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Teacher Leadership: A Survey of the Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Leaders Program

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Abstract



The study aimed to identify the challenges faced by Teacher leaders in rural and urban setting in District Mardan at higher secondary level, to explore the opportunities for teacher leadership development and growth in rural and urban setting at higher secondary level and to compare the challenges and opportunities for educational leadership in urban and rural setting in District Mardan. The study nature was quantitative and survey method was adopted. All secondary schools in KP were part of the population. Sample was selected through stratified random sampling from both rural and urban schools. A likert scale questionnaire was developed to collect the data and SPSS will be used to analyze the collected data. It was found that schools in undeveloped and villages face distinct challenges because they must deal with limited resources. Moreover, they face isolated distribution of their teaching leadership members. It is recommended that DEO's help and support is required to handle problems that arises from unclear work duties of the staff and heavier work requirements. Moreover, colleague opposition and inadequate backing from senior leadership needs to be addressed.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership, School Administration, Mentorship

Introduction

Leadership is a multidimensional phenomenon including the ability to inspire, influence, and direct others or groups toward the accomplishment of common aspirations. According to Northouse, leadership is "a process whereby one person influences a group of people to accomplish a common goal" (Northouse, 2018.). This definition talks of the dynamism of leadership in the running of activities in many organizational setups, not excluding education. Therefore, educational leadership is immensely prominent because it bears a direct influence on coaching and learning outcomes.

With the realization that partners over the world are less fulfilled with the term and conditions of today's schools (Donahoo & Seeker, 2007), instructive scholastics and professionals have always been presenting and executing a assortment of imaginative models for school change and improvement. The disappointment of positional authorities in school advancement has driven to a developing consideration towards advancing the idea of shared and conveyed authority in schools. It calls for tolerating educator authority as an vital calculate of moving forward school with teachers' full association in school things past the classroom dividers. Subsequently, writing appears a developing agreement that more noteworthy obligations must be designated to instructors for creating them as instructor pioneers (Lambert, 2002). When instructors are given with the openings to work as pioneers, they can make a more grounded show for school enhancement and educator improvement (Beachum & Dentith, 2004).

District Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, KPK, Pakistan, offers an interesting mix of rural and urban educational settings. For the demographic and socioeconomic diversity, a multi-pronged approach by teacher leaders is needed. According to (Ahmed & Khan 2020, p. 42) "educational leadership in KPK must grapple with a complex environment characterized by heterogeneous community expectations, resource constraints, and diverse student needs" This case study will delve deeper into issues of teacher leadership in both rural and urban settings within District Mardan.

Statement of the problem

This teacher initiative is the leadership in educational transformation for better teaching practices and a collaborative school atmosphere. Rural and urban areas in the Mardan region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have their economic and social conditions, out of which emerges a different set of problems and opportunities for teacher leadership. Some of the issues rural schools face include limited resources, isolation from other professionals, and lack of infrastructure. Conversely, some of the issues urban schools face are overcrowding, meeting the diverse needs of students, and substantive administrative demands. On the other hand, there are also substantive opportunities for teacher leadership success through community resources on a local level, peers, and paving the way in innovative teaching methods. The current research will try to find the major challenges and possible benefits of the teachers in teaching in rural as well as urban schools in the Mardan region. All this is very essential to understand while developing the teacher leadership support to understand what will eventually affect the educational outcomes of the district.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the challenges faced by Teacher leaders in rural and urban setting in District Mardan at higher secondary level.
2. To explore the opportunities for teacher leadership development and growth in rural and urban setting at higher secondary level.
3. To compare the challenges and opportunities for educational leadership in urban and rural setting in District Mardan.

Research Questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by the teacher leaders working in the higher secondary level schools in rural and urban setups?
2. What are the opportunities available for the teacher leadership development and growth in a rural and urban setup of higher secondary School?
3. How do issues and opportunities in educational leadership vary across the urban–rural?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will be that it would give a complete understanding of the particular difficulties and opportunities faced in relation to teacher leadership in both rural and urban areas of District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This study will be focuses on these specific environments so as to gain insight into issues that are context-specific and best practices which can help design targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Such undertakings would inform future strategies for strengthening teacher leadership, with a knock-on effect on student achievement in terms of learning outcomes. Past research has shown that context plays a vital role in defining what teacher leadership is about. Moreover, this research seeks to provide insights for policy formulation, professional development programs orientation, and resource allocation approaches suited for teachers leading schools within District Mardan.

Literature Review

A specific type of leadership, educational leadership is concerned with raising the standard of education and creating a supportive learning environment. Encouraging teachers, students, and other stakeholders to accomplish educational objectives including raising student success, advancing equality, and cultivating a pleasant school climate are all part of it. The definition of educational leadership given by Leithwood et al. (2004) is the set of actions and behaviors that influence the development of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Principals, administrators, and teacher leaders are among the educational leaders who are crucial in determining the goals and course of schools. Implementing policies, overseeing resources, promoting staff collaboration, and assisting with professional growth are all under their purview. Hallinger (2003) asserts that dispersed leadership, a focus on instructional improvement, and fostering a sense of purpose among stakeholders are characteristics of good educational leadership.

Teacher leadership is an evolving paradigm that offers educators avenues to extend their influence beyond the confines of the classroom. Teachers who take up leadership roles not only help schools get better, but they also advance their own professional growth, motivate their peers, and support the achievement of their students. With an emphasis on teamwork, shared accountability, and collective efficacy, this paradigm shift toward dispersed leadership has changed the face of education (Harris, 2013; Spillane, 2006).

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It is important to determine the skills that will enable teacher leaders to flourish in the diverse roles that they may perform. Since one cannot be a great teacher leader without first being a successful teacher, successful teacher leadership is largely ascribed to the pedagogical quality of the instructors (Frost, 2012). A teacher's incompetence in classroom management or lack of credibility can have a negative impact on teacher leader roles. In order to gain credibility with peers and colleagues, teacher leadership requires expertise in the classroom (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Therefore, via shared or cooperative connections that promote instructional practices, qualified teachers can exert influence over supervisors, colleagues, and members of the school community through teacher leadership (Poekert, 2012). According to the literature study conducted by York-Barr and Duke up until 2004, administrators and colleagues esteem teachers who take the lead. They adopt a learning mindset in their job and exhibit or are thought to possess the capacity to acquire leadership abilities, attitudes, and knowledge. According to Tomal et al. (2014), teacher leaders should be able to mentor and coach teachers, lead and inspire staff, improve curriculum instructions, manage resources, foster collaboration, handle school change, and communicate with staff in addition to having pedagogical knowledge.

Sanocki (2013) feels that top-down leadership paradigms still predominate in many schools, and they view organizational structures as one of the main obstacles to teacher leadership. Organizational traits and structural elements may negatively affect teacher leaders' work. The main characteristics of hierarchical structures that hinder the achievement of a shared objective and the optimal balancing act between formalization, centralization, and standardization in an educational institution are frequently control and accountability. Rigid bureaucratic systems, according to Tschannen-Moran (2009), would undermine attempts to establish a cooperative professional work environment.

Research Methodology

The nature of the study descriptive and survey method. Questionnaire was used for data collection from the respondents. Survey research method is a useful method to collect data from a large sample. Mostly the educational researcher who intends to generalize a study to a vast sample, employ this method. It enables the researcher to collect data from a large respondent's group which helps in results generalization. Moreover, the process is cost effective and ensures that researcher can collect varied information from the respondents regarding the research problem.

All the Higher Secondary Schools in Distt; Mardan will be constituted to the population of this study (N=75, ESED) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the Academic staff Principals, Head Teachers and Teacher will contribute in this study.

A sample of 38 Higher Secondary Schools from Rural and Urban setting were selected randomly. Stratified random sampling will be used to ensure representation from both rural and urban schools. A likert scale questionnaire will be developed to collect the data. SPSS will be used to analyze the collected data.

Data Analysis

Table No: 1 *Concept of teacher leadership in schools*

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	40	42	5	1	2	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	28	21	-14	-18	-17	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	784	441	196	324	289	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	43.56	24.50	10.89	18	16.06	$114.11 = \chi^2$

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

As can be seen from the above table, the computed value of χ^2 (114.11) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05). This indicates that the result is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Table No: 2 *In my school, teacher leadership is highly regarded.*

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	52	33	2	2	1	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	34	15	-16	-16	-17	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	1156	225	256	256	289	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	64.22	12.50	14.22	14.22	16.06	$121.22 = \chi^2$

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Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

The estimated value of χ^2 (121.22) is bigger than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05), as shown in Table 2. This indicates that the result is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Table No: 3 In schools, teachers frequently assume leadership positions.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	31	31	22	4	2	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	8	22	1	-16	-15	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	81	441	1	256	225	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	4.50	24.50	0.06	14.22	12.50	56.05 = χ^2

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

The computed value of χ^2 (56.05) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05), as Table 3 demonstrates. This indicates that the result is significant and that there are differences in the teachers' opinions.

Table No: 4 As a teacher, I am confident in my leadership skills.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	21	39	16	8	8	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	-4	27	0	-12	-11	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	16	729	0	144	121	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	0.89	40.50	0	8.00	6.72	56.11 = χ^2

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

Table 4 indicates that the computed value of χ^2 (56.11) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05). This indicates that the result is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Table No: 5 Student learning outcomes are enhanced by teacher leadership.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	11	32	31	9	7	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	-9	18	10	-11	-8	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	81	324	100	121	64	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	4.50	18	5.56	6.72	3.56	38.34 = χ^2

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

The computed value of χ^2 (38.34) is bigger than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05), as Table 5 demonstrates. This indicates that the result is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Table No: 6 Clear instructions regarding teacher leadership positions are provided by school administration.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	39	30	9	7	5	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	30	3	-5	-13	-15	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	900	9	25	169	225	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	50	0.50	1.39	9.39	12.50	74.07 = χ^2

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

As can be seen from Table 6, the computed value of χ^2 (74.07) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at P = (.05). This indicates that the result is significant and that educators have differing opinions.

Table No: 7 At my school, decisions are made with input from the teachers.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	29	40	10	3	8	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	14	18	-5	-13	-14	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	196	324	25	169	196	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	10.89	18	1.39	9.39	10.89	51.10 = χ^2

Table Value = 9.512 P = .05 df = 4

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Table 7 indicates that the computed value of χ^2 (51.10) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at $P = (.05)$. This indicates that the outcome is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Table No: 8 Teacher leadership is just as crucial as school administrative leadership.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	33	24	19	3	11	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	15	6	1	-15	-7	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	225	36	1	225	49	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	12.50	2	0.06	12.50	2.72	$29.78 = \chi^2$

Table Value = 9.512 $P = .05$ $df = 4$

Table 8 demonstrates that, for $P = .05$, the computed value of χ^2 (29.78) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512). Thus, the outcome is noteworthy, and it can be inferred that the instructors' perspectives are not all the same.

Table No: 9 Teachers inspire others through their leadership.

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	33	30	15	9	3	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	17	11	-5	-11	-12	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	289	121	25	121	144	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	16.06	6.72	1.39	6.72	8	$39.27 = \chi^2$

Table Value = 9.512 $P = .05$ $df = 4$

Table 9 demonstrates that the computed value of χ^2 (39.27) is higher than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at $P = (.05)$. This indicates that the result has significance and that there are differences in instructors' opinions.

Table No: 10 Teacher leadership builds a positive school environment

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	TOTAL
f_o	41	30	7	6	6	90
f_e	18	18	18	18	18	90
$f_o - f_e$	28	5	-6	-13	-14	0
$(f_o - f_e)^2$	784	25	36	169	196	
$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	43.56	1.39	2	9.39	10.89	$66.88 = \chi^2$

Table Value = 9.512 $P = .05$ $df = 4$

The computed value of χ^2 (66.88) is more than the table value of χ^2 (9.512) at $P = (.05)$, as Table 10 demonstrates. This indicates that the result is significant and that the instructors' opinions differ.

Discussion

Principals' and teachers' leadership styles in schools can positively impact student and teacher performance. The opinions of administrators and teachers toward school leadership techniques, with the mean value of the former being greater. Perceptions among respondents confirmed that principals scored far higher on leadership. Recognizing their impact on the classroom and school atmosphere, principals should show their teaching staff their principles and views in order to improve academic achievement.

This study looked at how school leadership practices—that is, those of teachers and principals—affect classroom management, the school atmosphere, and academic achievement in an effort to lower under-performance. The findings validated claims in the literature that school leadership practices affect academic performance, classroom management, and the school environment (Clawson, 2006; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi 2006; Spillane, 2005, 2006).

According to the literature review, school leadership practices are thought to be the most key elements in the school organization that have an impact on performance improvement (Bolden, 2011; James & Rottman, 2007; Knight & Rapley, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Spillane, 2005). According to this study, everyone surveyed thought well of school leadership procedures. Since education at the upper secondary school level is still very stratified and uneven, it demands vision, teamwork, values to inspire dedication, and sharing of problems to alter academic under-performance. Principals alone cannot make a significant difference in schools.

Findings of the Study

The study findings are discussed below:

- The report identifies multiple challenges that Teacher Leaders face because of insufficient administrative backing, ambiguous duties and limited chances for growth and increased workload and colleague resistance.
- Educational establishments grant their teachers leadership roles which unlock multiple collaborative chances to mentor students and enhance curriculum materials and advance career pathways.
- Schools in undeveloped and villages face distinct challenges because they must deal with limited resources. Moreover, they face isolated distribution of their teaching leadership members.
- Leaders at school work hard and tries to ensure good results of their students. They push the teachers' capacity of knowledge by enhancing their pedagogical skills.
- It was found that teacher leadership development needs specific trained programs to advance properly.

Recommendations

It is recommended that DEO's help and support is required to handle problems that arises from unclear work duties of the staff and heavier work requirements. Moreover, colleague opposition and inadequate backing from senior leadership needs to be addressed. It is recommended that teachers who take leadership roles must be trained for multiple tasks i.e counselling and guidance, curriculum development as well as mentoring services. Furthermore, it is recommended that mostly educational leaders needs to be trained in financial matters. They maybe be provided training how to handle limited financial resources appropriately.

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