



EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDER NEP 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has brought important changes in the structure, curriculum, teaching methods, governance, and management of school education. These changes have also increased the responsibilities of school leaders beyond routine administrative work. This conceptual paper examines the role of educational leadership in improving school effectiveness in the context of NEP 2020. It proposes an Integrated Educational Leadership Framework based on Instructional, Distributed, Transformational, Ethical, and Adaptive Leadership. Instructional Leadership is given central importance because of its direct focus on teaching and learning, while the other approaches support shared responsibility, teacher motivation, organisational change, fairness, accountability, and responses to changing educational needs. The framework explains that educational leadership contributes to school effectiveness through leadership capacity and school-level practices such as teacher professional development, strategic resource management, collaborative governance, FLN implementation, competency-based assessment, digital education, inclusive education, resource sharing, and the use of educational data. The paper also highlights the need to strengthen leadership preparation through B.Ed. and M.Ed. programmes, university and IASE courses in Educational Leadership and Management, and regular training for serving school heads. It further suggests that leadership practices related to NEP 2020 and school effectiveness should receive appropriate consideration in the professional development and promotion of school heads. The paper concludes that effective educational leadership can support the implementation of NEP 2020 and contribute to improved student learning, teacher effectiveness, equity, inclusion, innovation, governance, and overall school effectiveness.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, School Effectiveness, Integrated Leadership, NEP 2020, Teacher Development, Strategic Resource Management School Governance

1. Introduction

The quality and effectiveness of a school depend on several connected factors. These include the quality of teaching, teacher motivation, school culture, institutional governance, availability and proper use of resources, community participation, and educational leadership. Among these factors, educational leadership has an important role because it provides direction to the school and influences its organization and development. School leaders decide institutional priorities, manage human and material resources, support teachers, develop a positive school culture, and create suitable conditions for effective teaching and learning.

Research on school leadership has shown that its influence on student learning is generally indirect rather than direct. School leaders influence student learning by creating suitable organizational conditions, improving teaching practices, supporting professional learning, developing a positive school culture, and promoting instructional improvement. Leithwood et al. (2008, 2020) stated that successful school leadership is mainly related to setting clear directions, developing people, improving organizational conditions, and strengthening teaching and learning. Similarly, research on the pathways of school leadership shows that leadership influences student learning through several connected organizational and professional factors rather than through a single direct factor (Leithwood et al., 2020).

The changing educational environment has also increased the responsibilities of school leaders. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to bring significant changes in Indian education through holistic and multidisciplinary learning,



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foundational literacy and numeracy, competency-based education, inclusive education, continuous professional development of teachers, technology integration, school complexes, and participatory governance (Ministry of Education, 2020). The implementation of these reforms requires school leaders who can effectively convert policy objectives into practical institutional activities.

Therefore, educational leadership under NEP 2020 should not be limited to routine administrative work. It requires a combination of instructional leadership, strategic planning, effective resource management, teacher development, digital leadership, inclusive leadership, and collaborative governance. In this context, the present conceptual paper examines how these different dimensions of educational leadership can contribute to school effectiveness. It also proposes an integrated framework to understand the relationship between educational leadership and school effectiveness in the Indian educational context.

2. Educational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Educational leadership means guiding and influencing teachers, students, and other stakeholders to achieve common educational goals and improve the functioning of the school. It includes developing a clear vision, supporting teachers, taking decisions, managing resources, encouraging participation, and improving teaching and learning. Earlier, educational administration mainly focused on planning, supervision, control, record keeping, and following government instructions. However, modern educational leadership gives greater importance to cooperation, teacher development, shared responsibilities, school improvement, and learning within the organisation.

Different leadership approaches support school improvement in different ways. Instructional leadership mainly focuses on improving teaching and student learning (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). Transformational leadership gives importance to vision, motivation, trust, empowerment, and positive change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Distributed leadership promotes the sharing of leadership responsibilities among principals, teachers, coordinators, and other members of the school community (Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Strategic leadership connects school resources, decisions, and activities with long-term educational goals. Therefore, effective school leadership requires academic guidance, teacher support, cooperation, proper resource management, and a positive school environment (Leithwood et al., 2008, 2020).

School effectiveness refers to the ability of a school to achieve its educational objectives and improve its overall performance. Earlier, school effectiveness was mainly judged by students' academic achievement. Today, it also includes the quality of teaching, teacher development, school climate, inclusion, equity, governance, proper use of resources, innovation, and participation of stakeholders (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Scheerens, 2016). Educational leadership contributes to school effectiveness by setting priorities, supporting teachers, managing resources, promoting cooperation, and creating suitable conditions for teaching and learning. Research shows that leadership affects school effectiveness through its influence on teachers, school organisation, teaching practices, and the learning environment (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2008). Thus, educational leadership is an important factor in developing effective schools and improving their performance continuously.

3. Relationship between Educational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Educational leadership contributes to school effectiveness through resource management, governance, school culture, innovation, teacher development, and stakeholder participation.

3.1 Educational Leadership and Strategic Resource Management

Effective resource management requires school leaders to identify needs, set priorities, use resources fairly, and monitor their use. Human, financial, physical, technological, and community resources are useful when they support teaching and



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student learning. NEP 2020 promotes School Complexes and resource sharing among schools. Effective leadership is therefore important for the proper use of available resources (Ministry of Education, 2020).

3.2 Educational Leadership and Governance

School governance includes planning, decision-making, accountability, transparency, monitoring, and stakeholder participation. NEP 2020 emphasises collaboration, decentralisation, School Complexes, and participatory governance (Ministry of Education, 2020). Working with teachers, parents, School Management Committees, communities, and educational authorities can improve accountability and help schools address local needs.

3.3 Educational Leadership and School Culture

A positive school culture based on trust, respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility supports teacher development, teamwork, innovation, and student learning. School leaders shape this culture through their behaviour, communication, decisions, and relationships. Thus, school culture is an important link between leadership and school effectiveness.

3.4 Educational Leadership and Innovation

NEP 2020 promotes experiential learning, competency-based education, digital learning, vocational education, and multidisciplinary learning. School leaders support these changes by encouraging teachers to adopt new methods, share experiences, and improve their practices. Support and professional freedom are important for innovation.

3.5 Educational Leadership and Teacher Capacity

Teacher capacity is an important link between leadership and school effectiveness. Teachers need professional knowledge, teaching skills, motivation, feedback, cooperation, and regular professional development. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching, curriculum, assessment, and student learning (Hallinger, 2011). Transformational leadership supports shared vision and motivation, while distributed leadership encourages shared responsibility. Leadership also influences teachers' attitudes and working conditions, which affect classroom practices and student learning (Hallinger et al., 2025). School leaders should therefore support teachers in competency-based learning, experiential teaching, formative assessment, digital education, inclusive practices, and holistic education.

3.6 Educational Leadership and Stakeholder Participation

Parents, communities, School Management Committees, educational departments, and civil society organisations can contribute to school development. School leaders can strengthen their participation through communication, consultation, joint planning, and community partnerships. Such participation improves accountability, supports resource mobilisation, and helps schools respond to local needs. Thus, educational leadership includes both internal school management and meaningful engagement with the wider community.

4. Synthesis of Leadership Theories with the Goals of NEP 2020- NEP 2020 has introduced major changes in the structure, curriculum, and teaching methods of school education in India. The shift from the traditional 10+2 structure to the 5+3+3+4 structure, the emphasis on Competency-Based Education (CBE) instead of rote learning, and the development of School Complexes have increased the responsibilities of school principals. The role of a principal is therefore no longer limited to routine administration. Effective implementation of NEP 2020 requires an **Integrated Educational Leadership Approach** that brings together the useful features of different leadership theories according to the needs of the school.

4.1 Distributed Leadership: School Complexes and Shared Responsibility - Distributed Leadership considers leadership as a shared responsibility rather than the work of only the principal (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006). It encourages teachers, coordinators, and other staff members to take responsibility according to their knowledge and experience.

This approach is important for the School Complex system proposed under NEP 2020. Schools within a complex are expected to share academic, human, physical, and technological resources. Such cooperation requires the involvement of



school heads, senior teachers, subject teachers, and coordinators. Distributed leadership can also support teacher development through peer support, joint lesson planning, professional learning groups, and sharing of teaching experiences. It therefore encourages cooperation, shared responsibility, and participation in school decisions.

4.2 Instructional Leadership: Improving Teaching and Learning - Instructional Leadership gives primary importance to teaching, curriculum, assessment, teacher development, and student learning (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). It is therefore closely related to the academic aims of NEP 2020.

In Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), school leaders need to monitor early learning, identify learning difficulties, support suitable teaching methods, and use regular assessment to understand student progress. The implementation of Competency-Based Education and multidisciplinary learning also requires support for teachers to connect classroom learning with practical situations. Classroom observation, academic discussions, curriculum planning, and useful feedback can help improve teaching and learning.

4.3 Transformational Leadership: Developing Vision and School Culture - Transformational Leadership focuses on developing a common vision, motivating staff, encouraging new ideas, and supporting positive changes in the school (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood, 1994). This approach is useful for changing traditional views about teaching, learning, and assessment.

NEP 2020 aims to move education beyond rote learning and excessive examination-based practices. Transformational leaders can help teachers, students, and parents understand and accept these changes. They can also encourage activity-based, experiential, and innovative teaching by providing teachers with support and opportunities to improve their practices.

4.4 Adaptive Leadership: Managing Change in Schools - Adaptive Leadership explains that some problems can be solved through existing procedures, while others require changes in attitudes, practices, and behaviour (Heifetz et al., 2009).

This approach is important for digital education and the implementation of the 5+3+3+4 structure. Providing computers and digital devices is only one part of digital education. Encouraging teachers to use technology regularly in classroom teaching requires changes in their existing practices. Similarly, the new school structure may require changes in timetables, classroom arrangements, and administrative practices. School leaders need to listen to teachers' concerns, provide support, and make practical changes according to the needs of the school.

4.5 Ethical Leadership: Promoting Equity and Accountability - Ethical Leadership gives importance to fairness, honesty, social justice, and equal opportunities (Brown et al., 2005; Shields, 2010). It is particularly relevant to the emphasis of NEP 2020 on inclusive education and the educational development of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

Ethical school leaders work to reduce discrimination, ensure fair access to educational resources, and support students with different learning needs. They also promote transparency and accountability in school administration. The active participation of School Management Committees and local communities, transparent communication, and fair decision-making can help build trust between schools and the community.

Table 1. Leadership Theories and NEP 2020 Goals Supported

Leadership Style	Major Leadership Function	NEP 2020 Goals Supported
Instructional Leadership	Improving teaching, learning, assessment, and teacher support	FLN, competency-based education, assessment reform, teacher development



Distributed Leadership	Sharing leadership and decision-making	School Complexes, participatory governance, collaboration
Transformational Leadership	Creating vision and motivating change	Educational reform, innovation, multidisciplinary learning
Ethical Leadership	Ensuring justice, equity, transparency, and accountability	Inclusive and equitable education, gender equality, social justice
Adaptive Leadership	Responding to complexity, uncertainty, and change	Digital education, technology integration, innovation, crisis management

No single leadership style is sufficient to meet all the goals of NEP 2020. Therefore, an **Integrated Educational Leadership Framework** is suggested by combining the strengths of five leadership approaches. **Distributed Leadership** encourages shared responsibility and participation (Spillane, 2006). **Instructional Leadership** focuses on improving teaching and student learning (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). **Adaptive Leadership** helps school leaders respond to changing educational and technological needs (Heifetz et al., 2009). **Ethical Leadership** promotes fairness, inclusion, transparency, and accountability, while **Transformational Leadership** develops a shared vision and motivates teachers to bring positive change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Together, these approaches can help school leaders respond to the different requirements of NEP 2020 and improve school effectiveness (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020).

5. Integrated Educational Leadership Framework for Achieving the Goals of NEP 2020

The discussion presented above shows that one leadership style alone may not be sufficient to address the wide-ranging objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy requires school leaders to improve teaching and learning, develop teachers, promote participation in school governance, manage resources properly, use technology, ensure inclusion and equity, and respond to changing educational needs. Therefore, the implementation of NEP 2020 requires a combination of different leadership approaches.

In the proposed framework, **Instructional Leadership is considered the central leadership approach** because improvement in teaching and learning is the main purpose of school education. However, instructional leadership alone cannot address all the organisational, social, ethical, technological, and administrative requirements of NEP 2020. Therefore, it needs to be supported by Distributed, Transformational, Ethical, and Adaptive Leadership. Each of these leadership approaches contributes to different areas of school improvement.

5.1 Leadership Capacity Requirements within the Integrated Framework

The implementation of the proposed integrated leadership framework requires appropriate training and professional development of school leaders.

The major training requirements related to different leadership approaches are given below:

Table – 2 Leadership Perspective and required Training

Leadership Perspective	Major Training Requirements
Instructional Leadership	Academic supervision, classroom observation, assessment literacy, curriculum implementation, and FLN pedagogy
Distributed Leadership	Team leadership, collaborative decision-making, teacher participation, and development of professional learning communities



Transformational Leadership	Vision development, change management, teacher motivation, empowerment, and communication
Ethical Leadership	Ethical decision-making, inclusion, child rights, transparency, fairness, and accountability
Adaptive Leadership	Problem-solving, digital leadership, innovation, and responding to changing educational needs

Leadership training should not be limited to short-term programmes. It should include mentoring, continuous professional learning, knowledge of educational policies, opportunities for collaboration, and institutional support. These elements can help school leaders develop the knowledge and skills required for the effective implementation of NEP 2020.

5.2 Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework explains how integrated educational leadership can contribute to the implementation of NEP 2020 and school effectiveness. It assumes that leadership influences school effectiveness through the development of leadership capacity and the implementation of effective practices at the school level.



The proposed conceptual relationship can therefore be stated as follows:

Integrated Educational Leadership → Leadership Capacity Development → School-Level Leadership Practices → NEP 2020 Implementation Outcomes → School Effectiveness

This conceptual relationship provides a basis for examining how different dimensions of educational leadership contribute to the implementation of NEP 2020 and the improvement of school effectiveness.

5.3 Policy and Practical Implications

The proposed framework has important implications for educational policy and school practice. **School leadership and school effectiveness should be introduced in pre-service teacher education programmes such as B.Ed., M.Ed.** This will help future teachers understand the importance of leadership, teamwork, school development, and effective school functioning. Similarly, universities and IASEs should offer courses related to **Educational Leadership and Management** to prepare teachers and educational administrators for future leadership responsibilities.



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School heads should not be limited to routine administrative work. They need to develop skills related to instructional supervision, curriculum implementation, planning, resource management, digital leadership, inclusive education, conflict resolution, and decision-making based on school needs and evidence. **Leadership strategies and school effectiveness in relation to the goals of NEP 2020 should also be considered in the professional development and promotion of school heads, along with existing service criteria.** In addition, all serving school heads should receive structured training on **Leadership for NEP 2020** so that they can better understand and implement its major provisions.

Teacher development should also be given an important place in school improvement. Teachers need regular opportunities for professional learning, mentoring, collaboration, and participation in school-level decisions. Professional development should lead to visible improvement in classroom teaching, assessment, student support, and other professional practices. This is especially important for implementing competency-based learning, digital education, inclusive education, and holistic learning.

SCERTs, DIETs, and IASEs can play an important role in developing educational leadership. They can organise leadership training, mentoring programmes, action research, workshops, and professional learning communities for school heads and teachers. Such support can help school leaders understand the changing requirements of NEP 2020 and improve their leadership practices.

School Management Committees and local communities should also be actively involved in school development planning, monitoring, accountability, and resource mobilisation. Their participation can increase a sense of responsibility towards the school and help schools address local educational needs.

Finally, educational policies should create a clear and continuous system for preparing and developing school leaders. This system should include leadership education, professional training, mentoring, professional standards, research, and regular review of leadership practices. Such measures can help develop capable school leaders, improve school effectiveness, and support the successful implementation of NEP 2020.

6. Future Research Directions

Further empirical research is needed to examine the relationship between educational leadership and school effectiveness in the Indian context, particularly in relation to NEP 2020. Future studies may investigate the effects of different leadership styles, strategic resource management, teacher capacity, school culture, digital leadership, distributed governance, and leadership practices in rural, tribal, remote, and government schools. The proposed framework can be tested through quantitative methods such as SEM, PLS-SEM, and multilevel modeling, as well as through qualitative case studies, interviews, observations, and mixed-method approaches. Comparative and context-sensitive studies across different school types and geographical regions can help identify leadership practices most suitable for diverse educational settings in India.

7. Conclusion

Educational leadership is an important factor in improving school effectiveness and implementing the goals of NEP 2020. The present conceptual analysis shows that the role of school leaders is no longer limited to routine administrative work. They are also responsible for improving teaching and learning, supporting teachers, managing resources, encouraging cooperation, promoting innovation, ensuring inclusion, and strengthening school governance.

The proposed Integrated Educational Leadership Framework combines the useful features of Instructional, Distributed, Transformational, Ethical, and Adaptive Leadership. Instructional Leadership provides the main focus on teaching and learning, while the other approaches support shared responsibility, teacher motivation, organisational change, fairness, accountability, and the management of changing educational needs. The framework explains that leadership contributes to school effectiveness through leadership capacity and effective school-level practices.



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The study also highlights the need for systematic preparation and professional development of school leaders. Educational leadership and school effectiveness should be included in teacher education programmes such as B.Ed. and M.Ed. Universities and IASEs should also offer courses in Educational Leadership and Management. Serving school heads should receive regular training related to Leadership for NEP 2020. Leadership practices and school effectiveness should also be given appropriate consideration in the professional development and promotion of school heads, along with existing service conditions.

SCERTs, DIETs, IASEs, universities, and School Management Committees can play important roles in supporting this process. Overall, the effective implementation of NEP 2020 requires a shift from traditional administrative leadership towards leadership that is instructional, collaborative, strategic, ethical, and responsive to school needs. The proposed framework provides a basis for understanding how educational leadership can improve school practices and contribute to student learning, teacher effectiveness, equity, inclusion, innovation, effective governance, and continuous school improvement. Further empirical research is needed to examine this framework in different school contexts in India.

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