DOI: https://doi.org/10.71317/kjard.2.11.2026.1090

Kashmir Journal of Academic Research and Development

Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/KJARD

Training and Headship Experience as Predictors of School Heads' Administrative Competencies: Evidence from Southern Punjab, Pakistan

Syed Willeem Ul Haq
PhD Scholar, Department of Education, National College of Business Administration & Economics, Bahawalpur Campus, Pakistan
Email: waseemnaqvi12145@gmail.com
Dr. Muhammad Arshad
Associate Professor, Department of Education, National College of Business Administration & Economics, Bahawalpur Campus, Pakistan
Email: arshad06@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received:
October 17, 2026
Revised:
October 31, 2026
Accepted:
November 11, 2026
Available Online:
November 21, 2026

Keywords:
school heads; administrative competencies; leadership training; headship experience; induction; Pakistan.

Corresponding Author:
Syed Willeem Ul Haq
Email: waseemnaqvi12145@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

School heads in Pakistan are generally not trained and are promoted from teachers based on seniority to head a school. We sought to identify the personal and professional characteristics of school heads associated with their competence in school management and equitably distribute training on school management to such school heads. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 300 school heads and education managers in eleven districts of Southern Punjab via a 56-item questionnaire (α = 0.944) in seven areas of competencies. Independent sample t, one-way ANOVA (Tukey post hoc tests), chi-square, Spearman correlation, and multiple regression were used to analyze the data. Only 39.3% of responders had attended in-service training in management (other types of training relevant to this study are shown in Table 1). Trained heads scored significantly higher on all seven (M = 4.37 vs 4.15, t (298) = 4.51, p < .001, d = 0.53). Experience of headship also had an effect on all seven areas with heads in their first three years scoring lowest (M = 4.03 vs 4.38 for over ten years; F(3, 296) = 10.54, p <.001, η^2 = 0.096). No significant differences were found for gender, sector, age, qualifications (both professional and academic), or school level. Training least reached newly appointed heads (23.6%) and senior teachers on headship charge (18.3%). Only headship experience (β = 0.265) and training (β = 0.196; R2 = 0.153) had significant issue in predicting. This suggests the need for induction training of new heads and induction training of teachers in headship charge.

Introduction

They advised that good preparation should be valued at the same level as experience in making school leadership work. But evidence over the last 10 or 20 years now indicates that it is the conditions leaders create for teaching that are the key to student learning: a clear set of goals, staff development, management of resources and a constant focus on learning rather than on more general whole-school concerns (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2008). These are exacting capabilities, and increasingly education systems have come to understand that development of these cannot be left to chance. International reviews suggest that effective leadership preparation programs are selective, coherent, practice-based and mentored (Huber, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). A more recent report (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022) from the Learning Policy Institute

also reported that principals that are better prepared and developed show better school effectiveness, preparedness and tenure. Comparative work also points to an international trend toward recognizing headship as a profession in its own right, with separate preparation from the classroom teacher (Bush, 2018).

Yet in many systems heads are still made senior teachers and expected to learn the job by trial and error (Bush, 2008). This model takes for granted that a good teacher automatically makes a good head and that the knowledge necessary for management will be learned in the process. Studies of new heads challenge each of these assumptions. New principals often describe their entry into headship as a shock, feeling isolated, overwhelmed by the role, and feeling surprisingly responsible for everything that happened in the school (Spillane & Lee, 2014; Walker & Qian, 2006). In other systems, first-year principals' schools are less effective than schools led by more experienced principals, with principal effectiveness increasing with years of experience (Clark et al., 2009). Without such support, then, it is teachers and students who pay the price for the head's learning curve.

Pakistan is very much a seniority pattern. In Punjab, public schools promote senior teachers to headship, and senior school teachers are given charge of headship with no change in preparation. Heads then take up budgets, School Council funds, staff discipline, records and data reporting, often without any training in any of them (Simkins et al., 2003). Data monitoring has shifted online and schools have become accountable for enrollments, attendance and exam results, increasing their responsibilities. Training (when provided) tends to be short and generic, is provided post-appointment and is allocated by departmental nomination rather than by need. Pre-service teacher education (B.Ed, M.Ed) is focused on curriculum and pedagogy, with little emphasis on school finance and personnel management or educational law. Therefore, many heads in Punjab enter headship with little formal training to address the administrative challenges of headship.

The consequences of this are documented in Pakistani writing rather than quantifiably measured. Qualitative studies indicate the heads in government schools spend most of their day on administrative and compliance work, leaving few opportunities for instructional leadership (Khan, 2012; Simkins et al., 2003); moreover, success as heads comes with being involved with teaching, developing staff, and interacting with parents (Salfi, 2011). While useful, these studies use small numbers of heads and cannot tell us whether "well trained" (however defined) heads are systematically associated with stronger competencies across a broader population, or whether some types of heads are systematically disadvantaged.

This raises practical policy questions, which are taken here as three research questions. The first is differences in heads. For example, if newly appointed heads, heads in rural schools or senior teachers acting as heads demonstrate weaker competencies than do others, then they can be targeted for particular training and support. It may also be that the traits the system rewards (academic qualifications, teaching, age and service) do not go together with greater competencies, and directly testing these tells us whether current promotion criteria are a good basis for appointment. It thus starts to explore differences in perceived competencies of school heads as administrators by gender, location, sector, training, designation, age, educational and professional qualifications, total, service and headship experience, level and type of school.

The second issue is availability of training. Even where training is available, it may not be optimal training. Where places are filled by nomination, these may be taken by senior or more visible heads rather than those newly in post, and the order of preparation may be reversed, with training after heads' experience of learning the job by trial and error. Internationally, however, the experience has been the reverse, of preparation for headship before appointment and good systematic induction soon after appointment (Huber, 2004; Bush, 2018). This raises the question of the extent to which school management training is related to head characteristics, especially head appointment and headship experience.

A third question is how important the characteristics are. In comparing groups, they could differ on more than one variable, and some differences could overcross. For example, senior teachers with headship charge may have lower scores because they are seniors or because they are older and less trained. We have to take the characteristics together to disentangle these influences. Thus, the study attempts to see what characteristics predict heads' overall scores of administrative competency, when controlling for the others. If training is still significant when netting it out against experience and other characteristics, it would support the use of training as a policy lever. If experience with head of school responsibility is also found to be significant, then this would argue for more structured induction and mentoring to shorten the learning curve of new heads.

Answers to these questions will provide an evidence base missing from policy decisions on school leadership in Pakistan. It informs whom to train, at which career stage, and on what to focus. The study is based on a survey of 300 heads of schools and education managers in eleven districts of Southern Punjab, an overwhelmingly rural area that lags behind the north of the province in educational outcomes and where better-trained heads of schools are more of a priority. It also examines for whom these trainings are yielding most in terms of administrative competence and for whom the yields are low, so that future efforts can move toward a more just and effective system for training, supporting, and inducting school heads.

Literature Review

How school leaders learn

Adult learning theories suggest that adults learn best when learning is problem centered, experiential-based and immediately relevant to the self-image of professionals (Knowles, 1980). Kolb's (1984) experiential cycle also suggests that experience "becomes" learning only with reflection, conceptualization and intentional exploration. Experience could be the same thing all over if it is devoid of any opportunity for structured reflection. Similarly, the situated learning perspective is that professional knowledge is constructed through communities of practice, where inexperienced newcomers learn from others in these communities with more experience (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

For school leaders, these views mean practice-based programs, cases, mentors and peer networks rather than lectures (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). For example, Huber (2004) reviewed 15 countries and found that they all had moved from voluntary courses after appointment to systematic preparation and induction. Internationally, according to Bush (2018), headship is regarded as a specialist position for which preparation is necessary, usually derived separately from the teacher's role, although in many developing countries on-the-job learning is the dominant mode.

Leadership preparation and its effects

Research regarding the effects of preparation has become more prevalent. For instance, in a study comparing exemplary and typical preparation in principals, the researchers found that the candidates in the exemplary programs were significantly more likely to adopt the more effective leadership practices, which were also associated with improvement practices and the school climate (Orr & Orphanos, 2011). What counted were coherent curricula, active learning strategies, supervised internships and strong links to real school problems.

In-service development is also important. Grissom and Harrington (2010) found that principals who received university-based professional development and formal mentoring or coaching had higher ratings from teachers by activity type. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), long-term job-embedded professional learning for principals on mentoring or coaching tended to have positive effects on teacher retention and student achievement. These findings suggest that training (or the lack of it) should matter for the competencies of heads, and that the quality and timing of training are as important as its existence.

Experience, the novice period and self-efficacy

The head position builds practical knowledge and confidence. Low efficacy produces a lack of willingness to commit to hard work, and principals with rich experience and good support report greater efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). This could be explained by Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory where mastery experiences, the main source of efficacy beliefs, have had limited opportunity to be acquired by new leaders for building up a store of such experiences.

Beginning headship is repeatedly described as the hardest stage. Walker and Qian (2006) characterize new principals as being at the top of a 'greasy pole' and alone, facing role pressures and inheriting another's school. Spillane and Lee (2014) reported that new principals were as surprised as teachers to have "ultimate responsibility for everything" and that the volume and unpredictability of administrative demands was shocking. In New York City, Clark et al. (2009) found that new principals took positions in less-effective schools and that principal effectiveness grew with experience, at least in the initial years.

However, experience per se may simply reinforce good practice unless there is some pedagogical component (Bush, 2008). Heads can learn by trial and error, developing working routines, but they may never learn of better ones. This is why international literature stresses induction and mentoring of new heads. With trained mentors and a structured relationship, mentoring can help the beginning principal learn the culture of the role, learn technical skills and gain confidence faster (Daresh, 2004).

Training and leadership effectiveness

From leadership, student learning is most highly affected by instructional leadership and staff development (Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2008). Moreover, Hallinger, 2011 contends that the leadership effect is mediated by the conditions that heads set for teaching (i.e., clear goals, climate of support, systems to monitor progress). These are refined capacities, which would not grow on a simple core experience of administration.

In Pakistan Salfi (2011) was struck by how a powerful combination of heads' instructional involvement and professional development of staff and community engagement was unlikely to be developed by untrained heads. Siimony et al. (2003) found defined bureaucratic expectations and limited training to extend the role. Similar conditions have been reported in other low-

resource systems. Bush and Oduro (2006) report that new principals in Africa are usually appointed on the basis of their teaching record, with little or no induction and learn management by trial and error, often in isolation.

Fair Access to Leadership Development

Question two: who gets trained? For instance, if training places are nominated for, they tend to go to the already visible heads to the system, such as principals of larger schools or in urban areas, but often not to new heads or people in remote schools. Novice heads in challenge schools, who often need support the most, are least likely to receive it (Bush and Oduro, 2006; Walker and Qian, 2006). The timing of the preparation is also a matter, with international practice increasingly favoring preparation before appointment and induction immediately after appointment (Bush, 2018; Huber, 2004) rather than courses for long-serving heads who may have been in post for many years.

Preparing leaders for Pakistan

Headship preparation in Pakistan has always been regarded as an extension of teacher education and not a distinct discipline. Pre-service B.Ed and M.Ed programs address teaching and pay little attention to school finance, personnel administration and legal matters in education. Heads receive in-service training on short courses offered by schools attached to other provincial institutions and district training schools of QAED (on-going). Appointments and confirmation in post are by (usually departmental) nomination, or selection from a list of applicants, generally not conditioned by attendance.

In Pakistan, literature on school leadership is limited to small-scale qualitative accounts of individual heads or schools (Simkins, et al., 2003; Salfi, 2011; Khan, 2012). They all depict heads as being swamped by calls for management and compliance at the expense of instructional leadership. In Khan (2012) a government principal spent the majority of her time dealing with external and administrative issues, whereas a private principal with more independence could find time for teaching and learning. However, these studies do not tell us why training and experience are systematically related to the competencies of heads in a large population or the distribution of training opportunities among different heads groups.

No study in Pakistan examines a large enough sample and encourages examination of what type of association training has with headship and consequently heads' competencies in administration conditional on non-subject characteristics or considers the excluded ones from training. Most Pakistani literature is qualitative, exploring what good heads do but not associations of head competencies. This study addresses both these sets of questions using a sample of 300 heads and education managers from eleven districts.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was employed. Participants were 300 school heads and education managers from public (76.0%) and private (24.0%) schools of eleven districts of Southern Punjab. They comprised head teachers (45.0%), principals (22.0%), senior school teachers with headship charge (20.0%) and education officers (13.0%); 57.3% were male, 56.0% were from rural schools and 24.0% had less than three years of headship experience. The sample thus had many representations of these groups of special policy interest (new heads, rural heads and teachers' heads). The questionnaire consisted of 56 statements based on seven competency areas, with eight items each: Human Resource Management; Planning and Organization; Decision Making and Conflict Management; Communication and Community Relations; Instructional Leadership; Financial and Resource Management; and Professional Ethics, Accountability and Technology. Items are rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Expert ratings were used to test items for relevancy and clarity. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alphas) for areas varied from 0.737 to 0.782 with an overall coefficient of 0.944. Demographic data included gender, age, designation, educational and professional qualifications, total number of years served, headship experience, school level and type, location and sector, and school management training. Group differences were tested by independent-samples t-tests (gender, location, sector, training) and one-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD (designation, age, qualifications, service and headship experience, school level, school type). Chi-square and Cramér's V were used to test for associations between training and the heads' characteristics. The competency scores were correlated with the ordinal characteristics with Spearman correlations, and overall score predictors were established with multiple regression (enter method). Effect sizes are presented as Cohen's d and η^2 and interpreted in the conventional manner (Field, 2024). Headship experience and academic qualification were treated as ordinal (1–4) and training, location, designation, gender and sector as dummy (reference categories as shown in Table 3). Designation was coded as head of school vs. education officer. Significance was indicated at .05.

Results

Differences by heads' characteristics

Experience of training and headship made differences, some large, on all areas and on total score. Designation and location produced less difference in some areas. Differences did not arise per gender, sector, age, education, and profession.

Table 1. Differences in overall administrative competency score by heads' characteristics (N = 300)

Variable	Group means (overall)	Test	p	Effect size	Sig. areas (of 7)
Training received	Yes 4.37 / No 4.15	t(298) = 4.51	< .001	d = 0.53	7
Headship experience	<3 yrs 4.03 / 3–6 yrs 4.24 / 7–10 yrs 4.34 / >10 yrs 4.38	F(3, 296) = 10.54	< .001	η^2 = 0.096	7
Designation	EO/DDEO 4.33 / Head teacher 4.28 / Principal 4.24 / Senior school teacher 4.09	F(3, 296) = 3.73	.012	η^2 = 0.036	4
School location	Urban 4.30 / Rural 4.19	t(298) = 2.27	.024	d = 0.26	3
School type	Boys 4.29 / Girls 4.23 / Co-education 4.18	F(2, 297) = 1.81	.166	η^2 = 0.012	1
Total service experience	<5 yrs 4.25 / 5–10 yrs 4.19 / 11–20 yrs 4.30 / >20 yrs 4.19	F(3, 296) = 1.60	.189	η^2 = 0.016	1
Academic qualification	Bachelor 4.19 / Master 4.24 / M.Phil 4.22 / PhD 4.46	F(3, 296) = 1.67	.174	η^2 = 0.017	0
Professional qualification	PTC/CT 4.26 / B.Ed 4.25 / M.Ed 4.24 / Other 4.05	F(3, 296) = 1.13	.336	η^2 = 0.011	0
School level	Primary 4.26 / Elementary 4.19 / Secondary 4.24 / Higher Secondary 4.26	F(3, 296) = 0.43	.735	η^2 = 0.004	0
Gender	Male 4.25 / Female 4.23	t(298) = 0.42	.677	d = 0.05	0
School sector	Public 4.24 / Private 4.22	t(298) = 0.48	.629	d = 0.07	0
Age	<30 4.27 / 30–39 4.21 / 40–49 4.24 / ≥50 4.25	F(3, 296) = 0.26	.856	η^2 = 0.003	0

The greatest training effects were in Planning and Organization (4.32 vs 4.07, d = 0.50) and Instructional Leadership (4.38 vs 4.12, d = 0.49). Tukey tests showed heads with <3 years experience to be lower, compared with all experience groups, on the total score (mean differences −.21 to −.35, p ≤ .005). Scores rose by small increments with each band of headship experience, the largest increment occurring between the first and second bands. Planning and Organization (d = 0.26), Communication and Community Relations (d = 0.31), and Decision-making and Conflict Management (d = 0.24) showed urban-rural differences. The four lowest mean scores were for the senior school teachers on headship charge.

Who has received training

Training was associated with designation ($\chi2$ (3) = 18.17, p < .001, V = 0.246) and experience of headship ($\chi2$ (3) = 11.72, p = .008, V = 0.198) but not location, sector, gender, or school level (p > .05). The most needy of training were least likely to have received it (Table 2).

Table 2. Share of respondents trained in school management, by designation and headship experience

Group	Trained	n	% trained
Designation			
Education Officer/Deputy DEO	22	39	56.4
Principal	32	66	48.5
Head Teacher/Headmaster/Headmistress	53	135	39.3
Senior School Teacher (headship charge)	11	60	18.3

Group	Trained	n	% trained
Headship experience			
7–10 years	38	75	50.7
3–6 years	41	99	41.4
Above 10 years	22	54	40.7
Below 3 years	17	72	23.6
All respondents	118	300	39.3

Education officers were three times more likely to have received training compared to heads in their first three years and heads with 7-10 years in post were over double the percentage that had training compared to heads in their first three years.

Correlates and predictors of competency scores

Headship experience was positively correlated with all the seven areas (r_s = 0.18-0.30) and the overall score (r_s = 0.28, p <.01). For the independent variables, neither age, years of service experience, nor academic qualification correlated significantly with any area.
The model was significant, F (7, 292) = 7.52, p <.001 and accounted for 15.3% of the variance in total scores (R2 = 0.132).

Table 3. Multiple regression predicting overall administrative competency score (N = 300)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	3.898	0.097	—	40.34	< .001
Headship experience (1–4)	0.106	0.022	0.265	4.86	< .001
Training received (Yes = 1)	0.167	0.047	0.196	3.56	< .001
School location (Rural = 1)	−0.089	0.046	−0.106	−1.95	.052
Designation (Education Officer = 1)	0.079	0.068	0.063	1.16	.246
Academic qualification (1–4)	0.035	0.031	0.060	1.10	.270
Gender (Female = 1)	−0.035	0.045	−0.042	−0.78	.436
School sector (Private = 1)	−0.003	0.053	−0.003	−0.05	.959

Designation, which was significant in the ANOVA, was not significant when the experience and training were controlled for. which partly accounts for the much less and hence inferior experience and training of the senior teachers with headship charge (omnibus comparison) Rural location had an almost significant p of [.052], corroborating the marginal urban advantage seen on group comparisons.

Discussion

Our results (so far) indicate that the differences that matter between heads in terms of administrative competencies are explained by two variables of interest to policymakers: training and years of experience as head. The characteristics that the system currently rewards, including academic degrees, teaching qualifications, age, and total years of service, did not matter. This result goes against the conventional wisdom of seniority-based promotion that long teaching service fits one for headship. This was a moderate-sized training effect (d = 0.53) in comparison to the effects in all seven areas and was greatest for planning and for leadership of instruction, the two dimensions most strongly related to both school improvement and student learning in international research (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). Training also appears to broaden heads' knowledge base of school management beyond the rote compliance aspects they learn on the job. This is consistent with also emerging evidence from other systems that training and professional development is associated with stronger leadership practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). This result highlights the magnitude of the effect we found, considering that heads in Southern Punjab receive a brief, generic form of training; it implies that more carefully designed, practice-based training could have larger effects.

Service in general, rather than experience as a head, was also a predictor of competence. The first-time heads in the first three years scored the least on all competencies, indicating that trial and error is the main formative influence on their competence (Bush, 2008). All these are consistent with Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) finding that principal efficacy grows with experience and attendance and Clark et al.'s (2009) finding that principal effectiveness improves in the early years 'in/into post' and with Bandura's (1997) view that efficacy is built by mastery experiences, which new heads have not yet accumulated enough of. It also supports Bandura's (1997) assumption that efficacy is founded on mastery experiences, which new heads

arguably lack. This learning curve is then borne by new schools, and induction and mentoring could serve to reduce this curve by benefiting from others' experience rather than making mistakes (Daresh, 2004).

But the distribution of training defies the logic of preparation. Thus, only 23.6% of heads with 3 years' or less experience and 18.3% of senior teachers with headship charge were trained, as opposed to 50.7% of heads with 7-10 years' experience. So the training is reaching the heads once they have learnt the job for their early years, whereas practice globally has swung the other way toward preparation before appointment to post and structured in-post induction (Huber, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Bush, 2018). Senior teachers by charge, who are heads, represent a special case. They make up a fifth of the sample and head schools with the same responsibilities as appointed heads but were least likely to have been trained. This is contrary to designation and can be remedied by induction specific to their inexperience and lack of training.

The lack of differences in teaching qualifications (B.Ed, M.Ed) suggests that their teacher education programs did not prepare them for administration, which defined the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment but seldom included school management, finance or educational law. Once again, academic qualifications (M.Phil, PhD) were not related to competency scores when controlling for other variables and confirming the idea that academic qualifications may be a poor predictor of headship preparedness. The slight urban advantage in planning, communication and decision making also suggests a need for rural heads, working with restricted resources and less professional exposure, to see training models that draw on conditions in rural schools. This gap, given equal availability of training by location, points to working conditions (isolation, poor connectivity, lack of staff, etc.) and not differential access to courses.

These findings also suggest the type of induction and organization. The so-called greatest training effect was on Planning and Organization as well as Instructional Leadership, and because of the other findings that induction should be broader and not narrowly focused on rules and procedures, school development planning and school data usage as well as observation of classes and feedback to teachers should also form part of induction. Induction must be broad, not just in one area, as new heads scored lowest in all 17 areas; training cases should consider (not just urban) small, under-staffed, multi-grade, etc. schools, given rural heads scored lower in planning, communication and decision-making. International evidence is that one-off short courses are not as effective as sustained programs with workshops, mentoring, school visits and peer networks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Daresh, 2004). In Southern Punjab, the groups with highest scores in this study, education officers and experienced heads, provide a ready-made pool of mentors. Regular meetings with groups of heads to discuss real problems in their schools could easily provide new heads with low-cost situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) from peers. Attaching a condition of completion of the induction to confirmation in post would give the program weight and provide a guaranty that it will involve those teachers who are headship-responsible but least likely to be trained.

However, these findings should be interpreted with caution. The design is cross-sectional, and so the relationship between training and competency scores cannot be interpreted causally; heads who seek training may already differ from those who do not. The scores are perceptions reported by the respondents, not observed practice. The model accounted for 15.3% of variance, with the majority of variance explained by factors not investigated here, such as school context and individual motivation. Details of content, duration, and timing of training were not recorded, so the role of differences in quality of training could not be explored, and findings are limited to Southern Punjab only.

Conclusion

This research was conducted on personal attributes of heads and administrative competencies such as a fair distribution of school management training of school heads relating to the school heads of Southern Punjab. The evidence from 300 heads and education managers points to a clear conclusion: of the many personal and professional characteristics examined, only two made a meaningful difference. Heads trained in school management and with more experience of the headship role were more likely to report strong competencies in all seven areas and were significant predictors of competencies after controlling for other characteristics.

Equally important is what did not matter. Gender, sector, age, level of school, length of service, and academic/professional qualifications did not correlate with competency scores. Long service as teachers and higher degrees, which are strong predictors of promotion to headship, do not necessarily equip one for the administrative demands of the position. Low scores on headship charge by senior teachers were a consequence of designation rather than experience and training.

The study also found a gap between the provision made and the need. Fewer than two in five respondents had ever been trained, and training reached newly appointed heads and teachers holding headship charge least often, even though these groups scored lowest. The system depends on heads making a series of mistakes to learn and trains only when learning is essentially complete. Schools led by new heads absorb the cost of this delay.

The central implication is that the sequence of preparation should be reversed. Training should come first, at or before appointment, and the experience that follows should be supported through mentoring and peer learning so that heads develop through structured reflection rather than chance. Because both training and headship experience can be shaped by policy, improving the administrative competencies of school heads in Southern Punjab is within the reach of the education system.

Recommendations

- A timely and mandatory induction. Punjab School Education Department should make induction training on school management compulsory for all new heads within one year of their appointment. Senior teachers who are appointed to the charge of headship should complete this training before joining duty.
- Allocate training according to need. QAED and district training institutions should replace nomination-based selection with needs-based allocation, giving first priority to heads with less than three years' experience and to teachers holding headship charge.
  Establish a structured mentoring scheme. Each new head should be paired for two years with an experienced head or education officer who has received mentor training. New heads should be supported with practical problem-solving and rapid learning through regular meetings and school visits.
- Connect training with the confirmation of appointments. Link confirmation of appointment to headship to completion of school management training, according equal weight to training as to seniority in career progression and signaling that headship is a separate profession.
- Address rural conditions in training design. Case studies in small, rural, and understaffed schools should be part of the trainings and trainings should emphasize planning, communication, and judgment/decision-making more, areas rural heads ranked themselves lower on.
- Develop peer learning networks. Cluster (or district) networks of heads should meet regularly to share practice and discuss common issues and to turn experience into learning. Network meetings can be based on district meetings, at low cost, with experienced heads in each cluster acting as facilitators.
- Develop an evidence base. The content, duration, and timing of trainings should be examined to discern what makes the most difference, and future evaluations of training should be conducted using designs that are quasi-experimental and include pre- and post-measures of observed practice.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.

Bush, T. (2008). *Leadership and management development in education*. SAGE Publications.

Bush, T. (2018). Preparation and induction for school principals: Global perspectives. *Management in Education, 32*(2), 66–71.

Bush, T., & Oduro, G. K. T. (2006). New principals in Africa: Preparation, induction and practice. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(4), 359–375.

Clark, D., Martorell, P., & Rockoff, J. (2009). *School principals and school performance* (CALDER Working Paper No. 38). Urban Institute.

Daresh, J. (2004). Mentoring school leaders: Professional promise or predictable problems? *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(4), 495–517.

Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wechsler, M. E., Levin, S., Leung-Gagné, M., & Tozer, S. (2022). *Developing effective principals: What kind of learning matters?* Learning Policy Institute.

Field, A. (2024). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Grissom, J. A., & Harrington, J. R. (2010). Investing in administrator efficiency: An examination of professional development as a tool for enhancing principal effectiveness. *American Journal of Education, 116*(4), 583–612.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(2), 125–142. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111116699

Huber, S. G. (Ed.). (2004). *Preparing school leaders for the 21st century: An international comparison of development programs in 15 countries*. Taylor & Francis.

Khan, A. (2012). Instructional management of a private and a government secondary school principal in Northern Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Development, 32*(1), 120–131.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy* (Rev. ed.). Cambridge Book Company.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management, 28*(1), 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701800060

Orr, M. T., & Orphanos, S. (2011). How graduate-level preparation influences the effectiveness of school leaders: A comparison of the outcomes of exemplary and conventional leadership preparation programs for principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 47*(1), 18–70.

Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*(5), 635–674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509

Salfi, N. A. (2011). Successful leadership practices of head teachers for school improvement: Some evidence from Pakistan. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(4), 414–432.

Simkins, T., Sisum, C., & Memon, M. (2003). School leadership in Pakistan: Exploring the headteacher's role. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 14*(3), 275–291.

Spillane, J. P., & Lee, L. C. (2014). Novice school principals' sense of ultimate responsibility: Problems of practice in transitioning to the principal's office. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 50*(3), 431–465.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. R. (2004). Principals' sense of efficacy: Assessing a promising construct. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(5), 573–585.

Walker, A., & Qian, H. (2006). Beginning principals: Balancing at the top of the greasy pole. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(4), 297–309.

2026 by the authors; Journal of *Kashmir Journal of Academic Research and Development*. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).