www.irbas.academyirmbr.com
International Review of Basic and Applied Sciences
July 2021
Vol. 9 Issue.3

Examining the Instructional Leadership Practices among School Heads in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the current Instructional Leadership practices of secondary school heads in relation to developing an effective school culture and increase student engagement at school in Pakistan. The target population of the present study was comprised of all the teachers of public secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. Multistage sampling techniques were used to select the sample. The sample size was consisted of 1016 secondary school teachers. Researcher used close ended questionnaire for data collection. Data were analysed through the descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics. The findings of present study demonstrate that instructional leadership practices among heads are present, at a medium level. This study has shown that the level of school culture then the level of student engagement would increase considerably if instructional leadership practices are increased to a high level.

Keywords: *Instructional Leadership, School Culture, Student Engagement.*

Introduction

Instructional leadership focuses on a school's main role, namely teaching and learning, through defining the school's vision, mission, and goals, administering the instructional programme, and fostering the school climate (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Similarly, Niqab, Sharma, Wei, and Maulod (2014) argue that the role of school head's as instructional leader is critical in overcoming several challenges, increasing school capacity, developing teachers' talents, and creating a more conducive environment for teaching and learning. As a result, it falls to the head of school to collaborate with teachers to design a mission of school, manage the educational programme and create a healthy learning atmosphere (Manaseh, 2016). Instructional leaders are aware of what is going on in the classrooms and work to improve their staff's abilities by focusing on their strengths and minimizing their faults (Spillane & Zuberi, 2009). Instructional leaders go beyond the usual job of school administrators, focusing far more on creating knowledge and curriculum implementation, as well as instruction and assessment (Jita, 2010). The research claims that when leadership is instructionally focused and placed close to the classroom, enhancement in learning is more likely to occur. The cornerstone to the entire educational process is the training of competent instructional leaders. However, there are some leadership issues in Pakistan, such as educational leaders' lack of autonomy, limited professional training, an environment that encourages dependency and autocratic leadership, and programmes like Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) that lack the capacity to develop leadership skills (Rizvi, 2010). In general, these issues have an impact on the effectiveness of secondary schools in Pakistan. Regardless of whether the principals hold an M.Ed (Master of Education) or a B.Ed (Bachelor of Education), none of these programmes are designed to teach leadership qualities. The

reason for this is the mentioned professional programmes have limited practical application in Pakistani schools (Ministry of Education, NEP-1998-2010). Without proper leadership abilities or prior leadership training, teachers are elevated to the position of principal (Alam, 2012). Although a small number of Pakistani principals receive in-service training through foreign monies, their impact is insignificant (Khan, 2013a). Consequently, the majority of Pakistani schools lack the skilled and trained leaders, while school needs trained and qualified leaders (Rizvi, 2010). The situation in Pakistani schools, as evidenced by the literature, can be described as desperate, and necessitating empirical research studies to support school leadership (Ali, 2017).

Many analysts believe that "leaders" are superior to "managers" since a leader is always the one who creates the policies, while managers are the ones who carry them out. Managers aim to do the right things, but leaders have a different position because they do the things right. As a result, rather than acting as a manager or administrator, the school principal will frequently take on the position of instructional leader in order to do more for the school's benefit. However, School heads are confronted with a variety of issues as they provide leadership and organization to their schools. Evidence is growing that successful school leaders influence student success through the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of constructive organizational practice (Tobin, 2014). In Pakistan, there is little research on instructional leadership of school heads (Ali, Sharma, & Zaman, 2016; Rizvi, 2010; Simkins, Sisum, & Memon, 2003). As a result, our research revealed certain important variables and knowledge that should be reflected in such a system. This might be referred to as a self-development model for education in Pakistan, because it could be implemented by school heads in the context for which a need has been identified (Rahman, 2014). This study intended to determine the current IL practices of secondary school heads in Pakistan in regard to promoting an effective school culture and increasing student engagement level.

Research Objectives

Present research was based on the following objectives:

1. To examine the instructional leadership practices of school heads.
2. To investigate the school culture in term of professional values, collegiality, collaboration, and shared planning.
3. To assess the level of student engagement (Behavioral engagement, Affective engagement, and Cognitive engagement).
4. To find out the relationship among school heads' instructional leadership, school culture, and students' engagement.

Research Hypotheses

The following are the null hypotheses for objective 4:

$Ho_{4.1}$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the school heads' instructional leadership and school culture.
$Ho_{4.2}$: There is no statistically significant relationship between school culture and student engagement.

Literature Review

According to literature reviewed, IL plays a crucial role in supporting, improving, and encouraging teachers' classroom instructional methods as well as students' academic achievement (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007; Pustejovsky, Spillane, Heaton & Lewis, 2009; Spillane & Zuberi, 2009). International empirical studies also show that IL plays a key role in refocusing school-level initiatives toward instructional enhancements that help students learn more effectively (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000; King, 2002). The PIMRS (principal

instructional management rating scale) was proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1987) and Hallinger et al. (2015) has three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme, and fostering a positive school learning climate. Principals that have a high level of instructional leadership focus on academic components of their schools, such as setting academic goals, developing curricula, evaluating the efficacy of teachers' instructional methods, and offering opportunities for instructional improvement (Southworth 2002; Marks and Printy 2003; Hallinger 2003, 2011). According to Dinsdale (2017), Principals play a significant role in shaping a school's culture as front-line leaders. The culture that school leaders create can either hinder or help students succeed in learning and teachers succeed in teaching. Principals are in charge of ensuring that staff and students have a positive teaching and learning environment. They must do so while ensuring that the school's culture is favorable. Leaders that succeed in creating a positive school culture encourage teachers to collaborate in order to share best practices and ensure that teachers are working toward a common goal. In order to develop staff members, leaders must not only collaborate but also establish a friendly environment that provides feedback and encourages open communication. Principals, who ensure that their teachers have the resources they need in the classroom, build a strong sense of trust in the school's leadership. Trust in one's leadership is enhanced when one leads in a transparent manner that clearly communicates the school's vision and involves all stakeholders (Dinsdale, 2017). Lynch, Lerner, and Leventhal (2013) discovered that collective perceptions of a bad school environment (defined as feelings of injustice, antagonism, and victimisation) were linked to low student school engagement. Students were less engaged in schools where adolescents experienced high levels of animosity than in schools where adolescents perceived low levels of hostility. Enhancing personalization, or the tightening of connections between students and their learning environments, has been a crucial component of improving school surroundings (Teachers, other adults, student peers, curriculum, and overall school culture are just a few examples). Personalization is important because students who are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally engaged in their learning are less likely to show signs of alienation and are more likely to feel connected to their school. According to McClure, Yonezawa, and Jones (2010) Students who experience a sense of belonging at school are more likely to engage in good lifestyle manners. Increased school connectedness has also been linked to greater educational motivation, classroom engagement, and attendance, all of which are linked to better academic success. Dufour and Mattos (2013) discovered that if instructional leaders wish to increase student accomplishment in their school, they must focus on the collective analysis of evidence of student learning rather than individual teaching inspection. Of course, teaching and learning are not mutually exclusive. However, the majority of the time, more good teaching in more classrooms is the answer to improved student learning (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). As a result, instructional leaders influence school culture and, build the nature of school progress. Leadership and school culture work hand in hand when it comes to the creation and sustainability of school reform (Valentine, 2006). The school leader plays an important role in defining the culture of the school, guiding change; the existence and sustainability of reform are strongly linked to the culture of the school (Valentine, 2006). However, the research on the link between school environment and academic achievement shows that school atmosphere can have a long-term impact on student achievement and engagement (Lewis, Asberry, DeJarnett, & King, 2016).

Research Design

Present study was based on a positivist paradigm to understand the phenomenon through a quantitative research design. The teachers' perception about school heads instructional leadership, school culture and student engagement was investigated through a survey research.

Population of the study

The target population of the present study was comprised of all the teachers of the public secondary schools in province of Punjab. According to census of school education department Punjab (2018), there are 133260 (67346 male and 65914 female) secondary school teachers are working in Punjab.

Sampling

Multi-stage sampling methods were used to draw the sample. On the basis of a retention rate issued by an NGO Alif Ailaan (2017) in national educational district ranking of Pakistan, 36 districts in Punjab were divided into three categories to ensure true representation of the population. On the basis of retention rate, group one is the highest of the three categories of districts, with a retention rate ranging from 62 percent to 52.12 percent. The group two is the average score among the three groups of districts on the basis of retention rate and its retention rate ranged from 51%to 46.39%. The 3rd group is the lowest among the three groups and retention rate of this group ranged from 46%to 39.94%. At first stage, researcher selected three districts from each group by using lottery method of simple random sampling technique. At the second stage, researcher selected public secondary schools from each selected district. Schools in each selected district were divided into two strata i.e. boys and girls. Researcher selected 10% of total schools from each stratum by using proportionate sampling technique. At last stage researcher selected all secondary school teachers of each selected school through cluster sampling technique. Hence, the sample size was consisted of 1016 secondary school teachers (figure 1).

Figure 1: Flow Chart of Sampling

Instrumentation

Researchers have used Hallinger's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) instructor short form to test IL. It was used with authorization from the developer. The scale consists of 22 components and 3 areas (Defining mission of school; 5 items, managing instructional programme; 8 items, creating learning climate; 9 items). Researchers used three dimensions of the PIMRS in this study for data collection. 135 observational studies were reviewed by Hallinger (2011) with the PIMRS. PIMRS tends to have a clear record that offers accurate and relevant information on principal instructional leadership (Hallinger, Wang and Chen, 2013).To assess the school culture, researcher has developed questionnaire based on an extensive review of the literature. In this research SC was assessed in term of professional values, collegiality, collaboration, and shared planning in secondary schools. To assess students' engagement, researcher adapted the Academic Enabler subscale (ACES) developed by DiPerna and Elliott (2000), which was used with the developer's permission. The Academic Enabler subscale is designed to assess students' academic skills and academic motivation (interpersonal skills, motivation, learning skills

and engagement). The internal consistency range of ACES was found to be 0.92 to 0.98 (DiPerna& Elliott, 1999; DiPerna& Elliott, 2000). The stability coefficient for the new test ranges from 0.68 to 0.97 (DiPerna& Elliott, 1999; DiPerna& Elliott, 2002). In this study, a researcher has used an ACES one dimension, engagement to collect data.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha Values for the factors and Variable

Variable	**Factors**	**Cronbach's alpha values**
I L	Defining Mission of school Manage Instructional Program Creates Learning Climate **Overall**	.86 .87 .87 **.93**
S C	Professional Value Collegiality Collaboration Shared planning **Overall**	.89 .81 .85 .81 **.93**
S E	Behavioral engagement Affective engagement Cognitive engagement **Overall**	.83 .86 .89 **.94**
Overall reliability	**Items 54**	**.97**

On the basis of the data collected, scale reliability was discovered at. 97. The alpha coefficient for IL is.93, according to the data analysis for the pilot report. The alpha coefficient for SC is .93, although SE has an alpha coefficient of.94. The alpha values were high, according to the test results. The instrument is suitable for use in a real study based on these values.

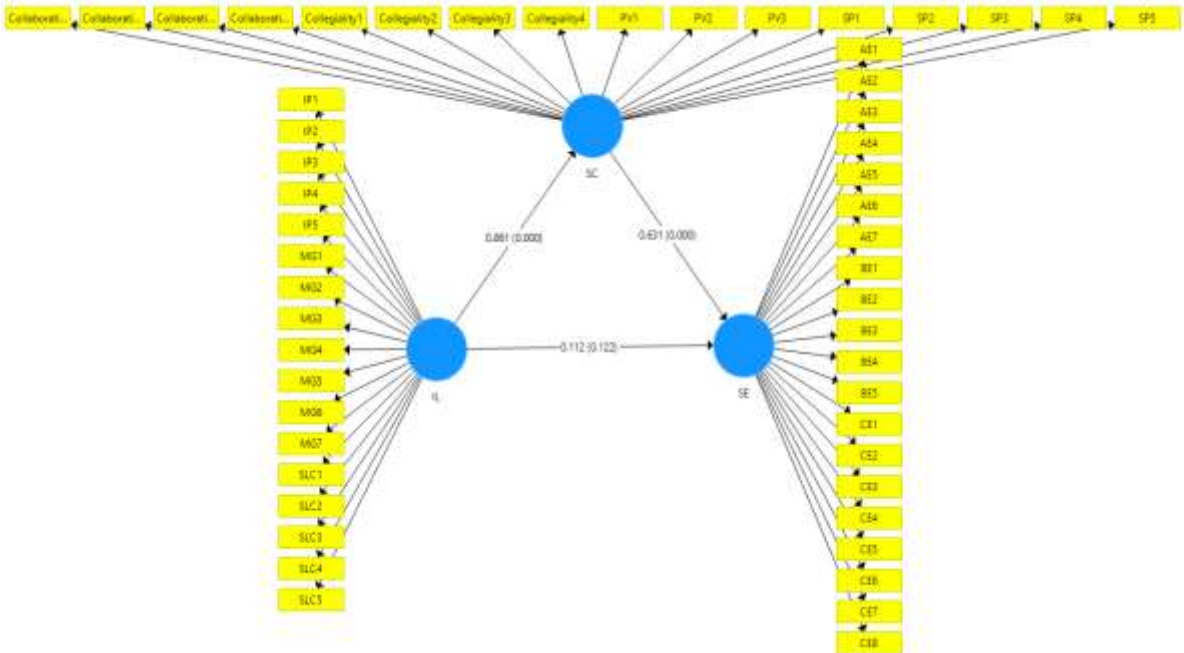

Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Measurement Indices

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
IL	0.940	0.947	0.512
SC	0.933	0.941	0.501
SE	0.939	0.945	0.485

Reliability of internal consistency: composite reliability needs to be greater than 0.70. Consider Cronbach's alpha as a conservative indicator of reliability for internal consistency. All the factors in the above table are reliable as all alpha values are greater than 0.70, this means that the factors are reliable.

Composite reliability: the outer loading of the indicator should be above 0.70. In the table above, all the variables are reliable as all the composite reliability values are greater than 0.70, which mean that the variables are reliable.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE): AVE is often referred to as convergent validity. By squaring each external loading, making the sum of three square outer loadings, and then measuring the average value, the AVE value is achieved. The Extracted Average Variance should be equal to or greater than .50.

The above table shows that all the variables are valid since the value of the Average Variance Extracted is greater than .50, which means that the variables are convergent and explains more than 50 percent of the variance in the statements. The student engagement has a lower value of .485, which was very close to the value of the criteria, so it is also acceptable.

Data Collection

For the purpose of collecting data the researcher has taken permission from the public secondary school heads. Furthermore, the researcher has survey in the selected secondary schools of Punjab for collecting the perceptions of teachers about school heads' instructional leadership, school culture, and student engagement.

Objective 1: To examine the instructional leadership practices of school heads.

This objective was analysed through descriptive statistics (Mean, SD).

The 3 dimensions of IL (define the school mission, manage instructional programs, and designing a school learning climate) of instructional leadership were statistically defined to determine the level through mean perception score of each item.

Table 3: Level of IL in the Secondary Schools of Punjab, Pakistan

Sub-factors	**N**	**M**	**SD**
Defining school mission	1016	3.93	.85
Managing instructional programm	1016	3.84	.86
Creating school learning climate	1016	3.87	.87

The above table shows the level of each dimension of instructional leadership. A mean score of Defining school mission (3.93), managing instructional program (3.84), and creates school learning climate (3.87) shows that all the factors fond at medium level. The range of scores is 1(almost never) as the lowest and 5 (almost always) as the highest. However, respondents mean score range between3 to 4 (sometimes or frequently). It is concluded that instructional leadership at secondary school is present at medium level in Punjab.

Objective 2: To investigate the school culture in term of professional values, collegiality, collaboration, and shared planning.

This objective was analysed through descriptive statistics (Mean, SD).

The four dimensions of school culture (professional value, cooperation, collaboration and sharing plan) are statistically described in the form of mean score and standard deviation to determine the level.

Table 4: Level of School Culture in the Secondary Schools of Punjab, Pakistan

Sub-factor	N	M	SD
professional value	1016	3.95	.90
Collegiality	1016	3.98	.84
Collaboration	1016	3.80	.85
spared planning	1016	3.88	.80

The above table shows the level of each dimension of school culture. A mean score of professional value (3.95), collegiality (3.98), collaboration (3.80) and spared planning (3.88) shows that all the factors fond at medium level. The range of scores is 1(almost never) as the lowest and 5 (almost always) as the highest. However, respondents mean score range between3 to 4 (sometimes or frequently). It is concluded that level of school culture in term of professional value, collegiality, collaboration and spared planning is present at medium level in Punjab.

Objective 3: To assess the level of student engagement (Behavioral engagement, Affective engagement, and Cognitive engagement).

This objective was analysed through descriptive statistics (Mean, SD).

The three dimensions of student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive), are statistically described by mean and standard deviation to determine the level.

Table 5 : Level of Students' Engagement at secondary school of Punjab

Sub-factor	N	M	SD
Behavioral engagement	1016	3.95	.76
Affective engagement	1016	3.90	.73
Cognitive engagement	1016	3.69	.76

The above table shows the level of each dimension of student engagement. A mean score of behavioral engagement (3.95), affective engagement (3.90), and cognitive engagement (3.69) shows that all the factors fond at medium level. The range of scores is 1(almost never) as the lowest and 5 (almost always) as the highest. However, respondents mean score range between3 to 4 (sometimes or frequently). It is concluded that level of student engagement is present at medium level in secondary school of Punjab.

Objective 4: To find out the relationship among school heads' instructional leadership, school culture, and students' engagement.

This objective was analysed through inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation coefficient).

$Ho_{4.1}$: There is no significant relationship between the school heads' instructional leadership and school culture.

Table 5: Relationship between the School Heads' Instructional Leadership and School Culture

Variable	N	M	SD	r value	p-value
Instructional Leadership	1016	3.890	.7784	.85**	.000
School Culture	1016	3.903	.7288		

Table 5 shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient of heads' instructional leadership and school culture. It is evident that the instructional leadership of school leaders has a statistically significant relationship with school culture (r = .85**, p = .000) so, the research hypothesis "there is no significant relationship between the school heads' instructional leadership and school culture is rejected". It is concluded that heads' instructional leadership had a strong relation with school culture at secondary school of Punjab.

$Ho_{4.2}$: There is no significant relationship between school culture and student engagement.

Table 6: Relationship between School Culture and Student Engagement

Variable	N	M	SD	r value	p-value
School Culture	1016	3.903	.7288	.71**	.000
Student Engagement	1016	3.830	.6818		

The table 6 shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient of school culture and student engagement. It is evident that school culture is statistically significant correlated with student engagement (r = .71**, p = .000) so, the research hypothesis "there is no significant relationship between the school culture and student engagement is rejected". It is concluded that school culture had a strong relation with student engagement.

Discussion

The first research objective is to investigate the instructional leadership practices of school heads. The results of the research objective highlighted that teachers in secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan perceive the level of instructional leadership is medium. This indicates that heads of the schools had somehow practices the dimensions of instructional leadership. However, results shows a medium level for the concept of the school mission, the management of educational programs and the development of a school learning atmosphere, which are considered to be important characteristics of the instructional leader. The second research objective is to assess the school culture in term of sharing plans, collegiality, cooperation, and professional standards. The findings of research objective two highlighted that the school culture is also at a medium level. This indicates that school heads instructional leadership had a great influence on school culture. It is evident from this research school heads with weak leadership skills have ineffective school culture. A study carried out by Ali (2017) confirmed this finding as a result of their analysis that effective and ineffective school culture is dependent on leadership style of school heads. To enhance the school culture is fully dependent on quality of school leadership (Peleg, 2012). This study and previous studies have confirmed that the principal plays an instrumental role as a school leader in the creation of a positive school culture (Hallinger, 2011). The third objective is to find the level of students' engagement in term of behavioral, affective and cognitive engagement. The findings of research objective highlighted that the level of student engagement is also at medium level in secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. This indicates that school heads instructional leadership and school culture had a great influence on student engagement level. A research by Sahin (2011) confirms that school leaders play a critical role in establishing and sustaining academic expectations, including the awareness and skills that students are required to learn in a subject and in grade. Similarly literature supports the findings of this research, that the head of school can enhance the teaching and learning atmosphere by developing a successful culture (Kiat, Tan, Heng, & Lim-Ratnam, 2017; Early, 2013; Yu, 2009). School leaders are accountable for developing a supportive atmosphere of school, inspiring instructors and students, and leveraging resources efficiently to improve finest instructional practices. Further to test the null hypotheses for the research objective four, Pearson correlation shows that heads' instructional leadership had a strong relation with school culture at secondary school of Punjab. Similar to the findings of this report, Ali (2017) discovered a strong link

between school culture and instructional leadership. Sahin (2011) also exposed that instructional leadership has a statistically relevant influence on all facets of school culture. Sahin (2011) concluded by saying that the association between IL and all aspects of SC is positive. Like this report, Ohlson (2009) indicates that there is a strong connection between school culture and instructional leadership. Leaders who are more involved with teachers outside of the workplace are more likely to help them solve problems. In addition, Le Clear (2005) revealed a strong connection between leadership characteristics and school culture. Mees (2008) carried out a study and found that there is a link between the leadership of the principal of Missouri colleges, the community of schools and the success of students. The essence of the link between school culture and the style of leadership is very positive. Similarly, DuPont (2009) conducted research on the views of teachers about the effect of the principal's IL skills on the SC. As a result, school culture and instructional leadership have a strong degree of positive association. The results of all the research studies mentioned above are similar to the results of the present analysis.

To test the null hypothesis of research objective four, the Pearson correlation shows that school culture is highly correlated with student engagement. It is also recognized that a dramatic influence on student engagement is the educational climate generated by faculty behavior and attitudes. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) conclude from their study that academic staff plays an important role to engage student at school. Similarly the findings of study conducted by Virtanen, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, and Kuorelahti, (2015) said it showed that the involvement of students in learning activities is high when there is a high level of organizational and educational support. Schools where leader create an environment that emphasizes on teachers collaboration, collegiality, shared planning effective educational practices have increased students engagement in their learning. A study conducted by Mann in (2001) also found that teaching staff would help alienated students become more involved. Another research further confirms the latest study's findings that the school culture has had a strong effect on the engagement of students and generates a "sentiment of belonging" to the school in the students (Smith, Ito, Gruenewald, & Yeh, 2010). Teachers are one of the key factors shaping the attitudes of students in their learning environment (Sahil, 2010). Most of studies have shown that teacher support and motivation are often essential for students to actively engage in school (Smith, Ito, Gruenewald, & Yeh, 2010; Trowler, 2010; Li, Doyle Lynch, Kalvin, Liu, & Lerner, 2011). The results of all the above research studies are close to the results of this study.

Conclusion

The results of present study indicates that the instructional leadership practices among heads are present but at a medium level. Current study has revealed that the level of school culture then student engagement would increase considerably if instructional leadership practice is increased to a high level. In order to achieve the results it can be assert that school head instructional leadership had a great influence on student engagement through the effective school culture. Although, a strong link was found between instructional leadership and school culture, as well as school culture and student engagement.

Suggestions

This study has found that school heads are less aware about the importance of instructional leadership practices. If the school heads perform instructional leadership, they can develop effective school culture to achieve student engagement at their school. It can be stated that school heads leadership skills is the only tool to developing a positive school culture. Through this school culture; an atmosphere of shared planning, collegiality, collaboration and professional values can be ensured student engagement. These factors can help leaders determine the mission of the organization, create a learning atmosphere in school, and manage the instructional program. School culture engages teachers to share knowledge and workload, obtain and provide feedback, assess their progress, focus on student learning outcomes, and preference for organizational priorities, organizational process collaboration and evaluations, extracurricular activities. In short, school Culture: train employees by sharing their knowledge, gaining good reputation in the school and shaping outstanding student performance in extracurricular plans and activities. In developing

countries, such as Pakistan, the results of present study can be used to bring about positive improvements to the education system. However, the present study provides a clearer distinction between actual leadership style, school culture and its relation to student engagement.

The following suggestions are made:

1. According to the findings of present study Educational authorities should reframe the training program of school heads, to focus on building instructional leadership skills among head teachers
2. By implementing instructional leadership strategies as seen in PIMR, School head may address school challenges and nurturing collective culture that increase student engagement at school.

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