



Teachers' Views on the Leadership Competencies of Secondary School Principals in East Gojjam, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine secondary school principals' leadership competencies as perceived by teachers. The national professional standards set by the Ministry of Education in 2013 was adapted as a measurement scale. It measured how well principals met leadership competencies, the competencies they applied most effectively, and whether teachers' perceptions varied by demographic characteristics. A cross-sectional survey design was used, with a sample of 324 teachers selected through proportional random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics (mean, one-sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses validated the instruments. The results showed that teachers rated principals' leadership competencies moderately higher than average, except for managing learning and teaching ($M = 2.93$, $d = 0.06$), which had the lowest score. Teachers also rated principals relatively stronger in school community relations and developing individuals and teams, with the highest effect size scores (0.74). On the other hand, teachers with over 20 years of experience showed a significant positive difference in three competencies – managing learning and teaching, developing individuals and teams, and leading school operations and resources – although the effect size scores were weak in all cases ($\eta < 0.1$). The findings suggest that teachers lack confidence in their principals' leadership skills, which could impact teacher commitment and effectiveness. The lowest score in principals' ability to manage learning and teaching, a key competency, signals the need for immediate remedial action at all levels of the education system to improve secondary school quality.

Keywords: Leadership competence, National standards, School principals.

1. Introduction

Leadership competence is increasingly vital in today's competitive global environment. It is a behavioral characteristic of successful job performance (Rai & Prakash, 2021). Several terms define competence, including traits, characteristics, qualities, knowledge,

abilities, and motivations, all causally connected to the improved performance of management work (Bass & Bass, 2008; Boyatzis et al., 2000; Jegelavičiūtė et al., 2018; Waldan, 2020). Competence is the capacity and utilization of knowledge, skills, and psychosocial appropriate for the environment to perform continuously and

successfully within a particular area (Vitello et al., 2021). Similarly, according to Shchur et al. (2022), effectively directing complex life situations, setting and achieving meaningful goals in a social context, communicating and forming relationships, adhering to a strategic growth plan, maintaining motivation through positive reinforcement, and acting appropriately in a variety of social settings are all signs of a well-developed personality.

Kadri et al. (2021) also added competence guides and motivates others to accomplish organizational objectives. Ongoing professional development and systematic evaluation of leadership competencies are critical for enhancing educational quality (Hosnan, 2019).

Essential competencies for effective school leadership include personality, managerial, supervisory, social, and entrepreneurial skills (Rozak et al., 2021). Principals must also develop communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity competencies in today's complex educational settings. These leadership competencies foster positive school climates and create opportunities for teacher professional development (Leithwood, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006). Researchers confirm that effective principal leadership correlates positively with improved student outcomes (Beatriz et al., 2008; Li et al., 2022; Marzano et al., 2005; Tan et al., 2024), as well as significantly impact teacher performance and organizational effectiveness through guidance and motivation (Achu, 2021; Ican et al., 2021; Kamaruddin et al., 2023; Kaso et al., 2019; Silam et al., 2021; So-Oabeb & du Plessis, 2023; Tonich, 2021; Zaman et al., 2020).

In addition, effective leadership encompasses a wide range of capabilities, including knowledge, expertise, and diverse leadership styles, all crucial for enhancing educational processes and benefiting student learning outcomes (Adero & Odiyo, 2020; Etecha & Shireye, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2023; Hosnan, 2019). A meta-analysis of 51 studies indicates effect sizes for the influence of principal actions on student achievement, teacher well-being, instructional strategies, and general school health range from moderate to significant (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). School leaders must possess sophisticated skills beyond basic requirements (Leithwood, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). Effective leadership traits contribute to improved teaching strategies, curriculum relevance, and community involvement (Al Ajmi, 2024).

Despite principals' central role as leading professionals, previous studies in Ethiopia indicated that schools were led by unprofessional school leadership and management (Anteneh & Zerihun, 2019). Many school leaders lacked the expertise and abilities necessary to lead secondary schools, and they were unfamiliar with the instructional leadership model (Abdi & Ayalew, 2022; Diriba et al., 2021; Etecha & Shireye, 2021; Matebe, 2020); and most leaders lacked the necessary competency to lead educational organizations (Aklilu et al., 2021). Research in the State of Amhara demonstrated that teachers perceived principals' inadequate supervision and leadership practice (Melaku & Demeke, 2022).

Subsequently, assessing leadership competence at the national and international levels necessitates a subtle understanding of

various theories and contextual factors. Northouse (2021) discusses assessment methods such as 360-degree feedback and competency-based interviews, which are crucial for evaluating leadership capabilities across different contexts. Fedorchuk (2019) compares professional standards for school principals in Russia with international practices, including the UK, Australia, the USA, New Zealand, and Japan. Each country has developed unique frameworks emphasizing various competencies, such as leadership, ethical standards, and community engagement. According to MoE (2013), the national professional standards of school principals emphasize that the quality of education depends on the effectiveness of school principals. These standards are part of a broader governmental initiative to enhance teaching quality and student learning outcomes by promoting collaboration among principals and stakeholders to devise innovative educational solutions.

Professional standards are the wide category of principals' knowledge and abilities of overall goals and themes that plan what principals should know and be able to do and specify the capacity of performance needed to meet work expectations (MoE, 2013). In the standard, competence infers the degree of principals' knowledge, skill, and ability to perform their responsibilities effectively and meet organizational goals. The expected leadership competencies involve integrating and applying knowledge, skill, and attitude to lead and manage a vision of learning, school community relations, teaching and learning, team and individual development, and school operations successfully (MoE, 2013).

The theoretical foundation of the school principal's leadership competence comprises five dimensions. *Lead and facilitate the vision of learning (FVL)* in the first dimension required for creating a shared vision, setting clear goals, making change for their schools—and ensuring continuous progress toward achieving the goals. As well as they lead the process of establishing, pursuing, and accomplishing clear and difficult goals that demonstrate high values for all employees and students. *Developing school-community relations (SCR)* is the next dimension needed for creating positive interactions with students' families, building school-community partnerships to enhance student learning, and communicating effectively with the school community. *Leading and managing learning and teaching (MLT)* in the third dimension requires directing and managing education by developing learning settings that optimize student performance, setting high standards, putting curricula into practice, and providing and assessing high-quality instruction. In the fourth dimension *managing and developing individuals and teams (SCR)* is essential for modeling high performance standards, developing, empowering, and supporting individuals and teams, monitoring performance, and establishing supportive networks. The last dimension is *leading and managing school operations and resources (LSOR)* requires the competence to manage the school resources and operations, to generate, maintain, and monitor an effective learning environment.

Problem Statement

As leading professionals, the primary responsibility of principals is to provide

professional leadership and management for a school and promote a secure foundation from which to achieve high standards in all areas of the school's work (MoE, 2013). However, most of the reviewed local studies indicated most leaders lacked the necessary competency to lead educational organizations (Aklilu et al., 2021). In addition, according to the East Gojjam Zone Education Department [EGZED] (2022) report there is a lack of competent and committed educational leaders, limitations for regulating accountability, and role confusion among educational leaders to prioritize sensitive educational issues. This is evident that the student results on the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examinations over the past four years (2018–2021/22) the [average pass rates] registered were 93.3%, 65%, 55.4%, and 17.8%, respectively (EGZED, 2022). The decline in the quality of education is partly due to a lack of responsibility, accountability, and transparency among educational leaders and experts (MoE, 2023).

This problem sparks the researcher to evaluate PLC with five dimensions in terms of the competence required for performance setting in the national professional standards. The study examines the current status of school PLCs within schools focusing on their knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively perform workplace responsibility and guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent do principals meet the required leadership competencies stipulated in the standard?
2. In which dimension of leadership competence are principals most effective in their workplace?
3. Are there significant differences in teachers' perceptions in terms of work experiences about PLCs in their work place?

2. Methods

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. In a cross-sectional survey, data is gathered from a selected group of people at the same time. Cross-sectional designs effectively capture a population's current behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs (Gay et al., 2012). It assesses PLC and its dimensions to describe the existing status in line with the national professional standards in the views of teachers' perceptions.

2.1. Population and Sample

The study population consists of secondary schools in the East Gojjam Zone. It incorporates 19 Wordas and 72 Secondary Schools. There are 5785 active teachers teaching in secondary schools comprising 4267 males and 1518 females (EGZED, 2022). The researcher selected sample teachers using a proportional stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from all sample woredas. Gay et al. (2012) assert that proportionate stratified sampling is a technique that selects a sample to represent specified subgroups in the population. A total of 412 participants were selected to collect quantitative data using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula.

2.2.Measurement Scale of PLC

The measurement tools are adapted from the national professional standards of Ethiopian school principals (MoE, 2013). These measurement tools were adapted to measure the principals' performance with five dimensions of leadership competencies, at the proficient level, excluding novice principals. Even though principals have four levels of competencies (from beginner to lead) the competencies set for the proficient level were considered in this study. A preliminary analysis has been done to identify the level of principals in 72 secondary schools, most of the schools are led by experienced principals, and a small number of schools are led by novice principals. Due to this reason measuring the competence of experienced principals at a proficient level gains an insightful understanding of the standards in terms of numbers and their performance. The scale

used a 5-point Likert scale, where one represents "strongly disagree" and five represents "strongly agree.". The total 53 items of measurement of PLCs, including FVL nine items, SCR five items, MLT 11 items, DIT 11 items, and LSOR 16 items. The pilot results tested the reliability (internal consistency) of the measures in each dimension were 0.87, 0.88, 0.89, 0.93, and 0.93, respectively. The Cronbach Alpha for the competence scale of 0.80 indicated good internal consistency (Leech et al., 2005); the alpha is 0.80 or higher, suggesting that the entire test is internally consistent and all of the items are reliable (Ho, 2006).

2.3.Data Analysis Techniques

The questionnaire was distributed to 412 respondents among which 352 (85.4%) were returned, and 28 questionnaires were removed due to incomplete responses. Hence, 324 participants' responses were used for further analysis.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Demographic Characteristic		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	233	71.9
	Female	90	27.8
	Total	324	100.0
Work Experience	Less than 6	10	3.1
	6 – 10	32	9.9
	11 – 15	60	18.5
	16 -20	99	30.6
	Above 20	121	37.3
	Total	324	100.0

Data analysis techniques involved quantitative approaches: descriptive and inferential statistics, EFA, and CFA. After collecting the data, the researcher coded and cleaned the data; identified invalid cases, missing values, outliers, and statistical assumptions were checked. Tabachnick et al. (2013) suggest that verifying score

ranges, data set fit, and the assumption of normal distribution is beneficial before data analysis. EFA and CFA are used for validating instruments, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics (one sample t-test and one-way ANOVA used for examining the status of PLC with five dimensions and

comparing teachers' perceptions based on work experience.

3. The Study Results

The results of this study began with presenting the analysis of the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, mean value, standard deviation, one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and post hoc results to understand the status of principles leadership competencies with five dimensions.

3.1. Validation of Instruments

Tests of validity and reliability were carried out to ensure the precision and consistency of the data gathered. EFA and CFA were applied to assess the validity of the constructs and examine the indicators' loadings on each construct. This analysis is applied to measure the scales PLC and its dimensions.

3.1.1. Exploratory Factor Analyses for PLC

This involved assessing sample adequacy using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test and determining the presence of significant relationships with Bartlett's test of Sphericity. A KMO value exceeding 0.5 indicates an adequate sample size. In this study, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.94, surpassing the recommended threshold, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant, χ^2 (n=324) = 4705.798 ($p < 0.001$), confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis. The maximum likelihood estimation with Varimax rotation produced a five-component solution with eigenvalues greater than one. Dimension one LSOR accounted for 43.22 % of the variance with an eigenvalue of 11.23, dimension two FVL accounted for 7.19 % of

the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.87, dimension three DIT accounted for 5.19 % of the variance with an eigenvalue 1.35, dimension four SCR accounted for 4.71 % of the variance with eigenvalue 1.22. Dimension five MLT accounted for 3.62 % of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.02. The five components altogether accounted for about 63.93 % of the total variance. After removing twenty-five items, the total number was reduced from 53 to 26 for further analysis.

Regarding the overall factor loadings of the five dimensions presented, nine items loaded significantly on dimension one LSOR with values ranging from .57 to .75 and commonalities from .47 to .69. Seven items loaded strongly on dimension two FVL, with loadings ranging from .54 to .79 and commonalities from .49 to .75. Four items had highly loaded on dimension three DIT, ranging from .53 to .68 with commonalities from .59 to .68. Three items loaded heavily on dimension four SCR, with values between .70 and .75 and commonalities from .64 to .71. Lastly, three items showed strong loadings on dimension five MLT, ranging from .53 to .81 with commonalities from .48 to .73.

3.1.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for PLC Measurement Scales

The standardized coefficient values ranged from 0.602 to 0.811, which indicates that the items in the PLC scale can adequately measure their respective constructs. It also provides evidence that the five-factor structure identified through the EFA was well-supported by the data (Collier, 2020).

The CFA results confirmed the factor structure of the PLC scale, which enhanced

the validity of the measurement model used in the study. The model fit measures were used to evaluate the overall goodness of fit, including X^2/df , GFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. All values met the commonly

accepted thresholds outlined by Brown and Cudeck (1992), Hair et al. (2010), Hu and Bentler (1999), and Ullman (2001): $X^2/df = 3-5$, $GFI \geq 0.90$, $CFI > 0.90$, $TLI > 0.90$, and $RMSEA < 0.08$.

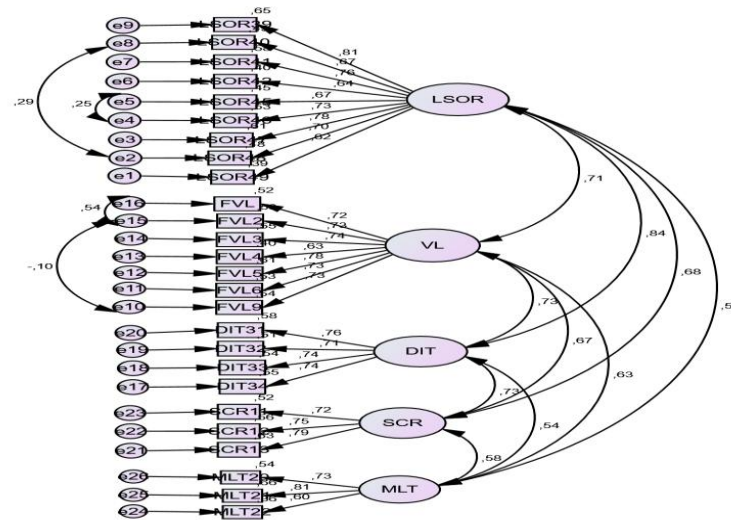


Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Principals' Leadership Competence.

Note. LSOR = Leading school operation and resources, VL = Facilitating vision of Learning, DIT = Developing individuals and teams, SCR = School community relations, and MLT = Managing learning and teaching

The five-factor model, which includes leading FVL, SCR, MLT, DIT, and LSOR, demonstrated a good fit for the data: $X^2/df = 2.25$, $GFI = 0.90$, $CFI = 0.92$, $TLI = 0.91$, and $RMSEA = 0.06$. Figure 1 shows that the finalized measurement model of PLC effectively differentiates between observed and latent variables. The factor loadings for the five-leadership competence sub-scales ranged from Figure 1 0.60 to 0.81, all exceeding the desirable threshold of 0.50 (Collier, 2020; Hair et al., 2019).

3.1.3. Convergent Validity, Reliability of Constructs of PLC Dimensions

The researcher calculated the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to assess the

convergent validity of the scale items (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values were above the recommended threshold of 0.50 for all the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). It indicates that the scales used in the study demonstrated the required convergent validity. The finding provided further evidence of convergent validity that the maximum shared variance was less than the respective AVE for all constructs (see Table 3). This finding suggests that the items within each construct shared more variance with their respective construct than with other constructs, an additional indicator of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. Loadings, Convergent Validity and Reliability of Constructs.

Variables/Constructs	Items	Standardize d factor loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Maximum Shared Variance
Leading school operations and resources	LSOR 39	.803	0.908	0.909	0.528	0.48
	LSOR 40	.684				
	LSOR 41	.757				
	LSOR 42	.632				
	LSOR 45	.693				
	LSOR 46	.741				
	LSOR 47	.777				
	LSOR 48	.713				
	LSOR 49	.620				
Leading and facilitating the vision of learning	FVL 1	.791	0.887	0.890	0.538	0.510
	FVL2	.786				
	FVL3	.750				
	FVL4	.623				
	FVL5	.758				
	FVL6	.715				
	FVL9	.696				
Leading and developing individuals and teams	DIT31	.766	0.828	0.828	0.547	0.50
	DIT32	.712				
	DIT33	.736				
	DIT34	.744				
Managing school– community relations	SCR11	.725	0.798	0.799	0.570	0.539
	SCR12	.749				
	SCR13	.789				
Leading and managing learning and teaching	MLT20	.734	0.746	0.762	0.520	0.381
	MLT21	.811				
	MLT22	.602				
Model fitness: X ² =650.342, df=289, X ² /df=2.25, GFI=0.90, CFI=0.92, TLI=.91, RAMSEA=0.06						

3.1.4. Discriminant Validity of PLC Dimensions

The researcher evaluated discriminant validity in this study employed the Fornell and Larcker criteria Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The Fornell and Larcker criterion suggests that discriminant validity

is achieved when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for a construct is higher than its correlations with other constructs in the study. However, as shown in Table 4 of the study, the discriminant validity was not entirely established when using the Fornell and Larcker criterion.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Result using Fornell and Larcker Criterion.

Constructs	LIOR	VL	DIT	SCR	MLT
LSOR	0.71				
FVL	0.71	0.72			
DIT	0.84	0.73	0.73		
SCR	0.68	0.67	0.73	0.75	
MLT	0.58	0.63	0.53	0.57	0.72

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Result using Hetrotraite-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio.

Constructs	LSOR	VL	DIT	SCR	MLT
LSOR					
FVL	0.70				
DIT	0.84	0.72			
SCR	0.67	0.65	0.73		
MLT	0.57	0.63	0.55	0.58	

3.2.The Status of Principals' Leadership Competence

The descriptive statistics mean and SD and one sample t-test analysis were presented to

assess the status of PLC with its dimensions to identify which dimension is effectively practiced.

Table 5. Mean, Standard deviation, and one-sample t-test statistics of PLC Subscales.

Dimensions	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Effect Size
FVL	3.55	.816	12.133	323	.000	.550	0.67
SCR	3.63	.858	13.317	323	.000	.635	0.74
MLT	2.93	.889	-1.375	323	.170	-.068	0.06
DIT	3.58	.787	13.344	323	.000	.583	0.74
LSOR	3.51	.788	11.676	323	.000	.511	0.53

Note: LSOR = Leading school operation and resources, VL = Facilitating vision of Learning, DIT = Developing individuals and teams, SCR = School community relations, and MLT= Managing learning and teaching.

Table 5 depicted that the highest mean score for SCR ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.858$) and one sample t-test ($t = 13.317$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) principals significantly demonstrate their competence in building and maintaining positive relationships with the school community. The following dimensions of FVL ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.816$) and one sample t-test ($t = 12.133$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) suggest that principals significantly well articulate and promote a clear vision for student learning. The third dimension DIT ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.787$) and one sample t-test ($t = 13.344$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrate significantly principals are competent in fostering teachers' development, and LSOR ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.788$) and one sample t-test ($t = 11.676$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) exhibited mean scores significantly higher than the hypothesized values managing school operations, with $p < 0.001$. The effect sizes for these dimensions ranged from 0.53 to 0.74, indicating moderate to significant substantive differences between the observed means and the expected values. These results suggest that principals are good in these areas,

demonstrating an excellent ability to articulate educational visions of learning, build community relationships, support individual and team development, and manage school operations and resources. On the other hand, the lowest mean score is observed in MLT ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.889$), reflecting a relative area weakness in overseeing and managing instructional and learning processes. One sample t-test did not show a statistically significant deviation from the hypothesized value ($t = 1.375$, $df = 323$, $p = 0.170$), with a small effect size of 0.06.

3.4 Perceptions of Teachers on PLC based on work Experiences

ANOVA results in Table 6, revealed a significant difference in three dimensions of PLC based on teachers' work experiences. DIT $F(4, 319) = 2.661$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$, MLT $F(4, 319) = 0.3223$, $p = .015$, $\eta^2 = 0.038$, LSOR $F(4, 319) = 0.976$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = 0.047$. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the dimensions of FVL and SCR.

Table 6. Teachers Perception of Dimensions of PLC based on Work Experience.

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta square
FVL	Between Groups	3.490	4	.873	1.315	.264	
	Within Groups	211.752	319	.664			
	Total	215.243	323				
SCR	Between Groups	4.622	4	1.155	1.581	.179	
	Within Groups	233.160	319	.731			
	Total	237.782	323				
DIT	Between Groups	6.457	4	1.614	2.661	.033	0.032
	Within Groups	193.543	319	.607			
	Total	200.000	323				
MLT	Between Groups	9.912	4	2.478	3.223	.013	0.038
	Within Groups	245.261	319	.769			
	Total	255.173	323				
LSOR	Between Groups	9.361	4	2.340	3.976	.004	0.047
	Within Groups	187.748	319	.589			
	Total	197.108	323				

Note: *FVL- facilitating vision of learning, school community relations, DIT developing individuals and teams, managing teaching and learning, and leading school operations and resources.*

In Table 7 the post hoc results indicated, that each group of participants compared to the remaining groups. Participants have shown significantly different perceptions of PLC in the dimension of DIT between 6-10 years and 20+ years of work experience ($P = 0.0035$). In the dimension of MLT, participants have significantly different

perceptions between 11 -15 years and 20+ years of work experience ($P = 0.026$). In the dimension of LSOR participants have significantly different perceptions between 6 – 10 years and 20+ years of work experience.

$P = 0.078$ and between 11 -15 years and 20 + years of work experience ($P = 0.0247$).

Table 7. Post hoc Results of PLC Dimensions based on work experiences.

Dependent Variable	(I) Work Experience	(J) Work Experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% CI		
						Lower B.	Upper B.	
MLT	Less than 6	6 – 10	.42083	.31766	.676	-.4507	1.2923	
		11 – 15	.09126	.29915	.998	-.7294	.9119	
		16 -20	.18667	.29081	.968	-.6112	.9845	
		Above 20	.49504	.28851	.426	-.2965	1.2866	
	6 – 10	11 – 15	-.32958	.19139	.422	-.8546	.1955	
		16 -20	-.23417	.17809	.682	-.7227	.2544	
		Above 20	.07421	.17430	.993	-.4040	.5524	
	11 – 15	16 -20	.09541	.14245	.963	-.2954	.4862	
		Above 20	.40378*	.13769	.029	.0260	.7815	
	DIT	16 -20	Above 20	.30837	.11850	.072	-.0167	.6335
			6 – 10	-.08281	.28219	.998	-.8570	.6914
		Less than 6	11 – 15	.09098	.26574	.997	-.6381	.8200
16 -20			.25500	.25834	.861	-.4537	.9637	
Above 20			.34545	.25629	.661	-.3577	1.0486	
6 – 10		11 – 15	.17380	.17002	.845	-.2926	.6402	
		16 -20	.33781	.15820	.208	-.0962	.7718	
		Above 20	.42827*	.15484	.047	.0035	.8531	
11 – 15		16 -20	.16402	.12654	.694	-.1832	.5112	
		Above 20	.25447	.12231	.231	-.0811	.5900	
LSOR		16 -20	Above 20	.09045	.10527	.911	-.1983	.3793
			6 – 10	-.26667	.27793	.873	-1.0292	.4958
	Less than 6	11 – 15	-.12550	.26173	.989	-.8435	.5925	
		16 -20	.12222	.25444	.989	-.5758	.8203	
		Above 20	.22966	.25243	.893	-.4629	.9222	
	6 – 10	11 – 15	.14117	.16745	.917	-.3182	.6006	
		16 -20	.38889	.15581	.094	-.0386	.8164	
		Above 20	.49633*	.15250	.011	.0780	.9147	
	11 - 15	16 -20	.24772	.12463	.274	-.0942	.5897	
		Above 20	.35516*	.12047	.028	.0247	.6857	
	16 -20	Above 20	.10744	.10368	.838	-.1770	.3919	

*.

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

4. Discussion

The study's objective is to state the status of the PLC with its dimensions in line with the requirements of national professional standards. In this regard, the PLC-adapted instruments were validated with EFA and CFA. Descriptive and inferential analysis was applied to measure the status of PLC with five dimensions.

Leading and creating school-community relations is the dimension of PLC that the knowledge, abilities, and performance outcomes necessary to manage school-community connections by fostering positive relationships with students' families, establishing partnerships to improve student learning, and successfully communicating with the school community (MoE, 2013). The findings of this dimension indicated that leading and creating school community relations found the highest mean score ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.858$) from the dimensions. Besides, one sample t-test result ($t = 13.317$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) showed statistically significant differences with a large effect size of 0.74 from other dimensions. It demonstrates that principals are moderately competent at building and maintaining positive relationships with the school community. Effective partnerships allow the school to use opportunities and resources that enhance student performance, increase sustainability, and connect the school to the larger community and professional networks (MoE, 2021). Marzano et al. (2005) stated that the primary link between the community and the school is the principal. Collaborative connections are essential for the internal and external elements that

influence the achievement of educational goals (Green, 2017; Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Leading and developing individuals and teams is the next dimension of PLC. The knowledge, abilities, and performance results necessary to guide and develop people and teams by setting an example of high performance, empowering, and supporting people and teams, keeping an eye on performance, and creating networks of support (MoE, 2013). The findings of leading and developing individuals and teams ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.787$). One sample t-test ($t = 13.344$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) shows statistically significant differences with a large effect size of 0.74. This implies that principals are competent in leading and developing individual and team support environments. In this regard, Fullan (2014) stated that effective school principals recognize that their leadership competence extends beyond simply managing their institution's operations; they must also prioritize the development of their teachers and staff. There is substantial evidence that great leaders put more attention into inspiring and developing people than creating and upholding processes and institutions (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). Building individual capacities and fostering collaborative teamwork are more likely to positively impact student learning outcomes (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The "technical core" of education—what is needed to raise the standard of teaching and learning—is one aspect of instructional leadership that determines a leader's capacity to implement practices that aid in human development (Leithwood, 2004).

Leading and facilitating the vision of learning involves guiding and empowering

individuals and organizations to achieve a shared vision of effective and transformative learning experiences. The performance results, abilities, and information needed to establish a common vision, defined objectives, and change for their schools guarantee ongoing advancement toward the goals (MoE, 2013). Leading and facilitating the vision of learning is the third dimension, accounting for the mean score ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.816$). One sample t-test ($t = 12.133$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$), and the effect size was 0.67. This suggests that principals effectively articulate and promote a clear vision for student learning. In this regard, Wiseman (2009) stated that creating a shared school vision, offering individualized support to employees, exhibiting exceptional teaching and learning, and sharing leadership as needed. Shava and Heystek (2021) also asserted that accountability, monitoring, evaluation, and ongoing staff development are crucial elements for attaining sustainable improvement and realizing the vision of learning.

Leading and managing school operations and resources is the fourth dimension of PLC, performance outcomes, competencies, and expertise needed to oversee school operations and resources in order to establish, preserve, and oversee a productive learning environment (MoE, 2013). The findings of leading and managing school operations and resources ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.788$). One sample t-test ($t = 11.676$, $df = 323$, $p < 0.001$) with a medium effect size of 0.53. It demonstrates that principals are competent in leading and managing school operations and resources. In this regard, Hallinger and Heck (2010) demonstrated that principals who effectively manage

budgets, facilities, and technological infrastructure create more conducive environments for teaching and learning. Leithwood et al. (2006) also added the critical need for principals to align operational decisions with the overarching vision and goals of the school, ensuring that resources are utilized in the most impactful and efficient manner (Achu, 2021; Cansoy & Polatcan, 2019; Valenzuela & Buenvenida, 2021).

The last but not the least dimension of PLC is managing teaching and learning. Competence refers to the performance outcomes, abilities, and knowledge needed to direct and oversee instruction by developing learning environments that optimize student outcomes, setting high standards, implementing curricula, and providing and assessing high-quality instruction (MoE, 2013). Bush (2013) emphasized the importance of managing teaching and learning as the primary activities of educational institutions, which has resulted in an emphasis on "instructional leadership." Instructional leadership is the most well-known impression that links learning with leadership. Still, several other names may be used to describe this connection, including curriculum leadership, pedagogic leadership, and leadership for learning. Competent principals deeply understand effective teaching and learning strategies, curriculum development, and assessment practices (Leithwood, 2004). A leader's key role is to assist, support, and facilitate teaching and learning (Gougas & Malinova, 2021).

Despite this fact, the finding of managing the teaching and learning dimension is the lowest mean score ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.889$),

reflecting a relative area of weakness in overseeing and managing instructional and learning processes. One sample t-test result also indicated that the managing learning and teaching dimension did not show a statistically significant deviation from the expected value ($t = 1.375$, $df = 323$, $p = 0.170$). It suggests that PLC in managing learning and teaching processes aligns closely with expectations or tends to standards. In this regard, The Wallace Foundation (2013) highlights that many principals exhibit strong skills in setting a vision, fostering a positive school culture, and managing daily operations. However, they frequently lack the specific competencies necessary for effective instructional leadership. Likewise, Melaku and Demeke (2022), the leadership practice of beginner principals is found to be below average in terms of curriculum coordination and instructional time protection. Additionally, many school principals today lack the skills or knowledge required to promote students' accomplishments, which are more likely to be promising through effective teaching and learning procedures (Matebe, 2020).

Generally, PLC with five dimensions mean score of ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.666$) suggests a moderately high level of leadership competence among principals, with prominent strengths in school community relations, facilitating vision learning, managing individuals and teams and managing school operation and resources mean values exhibited significantly higher than the expected values, with $p < 0.001$. The effect sizes for these dimensions ranged from 0.53 to 0.74, indicating moderate to significant differences between the observed

means and the expected values. Meanwhile, managing learning and teaching presents an important area for improvement. These insights can guide professional development efforts, enhancing areas where principals may benefit from additional support and training, ultimately contributing to more effective school leadership. In addition, teachers have shown different perceptions of PLC in managing learning and teaching, developing individuals and teams, and leading and operating school resources. These suggest that their understanding and expectations about PLC are insightful in addressing professional developments and supportive strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the vital role of principals' leadership competence in creating productive learning environments in the context of national professional standards. Leading and managing school community relations, facilitating a vision of learning, developing individuals and teams, and leading school operations and resources were practiced at a good level of principal competence. While managing learning and teaching ongoing professional improvements are emphasized to enhance effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. This disparity emphasizes improving instructional leadership is critical to effectively support student success.

Based on the findings, principals' instructional leadership, especially leading the teaching and learning processes, should be improved through professional development programs that are prioritized by educational authorities and schools. Principals use their performance in school-

community connections to form closer bonds with families and different organizations to improve student support. Continuous work is also required to make sure principals convey and carry out a common vision of education, creating a cooperative culture that supports the development of both teachers and students. To sum up, regularly evaluating areas of strength and weakness and guiding solutions of principals' leadership practices demands informed decisions for policymakers.

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