instruction (Li, 2024). Although they are effective, they have been criticized due to their shortcomings as compared to collaborative leadership models (Bush, 2015). The instructional leadership trends despite their optimistic forecasts have their issues, and one of them is the difficulties in the complete implementation of the models, especially the obstacles to traditional hierarchies and fair involvement of educators (Townsend, 2011) (Karakse et al., 2024).

V. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP RESEARCH TRENDS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The discussion of the topic of instructional leadership in teacher education has experienced a dramatic shift in the course of time, as bibliometric and thematic analyses of the wide range of academic literature demonstrate. In the past, the empirical research (Singh, 2024) (Pitriani, 2024) concentrated on the administrative and management roles of school principals. Given that instructional leadership has been brought into focus more recently, the focus has then moved to distributed leadership models that model collaborative practice. This development indicates recognition that the effectiveness of educational leadership depends on developing the quality of instruction and

empowering various school participants, instead of centralizing the power in the hands of one person. In line with this, the literature shows a growing trend of using quantitative methodologies in the past decades, and thus it is easier to use it to make more strong and generalizable conclusions about the effects of leadership. Additionally, modern research includes the aspects of social justice and equity, and leadership is viewed as a means of eliminating systemic differences in education. The study has significant contextual diversity, as far as geography is concerned. Whereas initial and intensive writing is based in Western environments like United States and Europe, recent research is paying more attention to non-Western environments such as India, Turkey and Kenya. These papers emphasize the fact that leadership strategies are always shaped by culture, society, and policy contexts and require adjustments to local realities (G. Singh, 2024). An example of this is that distributed leadership in Turkey gives rise to differences in enactment that have been influenced by cultural norms that are specific to the region. Importantly, the disparities also manifest themselves between the public and the private educational sectors, as the former tend to have less freedom to enact the instructional and transformational leadership practices, which results in higher teacher satisfaction and better student results in comparison to the latter. In methodology, research has taken advantage of the large scale internationally survey data sets like TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) to carry out multi country analysis which provides the comparative information on the role of leadership within the education systems. The mixed-method designs of encompassing qualitative interview and quantitative survey have further contributed to the understanding of leadership enactments and experiences in various educational contexts. The evaluation of direct and indirect effects of leadership on teacher professional growth and student learning outcomes has been promoted by meta-analytical methods, such as structural equation modeling, and thus clarified the indirect mediating roles of teacher efficacy and collaboration. Instead, these models enable leaders to foster an environment in which every stakeholder feels at ease with change and is supportive of it. Modelling Leadership and Application in Teacher Educations. (Adams & Yusoff, 2020) (Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024)

Conventional theories of instructional leadership anticipate the principal as the key facilitator of controlling the quality of instruction and developing a favorable school-learning environment. Principals engage in classroom, teacher, and curricular supervision practises to ensure that practice is in line with pedagogical norms. Nevertheless, these models tend to face the problem of inability to balance the two demands of administrative and instructional leadership and this can lead to the lack of attention to teacher development and innovation. However, leadership in instructions produces a significant effect on teacher self-efficacy and commitment that have consequent effect on teaching quality and student achievement. A more modern paradigm embraces distributed and pedagogical leadership models, which unite delegation of leadership roles and the emphasis on the enhancement of pedagogy. These hybrid models recognize that the instructional leadership is not limited to principals, but includes teacher leaders, trainers, and other parties, all of whom impact on instructional activities. In this respect, teacher leadership, especially, has become a major contributor of professional learning and improvement of

instruction by use of collaborative network and engagement among peers. Meta-analytic studies support the existence of a positive relationship between distributed leadership and teacher professional development and collective efficacy, which in turn leads to the creation of an educational environment that is conducive to student achievement. Simultaneously, the transformational and transactional models provide leadership perspectives that are still influential in the leadership discourse of teacher education. Transformational leadership where inspirational motivation and personalized consideration are the defining features have been associated with the nurturing of the key skills of the 21st century such as collaboration and critical thinking. Instructional leadership is complemented by transactional leadership that brings about clarity of expectations, rewards and execution of tasks to ensure that there is organizational structure and accountability. Empirical reviews have outlined pre-conditions that contribute to the development of transformational leadership in educational settings- leader attributes and organizational equitability- hence strengthening the multiplier of transformational leadership in complicated schooling settings (Sanford et al., 2019). The role of instructional leadership in teacher education institutions is multiplied with the various roles and responsibilities. School principals do not only mentor and oversee teachers, but also lead the curriculum, managing the match between instruction and changes in educational requirements. However, the sharing of leadership costs is also evident in the work of teacher educators and administrative personnel, which implies the necessity to bear joint responsibility to be able to cope with the workload and improve teaching (Townsend, 2011) (Karakse et al., 2024). Notably, the application of instructional leadership in teacher education is currently focused more on considering the integration of teacher voice and developing agency, which can empower teachers to be active participants in the leadership process and curriculum choices. Constant learning and professional development are two of the most important practices in instructional leadership. Leadership strategies involve organizing continuous teacher professional learning which is in line with the specified instructional goals. The policies that facilitate continuity of professional growth are imperative especially in the reformative settings where the teachers need to adjust to new standards and pedagogies. In addition, formal teacher leadership and instructional coaching programs have been established in order to develop instructional competencies and improve collective instructional practices. Through these programs, teachers receive support frameworks which allow them to develop skills, exchange best practices as well as collaborate to enhance instruction. A collaborative culture is one of the pillars of instructional improvement. Educational leaders (principals) and other educational leaders are actively promoting collaboration and mutual reflective practice among the teachers and empirical research proves this to be true and can boost the quality of instruction. Since learning communities in schools foster innovation and a sense of shared responsibility, learning communities at the same time enable the creation of a conducive environment that sparks educational change. These facilitating cultures do not just motivate teachers but also have an impact on the student performance as they enhance uniformity and order in the delivery of instruction. (Cheng, 1994) (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020).

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE

Instructional leadership has significant influence on the outcomes of the teachers, especially with regard to teacher self-efficacy and profile of instructional practice. The empirical studies (Toprak, 2020) (Day et al., 2016) have found out strong positive ties between the instructional leadership of principals and teacher self-efficacy which proves that instructional leadership that develops a favorable learning climate in schools enhances the confidence and teaching performance of teachers. The mediating effect of teacher professional learning in the correlation of instructional leadership and better teaching practices highlights the need to develop over time and receive institutional support (E. Dorukbai and R. Cansoy, 2020). The positive learning conditions do not only strengthen the teacher efficacy but promote instructional innovation and commitment as well. (Singh, 2024) (Pitriani, 2024) Instructional leadership also affects teacher commitment and job satisfaction. Distributed leadership models have been seen to enhance job commitment by teachers in mitigating the isolation and by supporting shared leadership responsibilities. There are varying economic, social, and political factors that interact with the instructional leadership to influence the motivation of teachers, their job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Democratic styles of leadership have positive influence on the discipline and satisfaction of teachers through participation in decision making and the development of conducive workplace atmosphere. Furthermore, teacher empowerment through leadership is a critical aspect that determines the results of the instruction. Distributed and pedagogical leadership styles foster the leadership abilities of teachers, which allows them to influence instructional decision making and peer cooperation. The formal teacher leadership programs have been found to be successful in promoting teacher collaboration and teacher instruction support systems thus leading to professional growth and long-term instructional growth. The perception of leadership support and empowerment by teachers is always associated with high motivation of job satisfaction and instructional commitment. (Adams & Yusoff, 2020) (Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024).

VII. LEADERSHIP OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF STUDENTS

The connection of instructional leadership and student learning outcomes has been well established and works in more than one way, such as instructor instructional practices and motivation (Sanford et al., 2019) Teaching quality directly depends on instructional leadership, which makes it easier to achieve higher levels of student achievement. Cross-national data, such as that collected by The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024, shows that the extent of leadership effects differ among countries and schools, which the importance of situational factors. These findings are achieved by meta-analytical evidence that shows that leadership-for-learning frameworks have significant relations with improved academic performance by students. The differences in the approaches of leadership

in public and private schools also shed more light on the role in influencing student outcomes. According to the comparative studies, the transactional leadership style and instructional leadership style are more commonly used in the private schools and are related to high teacher satisfaction and high rate of student achievement. Conversely, there is a lack of flexibility in leadership in terms of the regulatory restrictions that are faced by public schools, thus potentially undermining the quality of instruction and student performance. Instructional leadership also plays a strategic role in cultivating competencies of the 21 st century, such as critical thinking and collaborative skills, without which students cannot succeed in modern societies. Leadership support is the key to innovation of instructional models. An example would be project-based learning that requires the solid leadership intervention to be effectively implemented into the curriculum, thus enhancing the student engagement and learning outcomes. There is also the central role of leadership that prepares the teachers towards applying the standards of education and reformations that would help in improving the quality and alignment of teaching. Faced with the world educational challenges, adaptive leadership is required to satisfy the cultural, technological, and pedagogical needs in various learning settings (Townsend, 2011) (Karakse et al., 2024).

VIII. CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Even after significant progresses, there are still several unaddressed gaps and issues in the field of instructional leadership. One of the most significant weaknesses revolves around the narrow-mindedness in terms of the interrelations that exist between teacher commitment and instructional leadership with respect to the subtle economic, social, and political aspects that serve to mediate this association (Cheng, 1994) (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). Also, the contextual variables which affect leadership effectiveness are not adequately studied, especially in diverse cultural and institutional contexts in which the meaning and practices of leadership can differ significantly. Furthermore, the lack of longitudinal empirical information restrains the evaluation of long-term effects of leadership intervention on teacher practices and student achievement, which limits evidence-based policymaking. The other issue is related to definitional congruence and operationalization of distributed and pedagogical leadership in teacher education. The literature presents inconsistency in the meaning of these concepts and application methods thus making it harder to comparatively analyze and synthesize research results. Also, the opinion of developing nations and non-Western situations is under-represented, which limits the breadth of generalization and worldwide applicability of the instructional leadership theories (G. Singh, 2024). Handling these inadequacies will require more contextually based, longitudinal and mixed method research which combines theory, practice and policy (Toprak, 2020, Day et al., 2016).

IX. POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the instructional leadership abilities in teacher education, specific leadership training programmes should be developed with a clearly stated focus on the

instructional and distributed leadership capabilities (Singh, 2024, (Pitriani, 2024). The potential educational leaders should be prepared to juggle both administrative and pedagogical roles with the help of such programmes. It is also advisable to incorporate mentorship and coaching models in teacher preparation to provide enabling models to novice teachers and the upcoming leaders. Additionally, the development of leadership strategies that emphasize collaboration and professional learning communities creates a fertile ground on which instructional innovation and continuous improvement take place (E. Pitriani, 2024). Policy frameworks should support sustainable instructional leadership by ensuring educational policies are in tandem with leadership development, and ceaseless professional development of teachers. With the recognition of the heterogeneity of educational situations, educational policies must encourage flexible leadership frameworks, which are responsive to cultural and contextual demands, thus avoiding a one-size-fits-all prescription. Furthermore, enhancing the system of accountability by means of facilitative leadership, which values learning conditions and interaction between teachers can intensify the overall efficacies of schools (Adams & Yusoff, 2020). Improving research-practice connections is critical in the direction of improving the influence of instruction leadership. This includes the encouragement of longitudinal and mixed-method research designs that provide in-depth evidence about the effects of leadership in teaching and learning. Further promotion of cross-national comparative research that leverages the use of datasets like TALIS can produce subtle information that can be applied in a variety of settings. Nurturing the development of collaboration between researchers, policymakers and practitioners can see that leadership research becomes applied in practical, real-world strategies that can transform the outcomes of education. (Adams & Yusoff, 2020, Dorukbai & Cansoy, 2024)

CONCLUSION

This overall analysis shows that instructional leadership in teacher education has approached a different angle of administration, whereby it is inclusive, distributed, and pedagogically oriented practices that are critical in promoting teacher and student success. The literature highlights distributed and instructional leadership as key forces in successful teacher preparation, professional growth, and quality of instruction, which in turn affect the achievement of students. Despite this, there still exist considerable gaps especially in matters of contextual variability, long term effects, and conceptual clarity of leadership models. To deal with these issues, there should be integrative research methods and responsive policies that develop instructional leadership capabilities of various educational systems. With the ongoing process of teacher education adjusting to the fast changing educational environments in the global frontiers, the long-term emphasis over instructional leadership will remain indispensable in the development of efficient teachers and empowerment of learners into the future. There is a changing emphasis on instructional leadership in teacher education, especially in the scenario of the

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India that lays stress on distributed leadership. The given approach will help to improve the quality of education by encouraging collaborative practices between the educators. Below, the major trends and practices in instructional leadership are explained. (Townsend, 2011) (Karakse et al., 2024) Leadership in teacher education: transformational leadership (Cheng, 1994) (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). This paradigm stresses the use of teachers as leaders in schools thus enhancing a common vision of quality education (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). It makes teachers train various skills, including pedagogical and leadership ones, and the aim of making students ready to face future challenges (Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020) (Toprak, 2020) (Day et al., 2016).

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