

# The Role of Educational Leadership of School Principals in Enhancing the Academic Performance of Teachers and Students

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## Abstract

*This study examines the role that the educational leadership of school principals has on improving the academic achievement of teachers and students in schools in Jordan. A quantitative descriptive correlational design was used, and a sample of 200 teachers was used to attain data on their characteristics through a structured questionnaire consisting of 3 main domains, namely, educational leadership practice by principals, academic performance of teachers, and students. Descriptive statistics showed that there is a high level of educational leadership among school principals (overall mean = 4.08), with the most prominent practices being communicating school vision and creating a good learning environment. Results also showed an excellent level of academic achievement of teachers and students (overall mean = 4.03). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant linear correlation between educational leadership and academic performance ( $r = 0.71, p < 0.001$ ), and this correlation shows that improvements in practices of educational leadership are related to improvements in academic outcomes. The findings add to the international evidence of the profound but indirect impact of leadership on the quality of teaching and student learning through support, motivation, and professional development. The study suggests building up the system of rewards and recognition, increasing the data-driven leadership education, and investing in the professional development to keep up with high academic performance in schools.*

**Keywords:** *Educational Leadership, School Principals, Academic Performance, self-efficacy.*

## Introduction

Educational leadership has turned into one of the most decisive factors in determining the quality of teaching and learning in contemporary schools. During the last 10 years, researchers have asserted that effective school leaders play a necessary role in the improvement of schools through the establishment of learning-focused school environments, teachers' professional support, and the focus on the academic success of children (Li et al., 2023). Modern leadership is consequently seen not just as administrative oversight, but as an instructional force leading to classroom practices as well as academic achievement (Hallinger et al., 2018; Li et al., 2023).

A growing body of research confirms that leadership makes significant contributions to effectiveness at school through shared vision, clear expectations, and constant communication with school personnel (Richardson, 2024). Leaders who express high expectations for learning, and who cause school policies to align with instructional needs, create a school climate that promotes motivation, commitment, and professional responsibility (Silins & Mulford, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Such school cultures - based on collaboration, support, and mutual trust - have been repeatedly found to be predictive of improvements in academic achievement in diverse educational systems (Trowler, 2013; Richardson, 2024).

Research has also established that the influence of leadership is not on the student but indirectly through the teachers. According to Tess Hill and Parker, "When the school leaders create an environment where the teaching faculty not only trusts in one another but feels an openness to engage in professional dialogue, reflective practice, and collective problem solving, hundreds of teachers may become more willing to embrace innovative teaching strategies and differentiated instruction that better meets the needs of the learner" (Pan et al., 2017). Furthermore, the concept of teacher empowerment has been associated with enhanced instructional quality, higher levels of job satisfaction, and higher student engagement (Zhao et al., 2025; Malokani et al., 2024).

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The role of professional development has also been given importance in the leadership literature. Teachers who engage in meaningful and ongoing professional development—especially when encouraged and supported by principals—exhibit increased levels of instructional competence and greater levels of self-efficacy, which eventually give rise to increased student learning outcomes (Dinham, 2005; Pan et al., 2017). Importantly, professional development is most effective when school leaders provide opportunities for teachers to implement new strategies in classrooms, reflect on their effectiveness, and receive feedback (Zhao et al., 2025; Malokani et al., 2024).

In recent years, research has focused on the new dimension of effective school leadership, including data-driven leadership. Leaders taking strategic choices on the basis of academic performance indicators, classroom observations, and assessment results bring about continuous and measurable school improvements (Malokani et al., 2024; Dinham, 2005). This development represents a shift away from the traditional leadership to evidence-based practices that are focused on specific interventions and accountability for learning.

Collectively, the literature draws attention to the understanding that educational leadership is a multidimensional process that drives school performance through the motivation of teachers, strengthening instructional practices, forming their school cultures, collaborating, and creating a learning environment to enhance not only educational but also substantive achievement and students' well-being. Collectively, the literature emphasizes educational leadership as a multidimensional process that benefits school performance through favorable motivation by teachers, strengthening their instructional practices, building collaborative school cultures, and creating learning climates that promote not only educational but also substantive accomplishment and student well-being (Solinas & Mulford, 2004; Richardson, 2024). As educational systems are faced with increasing societal and institutional pressures, the understanding of the influence of leadership on academic performance has become a major research priority. Examining this relationship within various cultural contexts, including schools in Jordan, is crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of leadership practices and ensuring the best possible level of academic achievement for teachers and students.

### *The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree to which the educational leadership practices of school principals are involved in improving the academic performance of teachers and students of schools in Jordan. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to determine the level of leadership behaviors that predominate among the principals, to determine current academic achievement of the teachers and students, and lastly to determine if there is a relationship between leadership practices of the principals and the enhancement in academic achievements. By so doing, the study aims to offer empirical evidence that could contribute to the creation of leadership programs and strategies that enhance the effectiveness of schools and promote academic success.

### *The Study Problem*

Despite the recent focus on educational leadership as an important source of school effectiveness, many schools still struggle with the challenge of maintaining high levels of teacher and student achievement. Although school principals are expected to exhibit leadership practices that motivate teachers, enhance teaching quality, and make learning environments supportive in schools, findings in the Jordanian educational field suggest that leadership practices are not necessarily applied at levels that are sufficient to maximize academic outcomes. The fluctuation in administrative creativity, decision-making, management strategies, motivation systems, and support offered to teachers may block the achievement of the optimal school climate, leading to professional growth and instructional improvement.

In addition, the continuous educational reforms that have been introduced in Jordan impose additional demands on school leaders, which makes it necessary to understand whether the leadership practices of school principals translate effectively into an increase in teacher self-efficacy and academic performance. The gap is how much current leadership behaviors suffice to improve the academic achievement of both

teachers and students, and whether or not such improvement requires professional leadership development. Therefore, the problem of the current study is limited by the need to know the extent to which educational leadership practices of school principals contribute to the improvement of teachers' and students' academic performance, and whether educational leadership practices are being applied to the extent that meets the expectations of educational institutions and the needs of the school environment.

### *The Study Questions*

1. To what extent do the school principals exercise educational leadership in Jordanian schools?
2. The question that arises is, what is the level of academic performance among teachers and students in Jordanian schools?
3. What is the role played by the educational leadership of the school principals in building up the academic performance of the teachers and students?

### **Literature Review**

Educational leadership has been widely accepted as a foundation of school effectiveness and student success. Early evidence established that principals directly influence the organizational conditions and teaching practices in the schools, while transformational leadership is associated with increased levels of student engagement and motivation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Later studies reinforced this view and demonstrated that leadership creates learning environments conducive to achievement by fulfilling the collaborative, instructional, and teacher commitment needs (Silins and Mulford, 2004).

With a new wave of studies on instructional leadership, the role of school leaders was redefined from managerial activities to guidance of pedagogy. Dinham (2005) stated that principals who demonstrate high expectations and support teachers professionally have significant improvements in both the quality of teaching and the academic performance of students. Similarly, Hallinger et al. (2018) have found that the beliefs of leaders and their professional identity had an impact on the success with which leadership for instruction is translated into daily practices.

Recent scholarship focuses on the role of leadership in the cultivation of positive school culture. Trowler (2013) highlighted the fact that leadership has a positive impact on learning results by shaping school values and social relationships, whereas Richardson (2024) reached a conclusion stating that students state and participate more when school leaders create a favorable environment and open professional dialogue. The cultural role of leadership combines with the empowerment of teachers, which fosters innovations in classroom teaching and reflection altogether (Zhao et al., 2025).

A separate body of research emphasizes the indirect nature of the impact of leadership. Pan et al (2017) showed that leadership affects student results mainly through professional development pathways. In support, Day et al. (2016) found that professional development, feedback, and shared decision-making are some of the drivers that turn leadership into results in the classroom that are measurable. Extending this evidence, Li et al. (2023) found that there exists mediation between the relationship between leadership and sustainable school performance through teacher collaboration.

In the context of organizational change, leadership practice contributes to school resilience and improvement. According to Hallinger et al. (2018), confidence and self-beliefs of leaders determine their readiness to implement reform. Similarly, the notion of distributed leadership advocated by Harris and Spillane (2008) was that the capacity of the institution and common responsibility are strengthened. Comparable results were reported by Robinson et al. (2009), who observed that the more leaders monitor the outcomes of their teaching and provide help with instruction, the better they achieve academic progress.

Professional growth is a prevailing mediating factor. According to Timperley (2011), PD is only effective when linked to feedback and classroom art. Pan et al. (2017) confirmed the contribution of continued PD

to long-term school performance. Dinham (2005) echoed the importance of leadership follow-up and evaluation to strengthen the learning of teachers.

The integration of data-driven leadership is a new topic in educational studies. Malokani et al. (2024) leaders who make data-based resource allocations by using performance data to identify the gaps in learners produce sustainable improvements. This is consistent with Dinham's (2005) finding that there are consistent gains generated by evidence-based leadership even in challenging school conditions.

Research also documents that there is a strong leadership effect on student well-being. Cheng and Szeto (2016) observed that leaders support holistic learning through the creation of safe school environments. Supporting such a view, Day and colleagues (2016) have connected emotional support and teacher wellbeing to an increased student's socio-emotional development. On a similar path, Richardson (2024) reported that the impact of leaders on student engagement was positive in ensuring the emotional and social aspects of learning were integrated in the instructional processes.

Cumulatively, 20 years of empirical evidence is leading to the same conclusion: Leadership is among the highest impact variables that affect the improvement of teaching and learning, although its effects are indirect and it mainly influences teachers, school culture and instructional practices (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000; Silins and Mulford, 2004; Pan et al., 2017; Li et al., 2023). Across the board and across contexts, strong school leadership is associated with superior school performance, irrespective of resources or ease of socioeconomic conditions.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

The study used a quantitative descriptive correlational method in determining the role of educational leadership among school principals in improving teachers' and students' school performance. This design was chosen because it allows for measuring the levels of leadership practices and academic performance, and studying the relationship objectively.

### *Population and Sample of the Study*

The study population was teachers working in the schools in Jordan in the academic year 2024/2025. A convenience sample of 150 teachers was selected from public and private schools in different regions in Jordan. The size of the sample was seen to be suitable to achieve statistical reliability and generalizability in the area of the study.

### *Instrument of the Study*

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire developed on the basis of the previous literature in educational leadership and academic performance. The three domains of the questionnaire were:

- Leadership practices in the education of school principals
- Performance of teachers in academics
- Academic performance of students

Each of these was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

### *Validity and Reliability*

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was validated through the opinion of a group of experts in educational management. Feedback was incorporated to have item clarity and relevance. To evaluate reliability, a pilot test was given to 30 teachers not in the target study sample, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to verify internal consistency. All domains had alpha values more than 0.80, indicating high reliability.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities. The questionnaire was distributed electronically and in paper form, and participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of responses. All completed questionnaires were collected and prepared for statistical analysis.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Data were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical procedures carried out were as follows:

- Means and SD to identify the level of individual study variables.
- Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between the educational leadership of principals and the academic ability of teachers and students.
- Independent samples t-test and ONE ANOVA to identify differences according to demographic variables, if applicable.

## **Findings of the Study**

**Results related to the first question:** To what extent do the school principals exercise educational leadership in Jordanian schools?

**Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Principals' Educational Leadership Practices**

No.	Item	Mean	STD
1	The principal encourages the teachers to become more effective as teachers.	4.13	0.77
2	The principal supports the creation of teams and collaboration by teachers.	4.10	0.82
3	The principal gives clear and consistent direction to teachers.	4.16	0.73
4	The principal encourages in-service opportunities.	4.09	0.86
5	The principal communicates the school vision.	4.21	0.71
6	The principal monitors and evaluates the teaching performance on a regular basis.	3.99	0.88
7	The major uses data to support decision-making.	4.06	0.80
8	The principal recognizes and rewards good performance.	3.96	0.91
9	The principal facilitates a positive and safe learning situation.	4.19	0.75
10	The principal encourages innovation and creative teaching practices.	4.03	0.83

Table 1 presents the means and the standard deviations of the items that were used to measure school principals' educational leadership practice as perceived by teachers in Jordanian schools. The results show the rate of leadership practices of the principals is high, ranging from 3.96 to 4.21, with a mean score of a 5-point scale. The most highly rated practice was "The principal communicates well the school vision" (M

= 4.21, SD = 0.71), or clear and consistent communication of school goals and direction. This was closely followed by "The principal facilitates a positive and safe learning situation" (M = 4.19, SD = 0.75) and "The principal gives clear and consistent direction to teachers" (M = 4.16, SD = 0.73), as a suggestion that principals have a supporting and structured role within the learning situation, in terms of arranging the learning environment and directing the educational work.

Other leadership behaviors showed similarly high levels, including motivating teachers, promoting teamwork, encouraging professional development, decision-making based on data, and promoting innovation in teaching. The lowest mean score, though still high, was seen on 'The principal recognizes and rewards good performance' (M = 3.96, SD = 0.91), as this suggested comparatively lesser concentration in the reward and reinforcement system. Overall, the results reveal that teachers rate their principals as strong leaders who communicatively illustrate vision, support professional and instructional growth, create positive school environments; however, recognition-based motivation may have more room for improvement.

**Results related to the second question:** The question that arises is, what is the level of academic performance among teachers and students in Jordanian schools?

**Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Academic Performance of Teachers and Students**

No.	Item	Mean	STD
1	Teachers get lesson plans finished promptly	4.10	0.82
2	Teachers employ different teaching methods for different student needs.	3.99	0.86
3	Learning outcomes are regularly assessed by the teacher.	4.03	0.80
4	Teachers are engaged in professional development in an effort to improve the quality of teaching.	3.96	0.89
5	Teachers use feedback from the supervisors to improve their teaching practices.	3.92	0.93
6	Students submit assignments and homework regularly.	4.06	0.79
7	Good participation and engagement in classroom activities are shown in student participation.	4.12	0.77
8	Students show steady progression in exams & assessments.	4.08	0.81
9	Students are collaborative with their peers.	4.01	0.83
10	School rules are followed, and responsible behavior is displayed by all students.	4.13	0.76

The means and standard deviations of the items that assess the academic performance of teachers and students are shown in Table 2. The overall results suggest that a high perception of academic performance is observed. The mean of the items was approximately between 3.90 and 4.15, which depicted a high level of academic competence and engagement in both pedagogical and cognitive practices in Jordanian schools.

The highest rated item in this domain was "Students demonstrate responsible behavior and follow school rules" (M = 4.15, SD = 0.74), suggesting overall high levels of discipline and responsibility expressed by students inside the school environment. This was followed by "Students actively participate in classroom activities" and "Students consistently complete their assignments and homework", which had a high average, indicating strong participation and continuity of learning among students.

With respect to the performance of teachers, high mean scores were obtained on the clarity of routine indicators "Teachers complete lesson plans on time" and "Teachers regularly evaluate learning outcomes", implicating good commitment to routine instructional planning and monitoring. The lowest mean score - and still high performance - was associated with Teachers applying supervisors' feedback to improve teaching practices. This indicates that while the performance of a teacher is good overall, there is possible room for progression in terms of implementing feedback from the superiors to strengthen the performance of the instructional quality.

Taken together, the findings in 'Table 2 affirm teachers', students', and teacher-student interactions as high academic performance on most measures in terms of high engagement, responsibilities, and performance in instruction. Minor areas needing support are in getting supervision feedback to translate into practical enhancement, which may be an opportunity for professional development initiatives.

**Results related to the third question:** What is the role played by the educational leadership of the school principals in building up the academic performance of the teachers and students?

**Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Educational Leadership and Academic Performance (N = 150)**

Variable 1	Variable 2	R	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
<b>Educational Leadership</b>	<b>Academic Performance</b>			
Principals' leadership practices	Teachers' & students' academic performance	0.71	0.000	Strong positive relationship

Table 3 shows the result of the Pearson correlation analysis of the school principals' educational leadership practices and the academic performance of teachers and students. The results are strongly positive and statistically significant, indicating that there is a correlation between higher levels of educational leadership and higher levels of academic performance.

The correlation coefficient given in the table has been found to be  $r = 0.71$ , and the level is  $p = 0.000$ , which is less than the accepted threshold mark of 0.05, which confirms the relation to be at a highly significant level. This means that improvements in educational leadership behaviors, such as motivation of teachers, teamwork, support for professional development, monitoring performance, and ensuring a positive environment for learning, are strongly associated with improvements in academic behaviors, including student engagement, assignment completion, academic progress, and teacher instructional performance.

Therefore, in Table 3, the findings show that the rise in educational leadership is very important to increase academic performance. When principals pursue successful leadership approaches, academic achievement for teachers and students goes up noticeably. These results support the theoretical assumption that leadership is not merely administrative, but is one of the central drivers of instructional improvement and student achievement in the school environment.

## Discussion of the Results

The findings of the present study reveal that the dozens of leadership education practices practiced by school principals in Jordanian schools are at a high level, as reflected in the mean scores of the leaders' behaviors in the measured items. This result is in line with the previous literature, which presents the increasing awareness by educational institutions of the critical role of leadership in bringing about improvement in teaching and learning outcomes. Similar to the present study, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) have concluded that transformational leadership facilitates higher student engagement and teacher motivation and shows that transformational leadership is a cornerstone of school success. Likewise, Silins and Mulford (2004) discovered that leadership results in the development of collaborative school cultures that support academic achievement, strengthening the consistency of the current findings.

The second major finding showed that the teachers and the students present in Jordanian schools show high academic performance. This finding is consistent with the argument that productive school environments enlarge the scope of instructional quality and learning outcomes. Dinham (2005) reported that principals who set high expectations and provide for professional learning promote teacher performance and student achievement. In parallel, the extent to which student engagement is enhanced seems to increase when school leaders create supportive learning climates and consistent forms of communication within the school, Richardson (2024) found. These studies confirm the suggestion of the current study that effective leadership is an essential ingredient in the maintenance of high academic performance.

The most outstanding finding in the study is the strong and statistically significant relationship between the educational leadership practices of the principals and the academic performance of the teachers and the students ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This result is in direct agreement with an extensive body of research suggesting that the effect of leadership is to influence student outcomes indirectly through the teachers. Pan et al. (2017) explained that leadership improves performance, mainly through professional development routes, while Day et al. (2016) stated that feedback and shared decision-making translate leadership practices to the measurable improvement of the classroom. The current results strengthen this established mechanism by demonstrating that leadership behaviors, such as monitoring performance, motivating teachers, maintaining a safe environment, and encouraging innovation, are associated with higher academic behaviors among both teachers and students.

Furthermore, the strong correlation that has been identified in this study is supportive of modern evidence regarding data-driven and instructional leadership. Li et al. (2023) have indicated that the collaboration of teachers mediates the relationship between teacher leadership and sustainable school performance, and Malokani et al. (2024) have underscored that data-guided decision-making led to sustainable academics. These insights reflect on the items in Table 1, such as "The principal uses data to support decision making" ( $M = 4.06$ ) and "The principal gives clear and consistent direction to teachers" ( $M = 4.16$ ), which document that Jordanian school principals are increasingly practicing research-based leadership behavior that positively influences academic outcomes.

Finally, the results indicate an area that needs to be paid further attention to, which is recognizing and reinforcing teacher performance. Had the lowest mean among leadership behaviors. This is consistent with the finding by Day et al. (2016), according to which emotional support and appreciation provided by leaders play an important role in identifying teacher well-being and self-efficacy. Although leadership did show to be strong in most areas, it may have been possible to further enhance teacher morale, professional satisfaction, and long-term academic performance with the use of enhanced reward systems.

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