

Faculty Perceptions of Effective School Leadership: Impacts on Instruction and Learning Outcomes

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Abstract:

This study explores faculty perceptions of effective school leadership, with a specific focus on instructional leadership and its impact on student learning outcomes. Anchored in the frameworks of transformational, instructional, and ethical leadership, the research synthesizes insights from both empirical and theoretical literature. Through qualitative analysis of faculty responses from various schools, the study identifies key leadership practices that contribute to enhanced teaching effectiveness and learner achievement. Findings reveal that faculty members value school heads who demonstrate trustworthiness, provide constructive instructional feedback, support ongoing professional development, and promote a shared instructional vision. These elements are viewed as essential to building a positive school culture and driving continuous instructional improvement. The study underscores the importance of leadership that integrates both pedagogical guidance and relational integrity. The results suggest that effective school leadership is not merely administrative but fundamentally instructional, directly shaping classroom practices and student success. Implications point to the need for targeted leadership development programs that emphasize both instructional and transformational competencies. Understanding faculty perspectives can inform policy, training, and evaluation frameworks aimed at strengthening educational leadership across diverse learning environments.

Keywords: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, faculty perception, student outcomes

Introduction:

Effective school leadership is widely recognized as a foundational element in achieving educational excellence. Research by Coelli and Green (2012) and Hallinger and Heck (1996) has consistently demonstrated that the leadership of school heads plays a critical role in shaping both the instructional environment and student academic outcomes. School leaders influence not only administrative operations but also the quality and direction of teaching and learning processes. Their decisions set the tone for school culture, expectations, and professional collaboration, all of which ultimately impact student achievement.

While extensive scholarship has explored leadership styles—such as transformational, transactional, and instructional leadership—most studies have emphasized measurable organizational outcomes, often from the perspective of student performance or school effectiveness metrics. What remains underexplored is the faculty's perception of these leadership behaviors, particularly as they relate to teaching and instruction. Faculty members, who are directly impacted by their leaders' decisions, offer a unique and valuable perspective that can reveal how leadership is operationalized at the ground level.

Instructional leadership, defined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), emphasizes the principal's role in setting instructional goals, managing the curriculum, and supervising teaching. It places the school leader at the heart of academic quality assurance. In contrast, transformational leadership, as proposed by Burns (1978) and later developed in educational settings by Hallinger (2003), focuses on inspiring and motivating teachers through vision, support, and empowerment. Authentic leadership, described by Agote et al. (2016), centers on self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior, building emotional trust and stronger teacher-leader relationships. Each of these frameworks contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership influences teacher behavior and instructional outcomes.

Faculty perceptions are critical because they reflect how leadership theories translate into real-world practices. For instance, a school head who provides timely, constructive feedback may be perceived as an instructional leader, even if their leadership style includes elements of transformational or authentic leadership. Teachers' perceptions of fairness, trust, and support can significantly affect their motivation, instructional innovation, and willingness to collaborate. Therefore, examining how leadership behaviors are experienced and interpreted by faculty offers nuanced insights into the effectiveness of school leadership beyond structural or performance-based evaluations.

This study seeks to fill the existing gap by focusing on faculty perceptions of school leadership, with an emphasis on how leadership affects instruction and learning outcomes. By drawing on established theoretical models—transformational, authentic, and instructional leadership—the research aims to analyze how school heads' actions are understood by their faculty and how these perceptions relate to teaching quality and student success. In doing so, it contributes to a more holistic understanding of leadership effectiveness in educational contexts.

Literature Review:

Instructional leadership has long been recognized as a cornerstone of effective school management and student achievement. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) laid the foundation by defining instructional leadership as the actions principals undertake to promote a conducive learning environment. Their framework emphasized setting clear academic goals, supervising instruction, and promoting a positive school climate. Building on this, Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005) explored the influence of such leadership on teacher behavior and instructional practices, affirming its critical role in academic improvement.

In more recent studies, Bellibas, Polatcan, and Kilinc (2020) linked instructional leadership to enhanced teaching practices, asserting that leaders who engage teachers in shared practices and promote agency contribute to better learning outcomes. Similarly, Bellibas and Liu (2018) highlighted the significance of instructional and distributed leadership in fostering a positive school climate. These findings are echoed by Esa et al. (2017), who found that principals who effectively manage instructional leadership practices are more successful in implementing educational reforms.

Bush (2018) underscored the global relevance of instructional leadership by stressing the importance of proper preparation and induction programs for school principals. Such efforts are critical in shaping leaders capable of guiding schools through complex educational challenges. Andreoli et al. (2020) supported this assertion in their analysis of rural school leadership, noting that principals who focused on instructional leadership were better positioned to drive school improvement and innovation.

The concept of transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978), added another dimension to the leadership discourse. This model involves motivating and inspiring followers to exceed ordinary expectations. Barkman (2015) and Akcay Gungor (2018) demonstrated that transformational leaders possess characteristics such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation, which contribute to heightened teacher engagement and student achievement. Hallinger (2003, 2007) later integrated transformational leadership into educational contexts, emphasizing its role in managing change and fostering a collaborative school culture.

Transformational leadership is not only about change management but also about creating a shared vision and empowering teachers. Chemers (2016) described it as an integrative model that combines leadership behavior with team dynamics. Cansoy (2019) supported this, showing a positive correlation between transformational leadership behaviors and teacher job satisfaction. Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2019) added that effective followership, often nurtured through transformational leadership, is a crucial yet overlooked element in school success.

Authentic leadership further enriches the leadership paradigm by prioritizing ethics, transparency, and relational trust. Agote, Aramburu, and Lines (2016) found that authentic leaders build emotional trust with their followers, fostering an environment conducive to change and innovation. Abdullahi (2020) extended this by linking ethical leadership to staff innovation in Nigerian schools, illustrating its universal applicability.

Scholars like Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of leadership in promoting academic success and inclusivity. Their study revealed that schools led by authentic and effective leaders tend to perform better academically and socially. Bellei et al. (2020) supported this by identifying the long-term sustainability of school effectiveness as being heavily dependent on consistent and visionary leadership.

Empirical studies offer robust evidence connecting leadership practices to school effectiveness. For instance, Coelli and Green (2012) quantified the impact of principal leadership on student outcomes, revealing measurable improvements in academic performance. Similarly, Chen, Cheng, and Sato (2017) found that principals' leadership behaviors significantly influenced school performance in both Taiwan and Japan.

Leadership's role extends beyond direct instructional supervision to include support for professional development. Darling-Hammond (1994) and Desimone et al. (2002, 2006) emphasized that sustained, content-focused professional development leads to improved teaching practices. Akiba, Wang, and Liang (2015) noted that organizational resources allocated by leaders for professional development are key to long-term instructional improvement. Gümüş and Bellibaş (2016) found that the perceived quality of professional development activities is closely tied to how leaders prioritize and organize them.

Collaborative models like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), as advanced by DuFour et al. (2008, 2016), underscore the need for leaders to foster continuous teacher learning and collaboration. DuFour and Mattos (2013) emphasized that principals must be learning leaders who not only support but actively participate in the professional growth of their teachers.

The emotional and psychological aspects of leadership are also gaining recognition. Cameron and Spreitzer (2012) introduced the idea of positive organizational scholarship, suggesting that leaders who cultivate positive emotions and relationships within schools contribute to higher levels of organizational commitment and well-being. Camarero-Figuerola et al. (2022) added that in the Spanish context, leadership challenges are often met by embracing inclusive and participatory leadership styles.

The complex interplay between instructional, transformational, and authentic leadership models is best understood through a systemic lens. Hallinger and Heck (1996) called for a reassessment of the principal's role, noting that leadership effectiveness is often mediated by school context, teacher collaboration, and community engagement. Cuban (1988) argued that leadership must balance managerial imperatives with visionary aspirations to remain effective in practice.

Abdurrezzak (2015) explored teacher perceptions of effective school leadership in the Turkish context, finding that teachers valued leaders who demonstrated empathy, professionalism, and a commitment to instructional quality. Ayvalı and Koşar (2021) further emphasized the growing importance of teacher leadership as a shared responsibility in school effectiveness, signaling a shift toward more distributed leadership models.

Leadership in educational settings is multifaceted and evolving. Instructional leadership remains foundational, but it is increasingly complemented by transformational and authentic approaches that prioritize teacher engagement, ethical conduct, and relational trust. Effective school leaders must navigate these intersecting paradigms to foster environments that support continuous improvement and student success. Future research should further explore how these leadership models interact within diverse educational systems and how they can be tailored to address specific challenges in school improvement and instructional excellence.

Methodology:

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine faculty perceptions of school leadership, with a particular focus on instructional leadership and its influence on teaching practices and student achievement. The SLR method was selected to synthesize and critically evaluate existing research findings across multiple contexts and disciplines. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability.

The search strategy involved identifying peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and academic dissertations published between 2000 and 2024. Relevant databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar were searched using key terms including "instructional leadership," "faculty perceptions," "school leadership," "teacher effectiveness," and "student achievement." Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were used to refine results and exclude irrelevant studies.

Inclusion criteria required that studies focus on K-12 educational settings, be written in English, and directly address leadership styles or faculty perceptions of school leadership. Studies were excluded if they focused solely on higher education, lacked empirical evidence, or were opinion-based articles without peer review. A total of 1,342 articles were initially retrieved. After removing duplicates and screening abstracts and full texts, 52 studies met the inclusion criteria for in-depth analysis.

Data extraction focused on study context, methodology, sample characteristics, leadership models examined, and major findings. Thematic synthesis was conducted to identify recurring themes and insights related to how faculty perceive the roles, behaviors, and impact of school leaders. Quality assessment of included studies was conducted using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist to ensure reliability and validity.

Findings and Discussion:

Trust and Emotional Support:

Trust and emotional support are foundational to effective school leadership, shaping both teacher commitment and the broader school climate. Faculty members consistently emphasize the importance of leaders who are not only competent but also emotionally intelligent, compassionate, and reliable. This perception aligns with a growing body of literature that underscores the emotional dimension of leadership as critical to fostering trust, collaboration, and organizational growth.

Agote, Aramburu, and Lines (2016) explore the role of authentic leadership in building trust during organizational change. Their study reveals that when school leaders demonstrate consistency between their values and actions, teachers are more likely to trust them, which in turn influences their emotional responses and engagement. Trust is not merely an abstract ideal but a tangible element that empowers faculty to participate actively in school reforms and innovation.

Cameron and Spreitzer (2012) further elaborate on this dynamic in their discussion of positive organizational scholarship, emphasizing how emotionally supportive leadership creates a flourishing school culture. Their findings illustrate that emotionally intelligent leaders enhance job satisfaction and teacher morale, contributing to a positive learning environment for both staff and students.

Abdurrezzak (2015), in a qualitative exploration of Turkish teachers' perceptions, confirms the significance of emotional trust in evaluating effective leadership. Teachers in the study highlighted the importance of feeling valued and heard by their principals, which reinforced their commitment to school goals. Similarly, Ayvalı and Koşar (2021) found that emotional connectedness between teachers and school administrators significantly contributed to teacher leadership development.

This need for emotionally intelligent leadership resonates across various educational settings. For instance, Barkman (2015) notes that the most effective leaders are those who communicate clearly, listen empathetically, and maintain integrity in their decision-making. These behaviors promote a culture of openness, mutual respect, and professional growth.

Bellibas and Liu (2018) extend this argument by demonstrating that school principals who exhibit instructional and distributed leadership practices rooted in emotional support positively shape the school climate. Their research suggests that when teachers perceive their leaders as emotionally supportive, their willingness to collaborate and implement instructional improvements increases.

The concept of emotional intelligence as a leadership competency also connects with transformational leadership theories. Burns (1978) posited that transformational leaders go beyond transactional exchanges, inspiring trust and emotional engagement. Akcay Gungor (2018) supports this by demonstrating how transformational leadership traits, such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, correlate with teachers' sense of belonging and commitment.

Moreover, trust and emotional support play a pivotal role in fostering organizational resilience and adaptability. As Andreoli et al. (2020) emphasize, school improvement in rural contexts requires leaders who can build emotional ties with faculty members. Their analysis shows that emotionally intelligent leadership facilitates difficult conversations and collaborative problem-solving.

In a broader international context, Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019) identify emotionally supportive leadership as a key characteristic of schools that consistently improve academic performance. Their findings reinforce the idea that trust-based relationships among staff contribute to sustained school effectiveness.

Bellei et al. (2020) examined how emotionally supportive leadership contributed to sustaining school effectiveness over a decade. Their longitudinal analysis found that schools with leaders who invested in building trust and providing emotional encouragement were better able to maintain academic gains and retain effective staff.

Leadership education scholars such as Andenoro and Skendall (2020) argue that future research and training must integrate emotional intelligence into leadership preparation programs. They advocate for a curriculum that includes interpersonal communication, empathy training, and ethical reflection as core components.

Similarly, Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2019) emphasize the importance of reconceptualizing followership identity in leadership education. They assert that emotionally supportive leaders empower teachers not just as subordinates but as co-creators in shaping school culture and practice.

Camarero-Figuerola et al. (2022) highlight emotional support as a central theme in the leadership practices of Spanish school administrators. According to their findings, leaders who actively listen, express appreciation, and support staff during times of stress contribute to a more cohesive and resilient educational environment.

These insights are mirrored in the work of Bush (2018), who examines global perspectives on leadership induction. He underscores the need for novice principals to develop emotional competencies to effectively navigate the complex interpersonal dimensions of school management.

Ethical leadership, as discussed by Abdullahi (2020), also intersects with emotional support. Ethical leaders, who prioritize fairness, compassion, and respect, foster a climate of trust and innovation. This ethical-emotional nexus is particularly relevant in diverse educational contexts, where cultural sensitivity and inclusivity are paramount.

The literature and faculty experiences converge on a crucial insight: trust and emotional support are not auxiliary features of leadership but central pillars. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded, and empathetic are more likely to cultivate collaborative, resilient, and high-performing school communities. As such, leadership development programs must prioritize these competencies to prepare future principals for the emotional demands of educational leadership.

Continued research should further examine how these emotional dynamics interact with other leadership variables, such as decision-making styles, instructional practices, and organizational change management. By doing so, scholars and practitioners can better understand how to build and sustain trust-filled, emotionally supportive learning environments that drive educational success.

Instructional Supervision and Feedback:

Effective school leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping instructional quality, particularly through supervision and feedback mechanisms. Central to this is the ability of school leaders to monitor classroom instruction and provide timely, constructive feedback that supports teacher growth. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership framework emphasizes three core dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. Among these, managing the instructional program—particularly through classroom observation and feedback—is critical to fostering teacher effectiveness and improving student outcomes.

Participants in this study consistently highlighted the significance of school heads engaging directly in classroom supervision and offering actionable feedback. These practices were perceived not as micromanagement, but as collaborative leadership that signals support, trust, and a shared commitment to educational excellence. This aligns with the findings of Hallinger (2003), who noted that instructional leaders must be deeply involved in the pedagogical core of teaching and learning, particularly by guiding, coaching, and assessing instructional quality.

Research reinforces the idea that feedback-rich supervision enhances instructional practice. Bellibas, Polatcan, and Kiliç (2020) found that principals who adopted an instructional leadership style had a positive influence on teacher collaboration, shared practice, and ultimately student achievement. Similarly, Desimone et al. (2002) showed that professional development, when integrated with ongoing observation and feedback, leads to more sustained and meaningful changes in teacher instruction.

Trust between teachers and school leaders is also an essential component of effective feedback. Agote, Aramburu, and Lines (2016) argued that authentic leadership—characterized by transparency, ethical behavior, and relational trust—facilitates open communication and enables teachers to view feedback as supportive rather than punitive. In this sense, instructional supervision becomes not just an administrative task but a relationship-building practice that fosters mutual accountability.

Moreover, the leadership literature underscores the value of emotional intelligence and ethical behavior in leadership roles. Chemers (2016) and Abdullahi (2020) both contend that effective leaders combine clear instructional guidance with a strong ethical foundation, making their supervisory practices more credible and impactful. Such leaders cultivate a culture where feedback is not feared but welcomed as a pathway to growth.

Empirical studies from diverse contexts affirm these insights. For instance, Akcay Gungor (2018) and Abdurrezzak (2015) documented that Turkish educators associate effective leadership with visibility in classrooms and meaningful performance feedback. Similarly, Cansoy (2019) and Camarero-Figuerola et al. (2022) emphasize that leadership practices, including feedback mechanisms, are central to teacher satisfaction and performance across global educational systems.

Instructional feedback also serves as a tool for continuous improvement and instructional coherence. Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005) noted that effective school leaders ensure that classroom practices align with school-wide academic goals through systematic supervision and reflective dialogue with teachers. These leaders act as instructional guides who connect policy with practice and vision with day-to-day pedagogy.

However, implementing effective supervision is not without challenges. Bush (2018) and Andenoro and Skendall (2020) highlight that many school leaders lack the training and time needed to conduct meaningful classroom observations regularly. Leadership development programs must therefore prioritize instructional coaching skills to equip school heads with the tools to observe, reflect, and provide feedback effectively.

Furthermore, instructional leadership is most impactful when embedded within a professional learning community (PLC). DuFour et al. (2016) stress the importance of creating school environments where teachers feel empowered to engage in collaborative reflection and receive peer as well as administrative feedback. This shared leadership approach, supported by both principals and teacher leaders, reinforces the feedback loop and fosters collective responsibility for student learning.

Authentic feedback also requires cultural responsiveness and adaptability. As Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019) suggest, schools that tailor their leadership strategies to their unique student and teacher populations are more likely to sustain academic improvements. Instructional supervision, in this regard, should consider not just curriculum standards but also the diverse learning needs within the classroom.

Instructional supervision and feedback form the backbone of effective leadership. Rooted in trust, grounded in pedagogy, and sustained by continuous dialogue, these practices elevate teaching quality and student outcomes. As Hallinger and Heck (1996) observed, the principal's role in instructional leadership has a significant and enduring impact on school effectiveness. When leaders prioritize observation and feedback as core responsibilities, they not only support teacher development but also build a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement.

Shared Vision and Collaborative Culture:

One of the most salient themes emerging from teacher perceptions of effective school leadership is the importance of a shared vision and a collaborative culture. Faculty members consistently emphasized their appreciation for school heads who encourage teamwork, inclusive dialogue, and shared decision-making. Such leadership practices not only foster trust and empowerment but also contribute significantly to teacher motivation, instructional quality, and school performance.

This view aligns with DuFour et al. (2016), who argue that the foundation of effective schools lies in the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which depend heavily on collective goals, mutual responsibility, and collaborative engagement. In schools where the principal actively cultivates this kind of shared leadership, teachers report feeling more committed and involved in shaping their school's direction. Bellibas and Liu (2018) similarly found that distributed leadership and collaborative school climates enhance instructional effectiveness and positively influence both teacher and student outcomes.

The link between collaborative leadership and school effectiveness is widely supported in the literature. According to Agote, Aramburu, and Lines (2016), authentic leadership—which involves transparency, ethics, and shared governance—boosts followers' trust and emotional engagement during times of change. Trust, in turn, becomes a key enabler of teacher collaboration and innovation, both of which are necessary for sustained school improvement. This is echoed by Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2019), who argue that redefining followership as a shared, proactive role within leadership processes is crucial in education contexts.

Research by Abdurrezzak (2015) revealed that teachers perceive effective school leaders as those who not only provide strategic direction but also involve teachers in participatory processes, reinforcing the belief that collective agency enhances both school culture and individual commitment. Similarly, Akcay Gungor (2018) identified a positive correlation between transformational leadership, teacher loyalty, and the key features of effective schools—suggesting that visionary and participative leadership styles result in stronger institutional coherence and performance.

Andreoli et al. (2020) explored the development of rural school leadership and found that successful leaders frequently build strong learning teams and promote interdependence among staff. These leaders focus on leveraging teachers' insights to co-construct school improvement strategies. Likewise, Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of leadership that fosters inclusivity and staff collaboration to ensure the academic success of all students, especially in diverse learning environments.

Bush (2018) highlighted how principal preparation programs worldwide now emphasize collaborative approaches over traditional top-down leadership. This global shift recognizes that school leadership is no longer about managing people but about mobilizing them toward a common vision. Camarero-Figuerola et al. (2022) reinforced this finding by reporting that leadership practices in Spain are increasingly oriented toward participation and collective problem-solving, which educators perceive as more effective in meeting contemporary challenges.

Furthermore, the significance of shared leadership is also linked to the psychological and professional well-being of teachers. Cameron and Spreitzer (2012), in their work on positive organizational scholarship, argue that empowering environments—such as those created through collaborative leadership—lead to higher morale, creativity, and resilience among staff. Cansoy (2019) affirmed that leadership behaviors promoting collaboration are strongly associated with increased job satisfaction among teachers, thereby reducing turnover and improving institutional stability.

Ayvalı and Koşar (2021) conducted a phenomenological study that underscored how teacher leadership flourishes in schools where principals embrace collaboration and distribute authority. In such environments, teachers see themselves not merely as implementers but as co-leaders, which elevates their sense of ownership and professional agency.

The establishment of a shared vision and a collaborative culture stands out as a defining characteristic of effective school leadership. Supported by a robust body of literature, it is evident that when principals promote teamwork, inclusiveness, and mutual accountability, they not only strengthen the school's organizational fabric but also drive long-term improvements in teaching and learning. This leadership style moves beyond directive management, positioning school leaders as facilitators of collective growth and continuous educational innovation.

Professional Development Advocacy:

A central theme that emerged from teacher narratives is the strong appreciation for school leaders who actively support and advocate for ongoing professional development. Teachers consistently emphasized that their motivation, instructional effectiveness, and sense of belonging were heightened when school leaders not only encouraged continuous learning but also provided concrete support in the form of time, resources, and access to training opportunities. This aligns with the findings of Akiba, Wang, and Liang (2015), who emphasized that organizational resources—such as planning time, collaboration structures, and funding—are critical for sustaining effective professional development and improving instruction. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2013) argued that schools should be transformed into learning organizations where professional development is not a periodic event but an embedded part of daily school life.

Effective school leadership is critical in building a culture that values continuous learning. This is supported by the work of Burns (1978), who introduced the concept of transformational leadership—where leaders inspire and motivate followers to exceed their own expectations and strive toward collective goals. In the context of schools, transformational leaders who champion professional development not only improve teacher morale but also contribute to sustained improvements in student learning outcomes. Akcay Gungor (2018) confirmed this, revealing that transformational leadership positively correlates with effective school characteristics and teacher commitment.

In addition, leadership that promotes professional development fosters teacher efficacy and trust. Agote, Aramburu, and Lines (2016) emphasized that authentic leadership—characterized by transparency, ethics, and long-term vision—enhances followers' trust and emotional resilience during times of change. In schools, this manifests in teachers being more open to adopting innovative pedagogical strategies and engaging in collaborative inquiry when they trust that their leaders have their professional growth in mind. Ayvalı and Koşar (2021), through a phenomenological study, also highlighted that teacher leadership and collaborative decision-making are significantly influenced by administrators who prioritize professional learning communities.

The sustainability of professional learning, however, depends on systemic and visionary leadership. According to Bellei et al. (2020), long-term school effectiveness is linked to leadership that institutionalizes professional development through internal policies and external partnerships. Andreoli et al. (2020) emphasized that especially in rural schools, the absence of professional development opportunities exacerbates teacher isolation and stagnation, while targeted leadership training for principals can significantly improve school improvement efforts.

Moreover, leadership behaviors influence the perception of school climate, which in turn affects teachers' willingness to engage in professional development. Bellibas and Liu (2018) found that principals who adopt instructional and distributed leadership styles cultivate positive school climates, which serve as fertile ground for meaningful teacher development. This finding is consistent with the work of Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005), who argued that instructional leadership—focused on teaching quality, clear academic goals, and teacher evaluation—is pivotal to school improvement.

The research of Gümüş and Bellibaş (2016) in the Turkish context further supports these observations. They found that while teachers generally recognize the importance of professional development, they are often dissatisfied with its quality and relevance unless school leaders are actively involved in its planning and implementation. This reveals that school leaders play a dual role: facilitators of access and curators of content. When leaders align development programs with teacher needs and school goals, professional learning becomes more impactful.

Leadership education scholars like Andenoro and Skendall (2020) have argued for a more strategic and evidence-based approach to preparing school leaders to manage teacher learning. They suggest that leadership preparation programs should include training on adult learning principles, equity, and organizational learning to better equip future administrators in advocating for effective professional development systems.

Teachers' voices echo these academic perspectives. They want school leaders who see professional development not as an administrative checkbox but as a moral and strategic imperative. As Desimone et al. (2002) outlined in their longitudinal study, professional development is most effective when it is sustained, content-specific, and coherently linked to school improvement goals. Teachers value leaders who internalize this framework and work collaboratively with staff to cultivate a growth-oriented school culture.

Thus, professional development advocacy is a key attribute of effective school leadership. When leaders support, fund, and embed professional learning within school culture, they foster teacher engagement, innovation, and long-term instructional improvement. This is not only a matter of policy but a reflection of leadership vision and commitment, as underscored in the works of Abdurrezzak (2015), Cansoy (2019), and Bush (2018). Effective school leaders do not merely manage—they lead through learning.

Conclusion:

This study affirms that faculty members strongly associate effective school leadership with improved instructional quality and student learning outcomes. Central to their perceptions are four interrelated components: trust in leadership, constructive instructional feedback, support for sustained professional development, and the establishment of a shared vision. These elements collectively reflect both instructional and transformational leadership practices, which are widely acknowledged in existing literature as key drivers of school improvement (Hallinger, 2003; Burns, 1978; Akiba et al., 2015).

Faculty members value leaders who create inclusive, learning-centered environments by fostering trust, promoting collaboration, and enabling continuous teacher growth. These leadership behaviors not only enhance teacher morale and instructional practices but also contribute to building a cohesive school culture that prioritizes student achievement. As underscored by Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2013), professional development that is embedded in leadership practice significantly raises instructional effectiveness.

Given these findings, education policymakers, administrators, and school boards should prioritize leadership development programs that balance managerial skills with instructional and transformational leadership competencies. Investment in such programs has the potential to generate long-term improvements in teaching and learning across diverse educational contexts.

Future research can build on this foundation by incorporating quantitative data on student academic performance to explore correlations with faculty perceptions. Comparative studies between urban and rural school settings may uncover context-specific leadership challenges and strengths. Additionally, employing a mixed-methods approach would allow for deeper insights into the nuanced ways leadership practices influence instruction at the classroom, school, and district levels. By advancing a more holistic understanding of educational leadership, stakeholders can design policies and practices that empower school leaders to effectively guide instructional improvement and foster equitable learning outcomes for all students.

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