

Administrative Support and Strategic Leadership as Predictors of Teachers' Professional Development and School Advancement

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Abstract

This study examines strategic leadership practices and administrative support as predictors of teachers' professional development and school advancement. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design with 300 secondary school teachers (93.75% response rate), the study found significant positive correlations between strategic leadership practices and teachers' professional development ($r = .68, p < .001$), and between administrative support and school development ($r = .64, p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis revealed that both variables significantly predict professional development ($R^2 = .43$) and school advancement ($R^2 = .47$), with strategic leadership practices emerging as the stronger predictor ($\beta = .49-.53, p < .001$). The school with strong strategic leadership and consistent administrative support should have foster professional learning cultures and contribute to the institutional growth however the result of the study undermines this logic which could be the result of cross-sectional design of the research and self-reported data of the schools, which are the limitation of this study.

Keywords: Professional Advancement, School Advancement, Strategic Leadership & Administrative Support.

Introduction

School leaders play a critical role in determining school outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and student success. Modern school leaders are required to fulfil many roles including strategic leadership, resource allocation, policy development and management, and curriculum and instruction supervision. One of these roles, strategic leadership, has received particular attention as it enables educational leaders to drive their institutions towards improvement (Makhdum et al., 2023). Strategic leadership includes the development of a vision, organisational goals, and the implementation of strategies for improving performance (Davies & Davies, 2010). School strategic leadership involves more than simple management: it also motivates and influences teachers, promotes collaboration, and facilitates learning environments. Studies have shown that effective practices of leadership contribute to school development by fostering professionalism and continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Also critical is teachers' professional development (TPD), the continuous process of teachers gaining new knowledge, improving teaching strategies and skills, and building professional skills (Faisal et al., 2024; Desimone, 2009). Administrative support (AS) from school leaders, such as mentoring, feedback, and professional development

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opportunities, is important in this regard. Teachers are more motivated, involved, and effective in the classroom when school leaders give them AS (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Leaders provide AS; teachers are more motivated, engaged, and effective in the classroom (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Although there is a growing awareness of the importance of school leadership, many schools continue to suffer from poor leadership practices, and a lack of AS. School administrators might prioritize day-to-day management tasks over strategic leadership initiatives that support teacher development and enhance school effectiveness. Leadership initiatives to enhance teacher development and improve school effectiveness. Furthermore, previous studies have mostly focused on leadership and teacher development separately, rather than studying combined effects.

Problem Statement

Research has long shown that school leadership makes a tangible difference to school performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). But most studies have focused on leadership in general terms, without digging into two specific ingredients. Strategic, forward-looking practices and day-to-day administrative support work together. Many have, for example, failed to ask how these factors jointly shape both teachers' professional growth and the school's overall progress. This oversight matters. Without a clearer picture, school leaders are left without practical guidance on how to blend bold, long-term vision with the everyday backing their staff truly need. As a result, leadership strategies often end up feeling either too abstract or too caught up in routine tasks missing the integrated approach that could genuinely advance teaching and learning.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested keeping in view the preliminary literature review:

- **H1:** Strategic leadership strategies impact teachers' professional development positively.
- **H2: Administrative support predicts teachers' professional development.**
- **H3: Strategic leadership practices predict school development.**
- **H4:** Positive school development can be predicted on the provision of administrative support.

Significance of the Research

This research does not just give school leaders more theory to file. It offers practical, down-to-earth approaches that actually help teachers grow professionally—while making the school run better as a whole. For a principal or vice principal, that looks like knowing when to step back and let teachers take the lead on their own initiatives, and when to jump in with the right administrative support. It is about balance.

For policymakers, the takeaway is just as real: this research shows how to shape leadership policies that do not just sound appealing on paper. Policies should focus on strategic planning, but also on the everyday support that teachers truly need. Think about manageable workloads, resources they can access, and leaders who respond rather than dictate.

In short, this study connects the big picture to the messy, beautiful reality of running a school. This study provides school administrators and policymakers with practical strategies to create schools where vision and support are truly integrated.

Literature Review

Strategic leadership in schools

"Strategic leadership" refers to the ability to design long-term goals, prioritise an organisation, and implement plans to enhance the effectiveness of an institution. Davies and Davies (2010) suggest that school strategic leadership ensures policy and school objectives are compatible, promotes effective use of resources, and encourages innovation in teaching and learning. Hallinger and Heck (2010) point out that when school administrators act on strategic leadership strategies, they have a positive impact on the workplace climate, they encourage collaboration, and they are involved in the execution of professional development initiatives.

Support for the Professional Development of Teachers and Management

Administrative support involves mentoring, professional development, feedback, and the availability of teaching resources. Gumus and Bellibas (2016) explain that when school administrators constantly support their teachers, teachers feel more secure and are willing to engage in activities that promote their professional development. Moreover, as Robinson et al. (2008) claim, supportive leadership is related to an increase in the level of professional commitment, the self-efficacy of teachers, and better teaching practices.

Schools Development consequences

The term "school development" is used to describe the deliberate improvement of learning environments, teaching methods, structures, and cultures of various schools. Developing a good school requires effective leadership that promotes a culture of collaboration, innovation, and collective responsibility among all stakeholders in a school. Strategic leadership techniques are used to identify issues, develop solutions, and implement policies that enhance learning.

The Present Study and Research Gaps

Four specific gaps emerge from the literature: (1) most strategic leadership research focuses on corporate settings rather than education; (2) studies of administrative support typically examine job satisfaction rather than professional development; (3) no study has tested the simultaneous predictive effects of both constructs on teacher and school outcomes; and (4) prior research often uses small or convenience samples. The present study addresses these gaps.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research implies the quantitative approach, while the survey was used to explore the impact of strategic leadership practices and administrative support on teachers' professional development as well as school development.

Population and Sampling

The secondary school teachers were the target population selected from the public schools of the province of Sindh, Pakistan. Using a simple random sampling method, 300 teachers were selected from a sampling frame of 1,245 teachers across 25 public secondary schools. Sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. Of 320 questionnaires distributed, 300 were returned fully completed (93.75% response rate).

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire measured the four constructs. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

- **Strategic Leadership Practices (6 items, $\alpha = .87$)**—example: "My principal communicates a clear vision for school improvement."

- **Administrative Support (6 items, $\alpha = .84$)**—example: “School administrators provide regular constructive feedback on my teaching.”
- **Teachers’ Professional Development (6 items, $\alpha = .88$)**
- **School Development (6 items, $\alpha = .89$)**

The researcher ensured content validity by grounding the items in established theoretical frameworks and conducting an expert review.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The researcher contacted the sample schools, scheduled the visits, shared the brief of the study, and answered the questions and explained the ethical practices, such as confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of the data, which would be exclusively used for the research purpose only and not be shared with a third party. Written informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered and collected on the same day. Ethical approval was obtained from the authors’ institutional review board.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were computed. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were performed using SPSS. Prior to regression, assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested and satisfied (VIF range = 1.42–1.68). All tests were two-tailed with $\alpha = .05$.

Research Findings

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics. Mean scores ranged from 3.59 to 3.75, indicating generally positive perceptions, with standard deviations below 1.0 suggesting acceptable homogeneity.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 300)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strategic Leadership Practices (SLP)	3.72	0.51
Administrative Support (AS)	3.59	0.60
Teachers’ Professional Development (TPD)	3.68	0.55
School Development (SD)	3.75	0.48

Correlational Analysis: Pearson correlations revealed significant positive relationships among all variables ($p < .001$):

- SLP and TPD: $r = .68$
- AS and TPD: $r = .65$
- SLP and SD: $r = .71$
- AS and SD: $r = .64$

Multiple Regression Analysis: Two regression models were tested. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Results (N = 300)

Predictor	β (TPD)	p (TPD)	β (SD)	p (SD)
Strategic Leadership (SLP)	.49	< .001	.53	< .001
Administrative Support (AS)	.35	< .001	.31	< .001
R ²	.43		.47	

Both models were significant: TPD model: $F(2,297) = 112.45$, $p < .001$; SD model: $F(2,297) = 129.87$, $p < .001$. SLP consistently demonstrated larger effect sizes than AS. According to Cohen's (1988) conventions, these represent large effect sizes.

Discussion

This study examined strategic leadership practices and administrative support as predictors of teachers' professional development and school advancement. The results fully support H1–H4. Strategic leadership practices consistently emerged as the strongest predictor, aligning with prior work emphasising the role of vision, goal setting, and strategic planning in educational contexts (Davies & Davies, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

While the effect sizes of administrative support were smaller, it still had significant effects. The research indicates that enabling activities, such as mentoring and resource allocation, enhance the development of teachers (Gumus & Bellibas, 2016; Desimone, 2009). This conclusion is in line with the results of the current studies. The evidence suggests that strategic leadership provides a direction for the school, and administrative support provides the means to deliver. These are both critical to success. The fact that the two variables significantly explain variance in teacher and school outcomes is evidenced by the fact that the explained variance ($R^2 = .43$ for TPD and $.47$ for SD) is also significant. These estimates are similar to those found in meta-analyses of educational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008).

Practical Implications: For school administrators: Dedicate time for strategic planning with teacher input; develop 3–5-year professional development roadmaps aligned with school vision; institute regular feedback cycles connecting strategic goals to individual growth plans. For policymakers this research provides guidance to revise principal preparation programmes to emphasise strategic leadership competencies; fund administrative support roles (e.g., instructional coaches); create accountability systems that measure leadership practices alongside student outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research: This study has the following limitations: (1) Cross-sectional design precludes causal inference. (2) Data are self-reported from a single source (teachers), raising potential common method bias. (3) The sample is limited to public secondary schools in one region, limiting generalisability. (4) No mediators or moderators were examined.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that strategic leadership practices and administrative support jointly predict teachers' professional development and school advancement, with strategic leadership consistently demonstrating stronger effects. The findings enhance theoretical understanding by showing that supportive administrative practices complement, rather than replace, visionary, goal-oriented leadership behaviors. For educational leaders, the message is clear: effective school improvement requires balancing strategic direction with

practical support. The provision of strategic vision ensures the right direction, while its absence would lead to the lack of direction or no direction. Right and timely administrative support ensure the implementation of support strategies.

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