

Instructional Leadership Practices for Effective Formative Assessment at Primary Level

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Abstract

Instructional leadership practices are vital in shaping quality education and improving outcomes of students. It ensures that the vision of the school is focused on academic excellence and holistic development, benefiting the learners, teachers, and the broader educational community. The current study investigates the instructional leadership practices that support effective formative assessment in primary education focusing on principals' and teachers' roles in enhancing the learning of students. The objectives are threefold highlighting the principals' self-reported practices, understanding teachers' perspectives, and examining discrepancies between the views of head teachers and teachers on formative assessment practices. Adopting a quantitative research approach, data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The tool includes 17 items. Data was collected from a sample comprising 34 principals and 48 teachers across both public and private sector primary schools within the District Lahore. The collected responses were analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistics highlighting a shared understanding among educational leaders and teachers. Findings suggest that diverse assessment techniques, collaborative discussions, and consistent monitoring of student's progress are vital to effective formative assessment. The study recommends practices such as peer resource activation, meetings regularly focusing on students' learning outcomes and active engagement by principals in evaluating the tasks of students. These strategies underscore the instructional leaders' crucial role in fostering a supportive environment for student assessment and development, with implications for both public and private education settings.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Formative Assessment, Primary Level.

Introduction

The professional practice gives direction to instructors and school pioneers on developmental evaluation (Bashir et al 2022). What it is and how to incorporate it into normal homeroom practice. Utilized close by a bunch of simply characterized and testing learning expectations. The developmental evaluation is ceaseless input that permits an instructor to assess the influence and an understudy to push their learning forward. The developmental appraisal guides the needs, whether is learning on track, what prerequisites to change, and where learning goes directly, it might be immediate (a specific request, thumbs up-dissatisfaction or organized (a test, a student

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balance). It is advantageous (integrated into every design of every unit), and iterative closes the circle of organizing. Our decision to leave is justified by the fact that the apprentice's new responsibilities allow for the full development of learning, which is made possible by making learning obvious. This suggests that students can understand they're getting the hang of happening inside the instructive experience. This detectable quality of learning is made possible through the ceaseless participation among educators and students and it relies upon a relentless connection made from finding, intercession, and impact evaluation, each dealing with the others (Allal, 2000). Formative evaluation, as defined by Black and William in their 1998 study, "is to be unravelled as embracing that an enormous number of activities embraced by teachers, as well as by their students, which give information to be used as analysis to change the educating and learning practices in which they are secured". Instead of regularizing evaluation, the developmental evaluation focuses on learning progress, helping students build their learning skills, and employing a simple technique to handle evaluation (Ashford, 2003). In light of the association between understudies' grades - reviewing on a bend. The pronunciation is placed not on execution and correlation between understudies, but rather on learning authority, for example, the advancement of learning for every understudy.

When we refer to feedback, we mean details on a student's performance or comprehension that the teacher has offered (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Students can gradually become active and competent in self-monitoring their learning when teachers have done modelling (examples, directions, instructions, description of evaluation, and success criteria). Therefore, feedback has two main target demographics: educators and pupils. Teachers create it and utilize it to make judgments about student learning remediation, preparedness, and analysis. Students utilize it to highlight the positive and negative parts of their performances so that successful or high-quality traits may be emphasized, and problematic ones can be changed or improved (Sadler, 1989).

Due to two changes, teachers and students are now using formative evaluation more frequently in the classroom. Both of these developments are connected to the function of formative assessment in bridging the teaching and learning processes (Allal 2000). The neo-behaviourists' idea of mastery learning is replaced with a framework for formative assessment based on learning theories as the first change.

Statement of the Problem

Effective formative assessment is a critical component in the teaching and learning process, particularly at the primary school level, as it helps to monitor students' progress and guide instructional decisions. However, the role of instructional leadership in ensuring the consistent and effective implementation of formative assessment practices remains underexplored. In many schools, principals and teachers face challenges in aligning leadership practices with formative assessment strategies, potentially impacting students' outcomes. This study aims to investigate the instructional leadership practices that support effective assessment in primary schools, focusing on the perspectives of head teachers and teachers in District Lahore. This study seeks to identify the gaps and provide recommendations for enhancing leadership practices to improve formative assessment processes in schools.

Objectives

- To explore the Instructional leaders' self-reported instructional leadership practices regarding students' formative assessment at the primary level.

- To find the opinion of the teachers about instructional leadership practices regarding formative assessment at the primary level.
- To find out the difference between the opinions of head teachers and teachers about instructional leadership practices regarding students' formative assessment at the primary level.

Research Questions

1. How does the headteacher ensure students' formative assessment at the primary level?
2. What is the opinion of teachers about instructional leadership practices regarding students' formative assessment at the primary level?
3. What is the difference between the head teacher's and the teacher's opinion of instructional leadership practices regarding student's formative assessment?

Literature Review

Instructional Leadership

Principals' and headmasters' leadership is one of the most important things that can directly or indirectly affect students' academic success (Norman & Loyiso, 2023). Previous studies have demonstrated a significant link between student achievement and the leadership of school administrators. Three strategies have been laid forth by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) to raise student accomplishment by strengthening the effectiveness of school administrators. One tactic is for school administrators to function as instructional leaders, coordinating, observing, and evaluating the school's teaching and learning process (T&L) as they participate actively in teacher development activities. The history and development of instructional leadership, definitions, the creation of instructional leadership concepts, instructional leadership models, and problems and difficulties that might occur when putting these leadership philosophies into practice are all topics that will be covered in this concept paper. Both a domestic and an international examination were done. The report is founded on a comprehensive examination of secondary data. The analysis of the challenges surrounding instructional leadership has led to the conclusion that to attain excellence in a school, every school leader must use this style of leadership. These issues must be resolved to keep the school moving in the right direction and to improve student accomplishment. The term "instructional" about education stems from the word "instruction," which is another name for teaching (Joseph & Aueada, 2021). Due to the phrase "instruction AL's" lack of meaning in English, the word "teaching" is used more often in both formal and informal conversations. Consequently, even though they both mean the same thing, the term "instructional leadership" is frequently used to describe any action taken by the school principal to enhance the T&L procedure (Martin et al., 2020).

Since more than three decades ago, educational scholars and policymakers have become interested in instructional leadership (Iram, 2023; Bashir et al, 2022; & Bano et al, 2021). It all began with a study on effective schools. The origin of instructional leadership can be found in research conducted in northern America between the late 1970s and early 1980s that compares successful primary schools with unsuccessful primary schools for disadvantaged pupils.

Before the development of studies on school administrators, studies about schools primarily concentrated on socioeconomic Status, social standing, and race as determinants of academic success. However, since the advent of studies on efficient school, the emphasis has turned to defining traits. The procedures used by school administrators to enhance pupils 'achievement in school (Uzma et al., 2023).

Models of Instructional Leadership

Education scholars have created a variety of instructional leadership models to outline the characteristics and duties that school administrators can carry out in their capacity as instructional leaders (Fiskia et al., 2023). Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1990), Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996), and Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model are the three primary instructional leadership models that are commonly discussed in academic research (Bashir & Khalil, 2017).

Here we discuss Weber's models. Weber defines some dimensions. The five dimensions are as follows.

- Defining School Goals
- Managing curriculum and teaching
- Providing a positive learning climate
- Observing and enhancing teaching quality
- Evaluating teaching program

In the second point, managing curriculum and teaching indicates how instructional leaders assess the student's formative assessment. What practices do they use to assess the formative assessment in their schools?

For the implementation of school-based management, the factor of instructional leadership is significantly important in the internal stakeholders of the school consultative meetings, administrative protocols, communication and in the process of decision-making (Martin, 2019). Instructional leadership has changed in many perspectives from the old approach to new innovative instruction that is considered better to use as a basis for improvement because of societal influence and modern technology (Roy, 2024). The formative assessment used to be thought of as an evaluation for learning, in contrast to summative evaluation. To distinguish between the two separate functions that evaluation could play in reviewing curriculum, Michael Scriven developed the phases formative and summative in 1967. Benjamin Bloom and colleagues (1969; 1971) advised using the same distinction for evaluating student learning, which is what we now often refer to as assessment (Lalitha, 2023). In essence, the concepts of formative and summative assessment have evolved into core concepts in the study of assessment in education. Some academics have started fusing the terms formative assessment and summative evaluation in recent years.

The impact of leadership is very critical in the effectiveness of school, and at every stage, it is striving for improvement and development (Mohamed & Abdul-ul-Raheem, 2023). In this perspective, schools need effective leadership and essential leadership in a way that leaders of every school must practice to achieve excellence in the institution. The foremost objective of instructional leadership is searching out ways and methods for the improvement of students' higher-order learning (Bashir et al, 2021; Ahmad, 2016). It is obligatory for school leaders to act as instructional leaders and must be aware of the ways and means to create the necessary conditions for organizational development. The effectiveness of long-term achievement of students and an institution is possible in terms of a good instructional practices system (Nazia, Farah, & Rubab, 2023).

From the year of Scriven's recognition and Bloom's expansion of summative and formative assessment types, summative assessment interest (and investment) has far surpassed that given to formative assessment, according to Stiggs (2005). The ups and downs of formative assessment from the 1970s to the late 1980s are briefly discussed in the 2003 essay by Black and William. In the late 1980s, interest in assessment for learning was sparked by a significant review study by

(Crooks, 1998) and a fundamental study on the role of formative assessment in the development of expertise (Sadler, 1989). This expanding interest appeared to be supported by the meta-analysis conducted by Fuchs and Fuchs in 1986. Black and William's (1998) comprehensive examination of almost 250 papers. Both studies revealed significant advancements in students' learning. Gains of the half to a full standard deviation were seen in the study, with low-achieving experiencing the biggest increases. Formative assessment, according to academics, is the method of using information about students' learning during instruction to decide how to improve learning. The potential benefits of this practice are also receiving more support.

There are still many different methods to conceptualize and apply formative assessment. All of the professionals mentioned above, however, concur that formative evaluation does not always involve routine testing or just telling students of their results. It is advised that educators instead "use the evidence of student knowledge (and learning) to alter the teaching effort to achieve learning goals based on Black and companions" (2004). In partnership with national and international formative assessment academics, the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers State Collaborative (FAST SCASS) of the Council of Chief State Officers defined five characteristics of the formative assessment process from the literature in 2007.

They are as follows;

- The sub-goals of the main learning goal should be stated clearly in learning progressions.
- Students should be informed of the precise learning objectives and success standards.
- Students should receive feedback that is supported by data and related to the objectives and success criteria of the instruction.
- It's essential to provide students with opportunities for metacognitive reflection on their learning through both self and peer assessment.
- To foster a collaborative learning environment in the classroom, teachers and students should collaborate.

The traits were incorporated into a model of the formative assessment process developed by Margaret Heritage of the National Centre for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) in 2007. This model can be used to describe a newly offered version in the debate that follows. Particular focus is placed on the following four areas of formative assessment: learning progressions, which include learning goals and success criteria, detecting the gap, eliciting evidence of learning, teacher evaluation, student involvement, and teacher feedback.

The theoretical framework was based on Weber's instructional leadership model. The second point of this model is managing the curriculum and teaching. Constructivist theories outline the cognitive and metacognitive processes necessary for learners to modify their knowledge and abilities which must be supported by cooperative formative assessment procedures. The paper uses the theory of formative assessment along with Weber's model of instructional leadership.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine instructional leadership practices that ensure effective formative assessment of primary school students. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect relevant data from school principals and teachers. The questionnaire focused on various aspects of instructional leadership and formative assessment practices the quantitative approach was chosen to enable the analysis of numerical data and to identify patterns and correlations among variables related to instructional leadership and assessment.

The target population for this study included all head teachers and teachers working in primary schools within District Lahore. This group was selected to provide insights into how instructional

leadership practices are implemented regarding formative assessment at the primary school level. Headteachers were chosen for their leadership role in guiding and influencing educational practices, while teachers were included to offer perspectives from the classroom. The combination of viewpoints was essential to capture a comprehensive understanding of how formative assessment is supported and carried out in schools across the district.

The sample of this study comprised school principals and teachers. The data was collected from 34 schools including both public and private schools. The researcher used a questionnaire for the final data collection.

Data were collected through an online survey and in-person distribution of questionnaires to a target population of school principals and teachers. The online format facilitated wide outreach, though response rates were lower than anticipated. However, the collected data were sufficient to conduct meaningful analysis and provide insights into instructional leadership practices in the context of formative assessment at the primary school level.

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were first generated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the key variables related to instructional leadership practices and formative assessment. To compare the mean differences between groups, a t-test was applied to examine whether significant differences existed in the responses from principals and teachers regarding their views on effective formative assessment practices.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire consisting of 17 items designed to explore instructional leadership practices related to formative assessment. The questionnaire was divided into sections that addressed various aspects of instructional leadership, such as planning, mentoring, and supporting effective formative assessment strategies. Each item was framed using the Likert Scale to capture the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the statements. The instrument was validated through expert review to ensure its relevance and clarity for both principals and teachers.

Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1: Commonly used IL practices for formative assessment

Items	S Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		S. Disagree		Mean P		
	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
See assignment task before teacher conduction	17.6	12.3	50.0	45.6	11.8	12.3	11.8	5.3	8.8	8.8	3.55	3.5	.828
Checking of students' assignment	17.6	19.3	50.0	42.1	8.8	7.0	14.7	10.5	8.8	3.5	3.52	3.5	.647
Visit teachers to discuss daily class assessment techniques	32.4	17.5	41.2	40.4	5.9	15.8	14.7	5.3	5.9	3.5	3.79	3.6	.305
Ask oral questions from students when I visit the classroom	26.5	24.6	32.4	40.4	14.7	12.3	14.7	1.8	8.8	5.3	3.44	3.7	.790
Check the students' worksheet	38.2	15.8	35.3	36.8	2.9	19.3	11.8	5.3	11.8	7.0	3.76	3.6	.790
Visits the classroom when teacher arrange the student practical	20.6	12.3	58.8	42.1	0	15.8	14.7	5.3	5.9	8.8	3.73	3.6	.851

Items of the table 1 from 1 to 6 show that there is no significant difference ($p > .05$) in the instructional leadership practices of principals and teacher's opinion. The mean score of teachers and principal is >3.5 that shows teachers acknowledge the practices of principals carried out in their schools. Mean score of *I ask oral questions from students when I visit the classroom* $M = 3.44$ which is less than 3.50. all other practices show the p value is greater than 3.50.

Table 2: Commonly used IL practices for formative assessment

Items	S Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		S. Disagree		Mean		P
	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
Asked questions to the students after finishing the lecture	26.5	17.5	44.1	45.6	14.7	17.5	8.8	3.5	5.9	0	3.76	3.91	.470
Saw the students' quizzes	17.6	14.0	61.8	47.4	2.9	15.8	8.8	3.5	8.8	3.5	3.70	3.77	.777
Visit the classroom when teachers arrange group activities	20.6	22.8	50.0	38.6	11.8	10.5	2.9	7.0	14.7	5.3	3.58	3.79	.460
Visit the classroom during student teacher discussion	29.4	14.0	41.2	31.6	11.8	22.8	8.8	10.5	8.8	5.3	3.73	3.45	.302
Saw the Students portfolio	20.6	17.5	55.9	42.1	11.8	17.5	2.9	1.8	8.8	5.3	3.76	3.77	.980
Recheck Students homework	32.4	17.5	38.2	35.1	5.9	10.5	14.7	12.3	8.8	8.8	3.70	3.47	.438

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference ($p > .05$) in the instructional leadership practices of principals and teacher's opinion about those practices. The mean score of teachers ($M > 3.50$) also confirms the practices of principals carried out in their schools.

Table 3: Commonly used IL practices for formative assessment

Items	S Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		S. Disagree		Mean		P
	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
Visits the classroom when students are working in pairs	29.4	12.3	29.4	42.1	14.7	15.8	17.6	5.3	8.8	8.8	3.7	3.98	.14
Reviewed the lesson plans of teachers especially the assessment part	23.5	10.5	47.1	40.4	5.9	17.5	5.9	7.0	14.7	7.0	3.9	3.59	.43
See the worksheets prepared by teachers	26.5	19.3	47.1	42.1	5.9	8.8	14.7	3.5	5.9	10.5	3.7	3.59	.41
See the worksheets solved by students	14.7	19.3	47.1	36.6	14.7	17.5	20.6	1.8	2.9	7.0	3.5	3.48	.96
Ask teachers to share class test schedule with me	23.5	10.0	58.8	49.1	2.9	12.3	5.9	0	8.8	8.8	3.8	3.70	.64

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference ($p > .05$) in the instructional leadership practices of principals and teacher's opinion about those practices. The mean score of teachers also confirms the practices of principals carried out in their schools. Mean score regarding item related to seeing worksheet solved by the students (principal's $M=3.50$, Teacher's mean= 3.48) shows that it is less practiced in the school. All other practices have mean score >3.5 , and $p > .05$ by principals and teachers. It shows that both teachers and principals agree that these practices are carried out in school.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of instructional leadership practices for the implementation of effective formative assessment in primary education. This factor is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in ensuring that schools achieve their academic goals, especially through regular and purposeful formative assessment (Norman & Loyiso, 2023). By analyzing the perspectives of both head teachers and teachers, this research highlights the collaborative, reflective and proactive roles that instructional leaders play in promoting students' learning outcomes.

One of the prominent observations from the data is the alignment in perspectives between principals and teachers towards formative assessment practices (Iram, 2023). Both stressed on the significance of continuous evaluation and feedback to improve students' understanding. This factor shows a shared commitment to promoting an environment that gives importance to students' learning.

Schools have been under growing pressure to meet the requirements of accountability measures during the past few decades. Educational practices have improved to include novel approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in response to raised expectations for student accomplishment outcomes (Lalitha, 2023). Sadly, despite the increased focus on good educational methods in policy and practice, educators have encountered numerous difficulties when creating and putting into practice school renewal initiatives, including a lack of time, money, and effective professional development. As a result, using transformational, distributive, and collective leadership models, principals have investigated collaborative instructional leadership strategies that include teachers as leaders to guide and support implementation.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher describes instructional leadership practices regarding students' formative assessment at primary level. It's helpful for the teachers and principals to assess the student's learning evaluation. There are different methods used to evaluate students learning outcomes. One of the formative assessments that teacher used in the class to measure the students understanding about learning. The instructional leaders/principals need to ensure the effective formative assessment that practices in their school. The opinion of the principal and teacher were same in this study. All activities that discuss in the study were practices in public and private both schools.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- Head teachers and teachers can collaborative discussion how to improve formative assessment in to a learning program that are effective for students learning.
- Principals should ask oral questions from students when visit the class

- Students' worksheets may also be collected for assessment
- Class discussions may also be observed for embedded assessment practices

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