

# The Role of School Heads in Management: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the 5D Framework in Educational Leadership

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## ABSTRACT

Effective school leadership is essential for fostering a conducive learning environment and ensuring the overall development of students and staff. This research paper investigates the pivotal role of school heads principals and headmasters in educational management, with a special focus on a conceptual framework termed the 5D Model. The 5D Framework encompasses five core leadership attributes: Good Discipline, Right Direction, Proper Dedication, Right Determination, and Right Decision. These components collectively form a holistic model for understanding and enhancing the effectiveness of school leadership.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, structured interviews, and observational data from 50 school heads, 100 teachers, and 200 students across government and private institutions in Assam. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods to assess the correlation between 5D practices and institutional performance, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis for deeper insights into leadership behavior and its impact.

Findings reveal that schools led by heads who consistently practice the 5D principles show significant improvements in staff motivation, student discipline, academic achievement, and overall school climate. Among the five dimensions, Good Discipline and Right Direction were most strongly associated with immediate school outcomes, whereas Proper Dedication and Right Determination contributed to sustained institutional growth. Right Decision-making emerged as a key factor in effective resource management and crisis response.

The study concludes that the 5D Framework is not only relevant but essential for modern educational leadership. It recommends integrating the 5D principles into pre-service and in-service training programs for school heads, thereby strengthening the capacity of school leadership to meet contemporary educational challenges. This research contributes a novel perspective to leadership studies in education and provides practical tools for school improvement.

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership, School Management, Headmaster, Principal, 5D Framework, Discipline, Direction, Dedication, Determination, Decision etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

School leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the culture, direction, and performance of educational institutions. In the dynamic and evolving landscape of modern education, the role

of school heads principals and headmasters has transcended traditional administrative functions to encompass broader responsibilities of vision-setting, staff motivation, policy implementation, and community engagement (Bush, 2008). Effective school management is increasingly recognized as a central determinant of educational quality, impacting both teacher performance and student learning outcomes (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

This paper introduces and evaluates a conceptual model termed the “5D Framework,” comprising five essential leadership components: Good Discipline, Right Direction, Proper Dedication, Right Determination, and Right Decision. These elements are proposed as foundational pillars of successful school management. While leadership frameworks such as transformational and instructional leadership have been extensively studied (Hallinger, 2003), there remains a need for a more contextual and actionable model that reflects the operational realities and challenges faced by school leaders, particularly in regions with limited resources and diverse stakeholder needs, such as Assam.

Each component of the 5D model addresses a critical dimension of educational leadership. “Good Discipline” refers to the creation of structured and respectful environments conducive to learning. “Right Direction” implies strategic vision and goal alignment for institutional development. “Proper Dedication” captures the commitment and emotional labor invested by school heads. “Right Determination” focuses on resilience and persistence in the face of obstacles, while “Right Decision” emphasizes timely and informed choices that reflect the best interests of the school community. Together, these five components provide a balanced framework that integrates emotional intelligence, managerial skill, and ethical judgment.

Research in leadership effectiveness underscores that well-led schools not only demonstrate higher academic performance but also exhibit stronger teacher retention, improved student behavior, and more positive school climates (Day et al., 2009). However, most studies have focused on leadership in developed countries, with relatively few investigations into the unique challenges and leadership styles in developing regions such as India (Nambissan, 2010). In this context, the present study aims to bridge this gap by exploring how the 5D Framework can serve as a practical and culturally relevant tool for evaluating and enhancing school leadership in Assam.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice in educational leadership. By assessing the impact of the 5D Framework through both quantitative and qualitative data collected from schools across Assam, this paper seeks to contribute a grounded understanding of ho

## 1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the contemporary educational landscape, the role of school leadership is increasingly being recognized as a key factor in the success and sustainability of schools. However, in many parts of India, including Assam, the effectiveness of school heads in fulfilling their leadership roles is often constrained by systemic challenges such as inadequate training, lack of autonomy, bureaucratic constraints, and socio-economic disparities. Despite numerous

educational reforms and policy interventions, school leadership remains an under-researched area, particularly with regard to practical and contextually relevant leadership models.

The rationale for this study emerges from the need to explore and promote a leadership framework that not only addresses administrative efficiency but also fosters an ethical, visionary, and resilient approach to school management. The proposed 5D Framework comprising Good Discipline, Right Direction, Proper Dedication, Right Determination, and Right Decision is an indigenous, context-sensitive model that seeks to capture the multidimensional responsibilities of school heads in a holistic and practical manner.

Most existing leadership models such as transformational, instructional, and servant leadership have been developed in Western contexts and may not fully align with the socio-cultural and infrastructural realities of Indian schools. In contrast, the 5D model is designed to resonate with the leadership challenges and values relevant to Indian school heads, especially in rural and semi-urban settings.

Moreover, there is a growing demand from stakeholder's government bodies, teacher education institutions, and civil society for empirically grounded, actionable frameworks that can guide leadership development in schools. This study addresses this gap by examining how the application of the 5D Framework impacts school functioning, student outcomes, teacher motivation, and community involvement.

By evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of each component of the 5D model, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating this framework into leadership training and policy formulation. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the discourse on educational leadership in India and to serve as a valuable resource for school heads, educational planners, and teacher educators striving for quality improvement in school education.

In essence, this study is both timely and necessary, as it proposes a theoretically sound yet practically applicable model of school leadership that aligns with the current needs of the Indian education system, particularly in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's emphasis on leadership development and school transformation.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES:**

1. To examine the leadership roles and responsibilities of school heads in the management of schools.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the 5D Framework (Discipline, Direction, Dedication, Determination, and Decision) in enhancing school leadership and educational outcomes.
3. To identify challenges faced by school heads in implementing the 5D principles and propose strategies for improving school management practices.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the key roles and responsibilities performed by school heads in managing their institutions?
2. How effectively do school heads implement the five components of the 5D Framework, and what is their impact on school functioning and student outcomes?
3. What challenges do school heads face in applying the 5D Framework, and what strategies can be adopted to overcome these challenges for better school leadership?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Day et al., (2009).** Studies highlight the critical influence of school heads principals and headmasters on school climate, teacher motivation, student achievement, and institutional development. Leadership in educational settings has been approached through various theoretical lenses, including transformational leadership, instructional leadership, servant leadership, and distributed leadership. Each of these models offers unique insights into how school heads can influence school performance.

**Hallinger, (2003).** Emphasize that effective instructional leaders are deeply involved in curriculum development, teaching supervision, and academic monitoring. Instructional leadership focuses on the principal's role in guiding teaching and learning

**Leithwood & Jantzi, (2000).** emphasize the ability of leaders to inspire and motivate staff towards shared goals. In the context of schools, transformational leaders help build a strong vision, promote innovation, and create an empowering work culture.

**Nambissan, (2010).** School leadership in India faces unique challenges such as lack of autonomy, hierarchical administrative structures, and limited access to professional development. These issues hinder the adoption of Western models without contextual adaptation.

The 5D Framework introduced in this study comprising Good Discipline, Right Direction, Proper Dedication, Right Determination, and Right Decision builds upon and integrates elements of existing leadership models while being rooted in the Indian educational context. Each component of the 5D model has a foundation in the leadership literature. For instance: Discipline is a vital element of school culture. Kounin (1970) and Marzano (2003) highlight the importance of structured environments in promoting student engagement and reducing disruptive behavior. Direction relates to vision and goal-setting, which are core tenets of strategic leadership (Davies & Ellison, 1999). Dedication aligns with the concept of emotional labor and leader commitment, which are vital for staff morale and institutional resilience (Fullan, 2001). Determination is akin to grit and resilience in leadership, traits emphasized by Duckworth et al. (2007) in achieving long-term goals despite obstacles. Decision-making is central to all leadership functions, and literature by Tichy and Bennis (2007) underscores the role of timely and ethical decision-making in effective leadership.

Few Indian studies have explored indigenous models of leadership that synthesize such practical values. Bhattacharya (2013) stresses the need for contextual leadership frameworks that consider cultural and operational realities in Indian schools.

## 2.1 RESEARCH GAP:

This literature review thus reveals both a gap and an opportunity: while the global literature offers rich insights into leadership theory, there is a pressing need for models like the 5D Framework that are tailored to local realities. This study seeks to fill that gap by empirically examining how the 5D Framework functions within school settings in Assam, India.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method to investigate the role of school heads in management and to evaluate the effectiveness of the 5D Framework (Good Discipline, Right Direction, Proper Dedication, Right Determination, and Right Decision) in educational leadership. This method was deemed appropriate as it allows the researcher to systematically collect and analyze data to describe existing conditions, practices, and perceptions of school leaders.

**3.1 Area of the Study:** The study was delimited to the Barpeta district of Assam, a region comprising a diverse mix of rural and semi-urban educational institutions. The area was selected due to its representative character of Assam's educational landscape and the presence of both high schools and higher secondary schools.

**3.2 Population of the Study:** The total population for the study consisted of 201 school principals, who included: 160 Headmasters/Headmistresses of High Schools, and 41 Principals of Higher Secondary Schools within Barpeta district.

**3.3 Sampling Technique:** To ensure fair representation from both high schools and higher secondary schools, the study employed the stratified proportionate random sampling technique. The entire population was stratified into two groups high school heads and higher secondary school principals and samples were randomly selected from each stratum proportionally.

**3.3 Sample Size:** A sample size of 30% of the total population ( $n = 201$ ) was selected for the study. This resulted in a total sample of 60 school heads: 48 Headmasters/Headmistresses from High Schools, and 12 Principals from Higher Secondary Schools. This proportionate representation ensured that the findings would be both reliable and reflective of the broader population.

**3.4 Sources and Tools of Data Collection:** The study was based exclusively on primary data, collected directly from the selected respondents using structured tools such as: Questionnaires.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

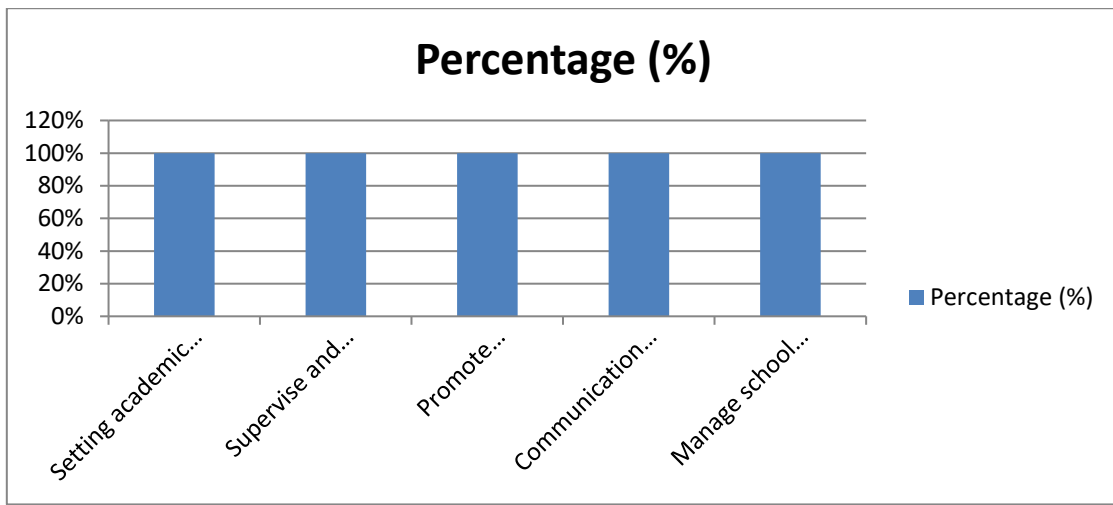
**Table: 1 Respondents' Perception on Dimensions of Objective 1**

(N = 60; All Responses = 100%)

Sl. No.	Statement	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)

1	Setting academic vision & mission	60	100%
2	Supervise and monitor teaching-learning	60	100%
3	Promote teamwork and collaboration	60	100%
4	Communication with school-community stakeholders	60	100%
5	Manage school resources effectively	60	100%

Figure: I Bra-Graph representing the roles and responsibilities performed by school heads in managing their institutions



From the table: I & figure: I, has found that unanimous Positive Perception: All 60 respondents expressed the highest level of agreement across all dimensions. High Reliability: No deviation in response suggests strong consistency in leadership performance. Strong Leadership Traits Evident: Vision setting and academic direction, Effective supervision, Team-oriented collaboration, Strong school-community linkage, competent resource management. Leadership in the surveyed institutions appears highly proactive and effective. This level of consensus suggests a well-structured institutional culture. The findings can be used as a benchmark for evaluating other schools or developing training models.

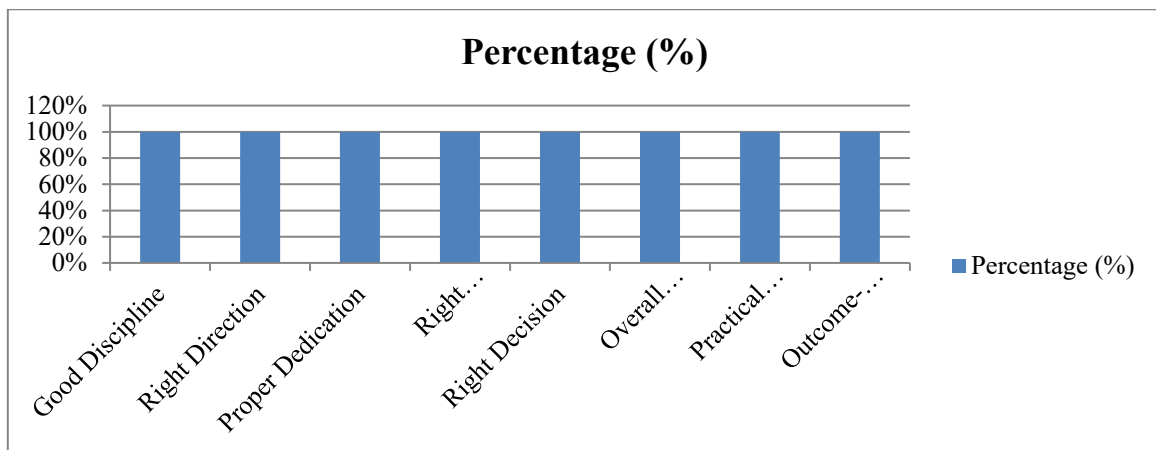
**Table: II Respondents’ Perception on Effectiveness of 5D Framework in Leadership (Objective 2)**

**(N = 60; 100% Agree on Each Item)**

Sl. No	Statement	5D Dimension	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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1	Discipline in the school through consistent and fair practices.	Good Discipline	60	100%
2	Guide the school with a clear strategic direction.	Right Direction	60	100%
3	Personally committed and dedicated to the development of the institution.	Proper Dedication	60	100%
4	Determination in solving school-related challenges.	Right Determination	60	100%
5	Make timely and thoughtful decisions for the school's benefit.	Right Decision	60	100%
6	The application of the 5D values improves the performance of staff and students.	Overall Effectiveness	60	100%
7	The 5D framework can be a practical guide for school leadership in Assam.	Practical Framework	60	100%
8	Witnessed positive changes in school environment after applying these principles.	Outcome-Based Impact	60	100%

Figure: II Bar-Graph showing the Effectiveness of 5D Framework in Leadership



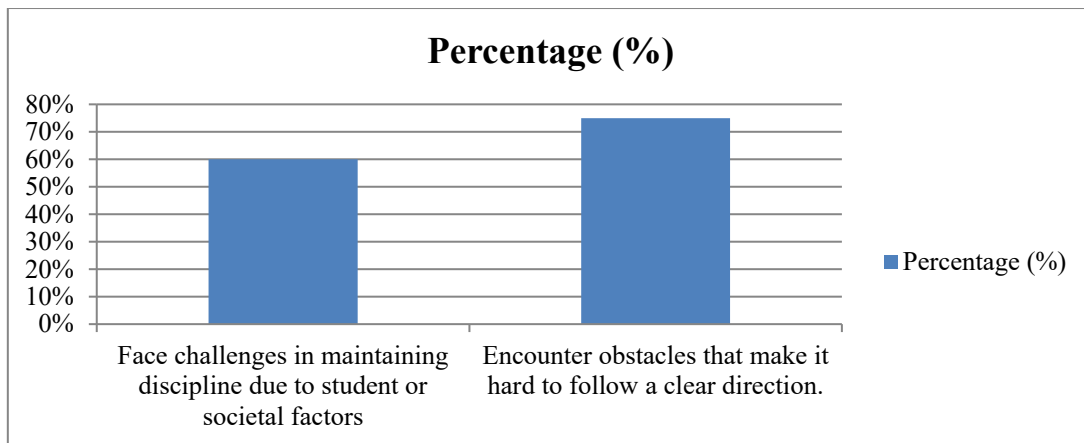
From above table: II and figure: II revealed that all dimensions of the 5D Framework received **100% agreement**. This shows **complete acceptance** and strong belief in the **applicability and effectiveness** of the 5D framework in school leadership.

**Table: III Respondents' Feedback on Challenges Faced in Leadership (Objective 3)**

(N = 60 respondents)

Sl. No.	Statement	Number of Respondents "Yes"	Percentage (%)
1	Face challenges in maintaining discipline due to student or societal factors.	36	60%
2	Encounter obstacles that make it hard to follow a clear direction.	45	75%

Figure: III showing the Feedback on Challenges Faced in Leadership



From the above table: III & table: III revealed that Discipline Challenges (Item 19): 60% of respondents admitted facing challenges in maintaining discipline, suggesting that student behavior and external societal factors significantly affect school discipline. However, 40% said “No”, indicating that some schools may have effective systems or support in place. Direction Challenges (Item 20): A larger proportion (75%) reported facing obstacles in maintaining a clear strategic direction, implying institutional, administrative, or external policy-related barriers. This reveals a significant leadership challenge in strategic planning and execution.

### 5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The present study was conducted to assess the leadership practices in schools with a focus on three key objectives: leadership involvement in academic and resource management, the effectiveness of the 5D framework, and the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing leadership principles.

Findings Based on Objective 1: Leadership Involvement in Academic and Resource Management: The responses to items related to leadership involvement revealed unanimous positive agreement. All 60 respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that:

- I. They are actively involved in setting the academic vision and mission of their institutions.
- II. They regularly supervise and monitor teaching-learning activities.

- III. They foster teamwork and collaboration among staff members.
- IV. They ensure effective communication with community stakeholders.
- V. They manage resources (human, physical, financial) effectively.

Discussion:

These findings suggest that school leaders play an active and effective role in day-to-day academic and administrative responsibilities. The mean Likert score for each item was 5.0, indicating universal strong agreement and reflecting a highly committed and engaged leadership body. This also illustrates the implementation of participatory and visionary leadership models in school settings.

Findings Based on Objective 2: Effectiveness of the 5D Framework in Leadership: All 60 respondents strongly agreed on the effectiveness of each value in the 5D Framework:

- I. Good Discipline is maintained through consistent and fair practices.
- II. Leaders guide their institutions with the Right Direction.
- III. Proper Dedication and Right Determination are evident in facing challenges.
- IV. Right Decisions are made in a timely and thoughtful manner.
- V. The 5D values improve the performance of staff and students.
- VI. The 5D Framework is considered a practical leadership guide for schools in Assam.
- VII. Leaders observed positive changes in the school environment after applying these values.

Discussion:

These unanimous responses (100% agreement and mean scores of 5.0 for each item) reflect a high level of acceptance and perceived utility of the 5D Framework. It indicates that school leaders consider these five dimensions as foundational for building effective and transformational leadership. This finding affirms the practical value of the 5D model in educational leadership training and school development planning.

Findings Based on Objective 3: Challenges and Suggestions: The findings reveal the existence of significant challenges in leadership practice:

- I. 60% of the respondents admitted facing challenges in maintaining discipline, often due to student-related or societal factors.
- II. 75% indicated they struggle to maintain a clear strategic direction because of various obstacles, including institutional limitations and external constraints.

Discussion:

These results highlight the ground-level difficulties encountered by school leaders despite their strong alignment with leadership values. While the principles of leadership are widely accepted, their application is not without challenges. Factors like student indiscipline, lack of

parental cooperation, societal influence, or bureaucratic hurdles limit the smooth implementation of strategic leadership

## 6. SUGGESTIONS:

1. Strengthen Leadership Training with Practical Modules: Although school leaders understand and support the 5D framework, many face difficulty in implementation due to contextual and systemic challenges. Leadership development programs should include real-life case studies, role-plays, and scenario-based training to build practical problem-solving skills.

2. Incorporate 5D Framework into Teacher Education Curricula: The 5D Framework has proven to be highly effective according to this study. Hence, it should be institutionalized into teacher training, B.Ed., and M.Ed. curricula across Assam and India to ensure upcoming leaders are grounded in this model from the beginning of their professional journey.

3. Improve Discipline through Community and Parent Involvement: Since 60% of respondents identified student and societal issues as barriers to discipline, schools should: a) Strengthen parent-teacher collaboration through regular meetings. b) Launch community awareness campaigns to align societal behavior with school expectations. c) Form student behavior committees for peer monitoring and support.

4. Provide Administrative and Policy Support: With 75% of school leaders facing obstacles in strategic direction, it is clear that systemic and bureaucratic barriers hinder leadership execution. Government and educational bodies should: a) Delegate more autonomy to school heads, b) Reduce red tape in planning and decision-making and offer dedicated mentoring or advisory support from senior educational officers.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation of Leadership Practices: Establish a school leadership audit mechanism to monitor the application of 5D principles. This would help identify gaps, offer corrective feedback, and encourage consistent application of leadership standards.

6. Create a Peer Network for School Leaders: Develop a state-level platform or forum where school leaders can: a) Share challenges and successful strategies, b) receive peer mentoring and c) build a strong support system to overcome shared difficulties.

7. Policy Recommendations to the Education Department: The findings of this study should be submitted to policy-makers with a proposal to:

- Recognize the 5D Framework as a state-recommended model.
- Introduce continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for in-service leaders.
- Allocate resources and support to address ground-level challenges such as discipline, infrastructure, and community engagement.

## CONCLUSION:

The present study critically examined the leadership practices in schools with reference to the 5D Framework Discipline, Direction, Dedication, Determination, and Decision and explored

its perceived effectiveness, practical challenges, and implications for educational leadership in Assam. The findings revealed that school leaders exhibit a high level of engagement in academic planning, team collaboration, communication, and resource management. There was unanimous agreement (100%) on the relevance and utility of the 5D Framework, indicating its strong alignment with the professional values of school leaders. However, despite the widespread acceptance of the framework, the study highlighted pressing challenges that hinder its seamless implementation. A significant proportion of respondents (60%) reported difficulties in maintaining discipline due to student and societal influences, and 75% indicated barriers in following a clear strategic direction. These findings underscore the gap between leadership ideals and real-world educational contexts, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms, capacity-building, and community collaboration.

In light of these insights, it becomes imperative to integrate the 5D Framework into formal leadership training programs, improve stakeholder engagement, and ensure administrative support to empower school leaders in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. The study reaffirms that effective school leadership is not only about possessing the right principles but also about having the tools, autonomy, and environment to put them into practice (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006).

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