UNSKILLED TEACHERS: UNDERMINING LEADERSHIP CREDIBILITY AND COMPROMISING WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY

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Abstract
The effectiveness of educational institutions hinges significantly on the competence and professionalism of their teaching staff. This qualitative study explores the detrimental impact of unskilled teachers on school leadership credibility and the overall quality of educational delivery. Unskilled teachers often lack not only pedagogical content knowledge and classroom management skills but also the emotional intelligence and communication competence necessary to align with institutional goals. Their inadequacies frequently lead to classroom inefficiencies, student disengagement, and academic underperformance. More critically, their inability to support or implement leadership directives erodes the authority and trust vested in school leaders by parents and stakeholders. These gaps distort the public image of school leadership, weaken institutional accountability, and hinder the pursuit of a holistic, student-centered education. Moreover, unskilled teachers can become unintended sources of misinformation, damaging the critical relationship between management and parents. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis in selected school settings, this study advocates for systematic teacher training, continuous professional development, and robust monitoring mechanisms. It calls for school leaders to recognize early signs of instructional inadequacy and to foster a culture of reflective practice and mentorship. Enhancing teacher competence is not optional—it is fundamental to sustaining leadership credibility and delivering quality education.

Keywords : Unskilled Teachers. Undermining, Leadership Credibility, and Compromising, Educational Delivery.

Introduction

The quality of a school's educational delivery is shaped by a synergy of leadership, curriculum, infrastructure, and, most critically, the competency of its teachers. In recent years, increased scrutiny has been placed on school leadership, particularly with regard to its accountability for institutional performance. However, the role of unskilled teachers in undermining this leadership and compromising the educational mission is often underexplored. This paper aims to shed light on this critical but neglected issue.

Unskilled teachers are educators who lack essential pedagogical competencies, such as subject mastery, classroom management, assessment literacy, communication skills, and the ability to adapt to diverse student needs. In many cases, these teachers may have formal qualifications but lack the practical application and reflective practices required in a dynamic classroom environment. When such teachers operate within an educational institution, their inefficiency directly impacts students and indirectly challenges the integrity and effectiveness of school leaders who are responsible for maintaining educational standards.

This paper seeks to explore how the presence of unskilled teachers affects not only student outcomes but also diminishes the credibility of leadership. In schools, leadership is expected to set academic goals, inspire teachers, facilitate collaboration, and ensure accountability. When teachers are ill-prepared or resistant to growth, leadership efforts are met with inertia or resistance. This creates tension, miscommunication, and a loss of trust—particularly among parents who interpret poor teaching performance as a failure of school leadership.

The central research question explored in this qualitative article is: **How do unskilled teachers undermine school leadership credibility and compromise the delivery of qualitative education?**

Through interviews with principals, experienced educators, and parents, as well as non-intrusive classroom observations, this study investigates:

- The manifestations of teacher incompetence in daily school life;
- The ripple effects on leadership perception and credibility;
- The reactions and perceptions of parents and community stakeholders;
- Potential strategies to address and mitigate these challenges.

By anchoring the discussion in real-life narratives and thematic analysis, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform, leadership resilience, and teacher professionalism in India's school system and beyond.

Review of Related Literature

The Teacher's Role in Quality Education

Teaching is universally acknowledged as the most significant in-school factor influencing student learning. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), effective teachers are those who not only know their subject but also understand how to deliver it in engaging, equitable, and context-sensitive ways. When teachers lack these capabilities, the learning process suffers, especially in under-resourced contexts where external support is minimal.

Characteristics of Unskilled Teachers
Unskilled teachers can be defined by a range of deficiencies: poor content knowledge, weak communication, lack of instructional strategies, minimal classroom management ability, and limited use of assessment for learning. Studies by Day & Gu (2007) indicate that such teachers are often disengaged, avoid collaboration, resist feedback, and fail to reflect on or improve their practice.

School Leadership and Institutional Credibility
School leaders are the vision-bearers and drivers of institutional success. Leithwood et al. (2008) argue that effective leadership is second only to classroom instruction in terms of its impact on student outcomes. However, school leadership is vulnerable to being undermined by internal inconsistencies—particularly from underperforming staff.

Parent-School Relationship and Reputation
Parents increasingly view schools through the lens of performance, values, and communication. Mapp (2003) emphasized that strong school-parent partnerships are dependent on mutual trust and consistent academic delivery. Unskilled teachers often create confusion, send mixed signals to parents, and misrepresent school policies, which leads to an erosion of trust and credibility.

Indian Context and Challenges
In India, the quality of teacher training remains a major concern. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the need for continuous professional development and systemic accountability. Despite this, many schools—especially in rural and semi-urban areas—struggle with retaining and empowering competent teachers. According to a 2021 NCTE report, over 40% of Indian teachers expressed the need for more robust training opportunities to meet classroom demands.
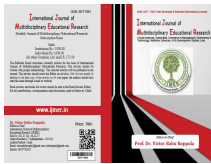
Research Design and Methodology

Research Approach
A qualitative, interpretive approach was adopted for this study to gain deep insights into the perspectives and lived experiences of educational stakeholders. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the nuances of unskilled teaching and its influence on school leadership in context-rich environments.

Sample Selection
Purposive sampling was employed to select:
- 5 school principals (from both private and government schools),
- 8 teachers (4 skilled, 4 identified as underperforming),
- 10 parents (from various socio-economic backgrounds).

Data Collection
Data were collected using:
- **Semi-structured interviews** with principals, teachers, and parents,
- **Classroom observations** to identify behavioral patterns and instructional quality,
- **Document analysis** of school reports and feedback forms.

Ethical Considerations
Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and gave written consent. Identities were anonymized, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis was conducted using inductive coding. Recurring patterns, contradictions, and tensions were identified and categorized under broad themes: instructional incompetence, leadership conflict, parent perception, and systemic failure.

Findings and Discussion
Instructional Incompetence
Classroom observations revealed that unskilled teachers often relied on rote methods, lacked differentiation strategies, and struggled to maintain student attention. Teachers lacked understanding of formative assessment and rarely used feedback constructively.

One of the Principal's remarked:
"Some of our teachers just read from the book. There's no attempt to connect with students or bring creativity to the lesson. And when results are poor, parents blame us—the management—not the teachers."
This sentiment illustrates how leadership credibility becomes collateral damage in the presence of teaching inefficiency.
Leadership Undermined
School heads described their inability to enforce accountability due to weak institutional frameworks and fear of teacher unions. Several mentioned being portrayed unfairly to parents by the same teachers they sought to support.

Another principal shared the views, saying :
"When I try to mentor or correct them, they complain to the management or mislead the parents. Eventually, I'm seen as the problem."
Such internal sabotage undermines the moral authority of the leader and causes mistrust among stakeholders.

Communication Breakdown with Parents

Parents reported being confused or misled by teachers regarding school policies, homework guidelines, and student performance. Many had little interaction with school leaders directly and based their perceptions entirely on the classroom experience.

One of the parents said :

"We assumed the school was weak because the teacher couldn't even explain basic math. Later we realized it was only one or two teachers, not the whole school."

Miscommunication stemming from teacher incompetence had a direct effect on parental trust and school image.

Damage to School Reputation

A common thread was the decline in school reputation due to poor teaching practices. Social media amplified this effect, with a few negative parent reviews influencing broader public opinion.

A well-known principal of the school explained:

"We had to deal with false complaints posted online—mostly because of poor classroom experiences that could have been prevented with proper training."

Systemic Gaps

Several teachers admitted they lacked updated training and had little opportunity for professional growth. Some expressed defensiveness, while others welcomed support.

An experienced teacher confessed:

"I struggle with using technology in class. I was never trained for this and feel left behind."

The absence of ongoing development frameworks contributed to stagnation and resistance to change.

Implications and Recommendations

For School Leaders

- Conduct regular audits of teaching quality through peer reviews and student feedback.
- Implement a mentoring system for underperforming teachers with clear growth goals.
- Foster a culture of dialogue and reflection rather than control and punishment.

For Policy Makers

- Ensure rigorous teacher training programs with practical exposure and assessments.
- Mandate continuous professional development (CPD) linked to performance appraisal.
- Strengthen school leadership training on how to manage underperformance diplomatically.
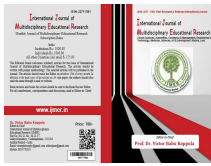
For Teacher Training Institutions

- Integrate real-classroom simulations, case studies, and critical reflection into pre-service training.
- Provide follow-up modules for alumni as part of a lifelong learning network.

For Parents and Communities

- Encourage regular school visits and joint parent-teacher conferences.
- Understand the difference between leadership inefficiency and individual teacher inadequacy.

Conclusion

Unskilled teachers pose a multifaceted challenge to educational institutions. Their deficiencies not only lower learning outcomes but also compromise the credibility of school leadership and erode the school's public image. In contexts where

leadership is judged by results and parent satisfaction, the presence of incompetent teachers creates a cascading effect of blame, frustration, and reputational damage.

This qualitative study has shown that unskilled teachers act as barriers to institutional vision, compromise instructional integrity, and damage communication networks with parents. Importantly, their actions often go unchecked due to systemic failures in training, monitoring, and support. However, the study also emphasizes that with the right leadership approach—grounded in mentorship, accountability, and professional growth—there is a pathway to change.

Leadership credibility and qualitative education are inseparable. To protect both, there must be a collective investment in improving teacher quality, starting from pre-service education and continuing through every phase of a teacher's career. In doing so, we not only restore faith in school leadership but also move closer to delivering the kind of transformative, inclusive, and high-quality education every child deserves.

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