

Instructional Leadership Practices in Secondary Schools of Assosa Zone, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate instructional leadership practices in secondary schools of Assosa zone, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia. In order to address the objectives of the study, a cross sectional descriptive survey method was employed. The population of the study were 266 teachers and 12 principals. From this number of population, 141 teachers and 12 principals were used as a sample using simple random and comprehensive sampling techniques respectively. Data collected from respondents was analyzed and interpreted using Percentage, one sample t-test, and weighted mean. The finding revealed that, among instructional leadership functions, instructional leaders' role in communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, monitoring of school progress, protection of instructional time, maintaining high visibility, are promoting professional development seemed to be at a level near to average. Whereas, coordination of the curriculum, providing incentive for teachers, and incentive for students were significantly low performed. Based on findings it is concluded that, instructional leadership practices in the zone seem to be deprived. On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the weaknesses encountered by the principals in their instructional leadership activities mainly focusing on empowering both principals and schools to foster instructional leadership practices in the secondary schools of the zone.

1. INTRODUCTION

Secondary schools play crucial role in producing quality students to the higher institutions and vocational that has a fundamental contribution in achieving social equity and promoting higher levels of economic and social development. In line with the attention given to the quality education, the importance of instructional leadership is considered as a major vehicle for the change and educational development (Musaaazi, 1988). It is a leadership that directly related to the process of instruction, teachers, learners, and the curriculum. With the increased value put on instructional leadership, what comes to vision is the school as an environment to change the productivity which depends mainly on the ability of instructional leaders to analyze existing conditions and future challenges, and implement strategies for attaining the goals (Ubben & Larry, 1997).

Due to the fact, the government of Ethiopia has prepared a guide line which incorporate instructional leadership functions and criteria for recruitment and selection of competent principals at secondary schools with higher standard in academic readiness, well experiences in instructional activities and commitment aspects of teachers to be school principals (MoE,2013).

With regard to Assosa Zone, a substantial expansion of secondary education took place under ESDP II & III. Nevertheless, instructional leadership practice in the zone is yet requiring much to be done. Thus, to improve this, school principals need to be well competent and effective in performing instructional leadership activities. Consequently, the preceding attempts would indicate that the conditions of secondary schools invite for appropriate instructional leadership which in turn calls for scientific study to identify the status of instructional leadership practice.

Therefore, the study attempts to measure instructional leadership practices related to three dimensions of instructional leadership described in Hallinger and Murphy model's of instructional leadership: defining the mission, managing instructional program, and promoting school climate; and functions within dimension; framing and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentive for teachers, and providing incentive for students.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Instructional leadership has a particular importance in educational administration because of its far reaching effects on the accomplishment of school programs, objectives, and educational goals. In light of this, secondary school principals are expected to perform well with instructional leadership activities.

However, school principals are not implementing the instructional leadership practices as expected to bringing changes in the school systems as effective as possible. Due to the fact that School principal are implementing instructional leadership practice in the environment of divergent needs that evolved from discontinuous environmental changes including globalization introduce new trends of instruction in schools(Hallinger & Murphy,198).

Research findings also show that majority of school principals in Ethiopia, were incapable in performing instructional leadership practices; they have not been trained in professional disciplines that make principals in secondary schools ineffective and inefficient in performing instructional leadership activities as expected of them (UNESCO, 2013).

Hence, Assosa zone as one of the zone in Ethiopia is not free from lack of effective and efficient instructional leadership in secondary schools (BGREB, 2013).

Though, from the above accepted wisdom one may depict that the existing situation could affect the quality of instructional leadership practice in secondary schools, until now there was no enough studies that can show the status of instructional leadership practices in Assosa zone, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia.

Therefore, this study attempts to make an assessment on instructional leadership practices in secondary schools of Assosa Zone, Benishangul Gumuz Regional sate, Ethiopia with the following basic questions:

1. To what extent are principals performing the functions of instructional leadership activities?
2. To what dimension of instructional leadership are principals giving more priority in instructional leadership practices?

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to assess instructional leadership practice in secondary schools of Assosa zone, Benishangul Gumuz Regional state, Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the study has the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the extent to which principals are performing the functions of instructional leadership activities;
2. To identify dimension of instructional leadership principals are giving more priority in instructional leadership practices.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Meaning instructional leadership

Different scholars' defines instructional leadership in different manner. Instructional leadership is a model of leadership which focuses on students learning and achievement through development of others, and also invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and all intellectual, professional capital for teachers (Harris et al, 2005; Leithood et al, in Dimmock, 1993). It is also a leadership that directly related to the process of instruction; teachers, learners, and the curriculum (Acheson & Smith in McEwan, 2003).

2. Model of instructional leadership

a. Hallinger and Murphy's Model

Hallinger and Murphy developed the instructional leadership model from examining the instructional leadership behaviours of school principals through collecting information from principals, school staffs and central administration supervisors, via a common questionnaire and other school data to supplement instructional

leadership behaviours. From the synthesis of questionnaire and the organizational information, Hallinger and Murphy (1987) created a framework of instructional management with three dimensions and eleven job descriptors. These dimensions and functions of instructional leadership are the dimension of defining the school mission includes the principal job descriptors of framing school goals and communicating school goals, dimension of managing the instructional program which involves working directly with teachers in areas related to curriculum and instruction, and dimension of Promoting a positive school learning climate that encompasses principal behaviours that protect instructional time, promote professional development, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, develop and enforce academic standards, and provide incentives for students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To study the existing practices of instructional leadership in secondary schools of sampled woredas' of Assosa zone, descriptive survey; cross sectional method was employed. 266 teachers and 12 principals of secondary schools of the seven woredas of the zone were the population of the research. From these 141 teachers and 12 principals were selected through random and comprehensive sampling techniques respectively as a sample.

The study was conducted by giving due attention on Hallinger and Murphy models of instructional leadership. In this study the dimension of instructional leadership in Hallinger and Murphy model's of instructional leadership: defining the mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting school climate. Functions within the dimensions: framing school goals, communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for students were measured. To measure this dimensions principal instructional management rating scale (five likert scale) which is formulated by Dr. Philip Hallinger was adapted. Statistical analysis like SPSS was used to analyse the collected data. Therefore, percentage for general background of the respondents', one sample t-test using weighted mean to indicate the extent principals are performing the functions of instructional leadership activities, and to show the dimensions of instructional leadership principals are giving more priority.

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The general objective of the study was to assess instructional leadership practice in secondary schools of Assosa Zone, Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, Ethiopia. Within this general objective, the first objective of this study was to investigate the extent principals are performing the functions of instructional leadership activities. To testify this, one sample t-test was employed.

Table 1

The Functions of Instructional Leadership Activities Performance As Viewed by Principals

Functions	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Framing school goal	12	19.2500*	4.15878	1.20054	3.540	11	.005	4.25000
Communicating school goal	12	18.5000*	3.84944	1.11124	3.150	11	.009	3.50000
Supervision and evaluation of instruction	12	18.7500*	2.98861	.86274	4.347	11	.001	3.75000
Coordination of the curriculum	12	17.7500*	4.07040	1.17502	2.340	11	.039	2.75000
Monitoring of student progress	12	17.0000*	3.01511	.87039	2.298	11	.042	2.00000
Protection of instructional time	12	17.0833	3.84846	1.11095	1.875	11	.088	2.08333
Maintaining high visibility	12	17.2500	3.64629	1.05259	2.138	11	.056	2.25000
Providing incentive for teachers	12	13.4167	3.72847	1.07632	-1.471	11	.169	-1.58333
Promote professional development	12	17.0833	4.54189	1.31113	1.589	11	.140	2.08333
Provide incentive for students	12	16.1667	5.30580	1.53165	.762	11	.462	1.16667

As indicated in table 1, the results of one sample t-test as exhibited that principals demonstrated significantly relative higher mean scores in activities of instructional leadership functions such as framing school goals (19.25), communicating school goals (18.5), supervising and evaluating instruction (18.75), coordinating the curriculum (17.75), and monitoring of school progress (17.0) than the mean test value which was 15. This may show that principals were performing the functions of instructional leadership relatively at higher level mainly on framing school goals, communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring of school progress functions significantly ($p < .05$).

On the other hand, the results of one sample t-test demonstrated that principals were found at relatively average mean scores as mean test value in functions of instructional leadership activities such as protecting instructional time (17.08), maintaining high visibility (17.23), promoting professional development (17.08), and providing incentives for students (16.16). This may imply that, these functions were found to be performed at an average level which was not significant ($p > 0.05$). Where as providing incentives for teachers (13.41) performed at lower level.

Similarly, the extent principals are performing the functions of instructional leadership activities in secondary schools as viewed by teachers was examined using one sample t-test.

Table 2

The Functions of Instructional Leadership Activities Performance As Viewed By Teachers

As indicated in table 2, the results of one sample t-test shows teachers' ratings of framing school goals function

Functions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig (.2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Framing school goals	141	16.4681*	3.77123	.31760	4.623	140	.000	1.46809
Communicating school goals	141	15.0567	3.79619	.31970	.177	140	.859	.05674
Supervision and evaluation of instruction	141	14.7305	3.31852	.27947	-.964	140	.337	-.26950
Coordination of the curriculum	141	14.1702*	4.22739	.35601	-2.331	140	.021	-.82979
Monitoring of students progress	141	14.7730	4.55501	.38360	-.592	140	.555	-.22695
Protection of instructional time	141	14.8369	3.94357	.33211	-.491	140	.624	-.16312
Maintaining high visibility	141	15.0496	3.55232	.29916	.166	140	.868	.04965
Providing incentive for teachers	141	11.7943*	4.30368	.36244	-8.845	140	.000	-3.20567
Promote professional development	141	14.6525	4.09352	.34474	-1.008	140	.315	-.34752
Provide incentive for learning	141	12.9858*	4.28450	.36082	-5.582	140	.000	-2.01418

mean score(16.46) was significantly higher than the mean test value (15). This may indicates that teachers are witnessing that principals were performing framing school goals function better than all instructional leadership functions they are supposed to do. On the contrary, teachers' ratings of coordinating of the curriculum (14.77), providing incentives for teachers (11.79) and providing incentives for students (12.98) mean score were significantly lower than the mean test value (15). This may indicates that teachers are witnessing that principals were performing coordinating the curriculum, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for students of instructional leadership functions significantly at lower level among all instructional leadership activities they are supposed to do(P<.05). On the other hand, teachers' mean scores of instructional leadership functions such as communicating school goals (15.05), supervising and evaluating instruction (14.73), monitoring school progress (14.77), protecting instructional time (14.83), maintaining high visibility (15.04), and promoting professional development (14.65), are similar to that of the mean test value (15).

This might entail that teachers' observation of principals in the aforementioned functions of instructional leadership activities found nearly average or normal level. Therefore, the above results from both teachers and principals showed that principals' performance in Framing school goals and communicating school goal is better and it is above average. Whereas, principals performance in coordinating curriculum, providing incentive for

students and providing incentive for students' is significantly low. Communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation, coordination of the curriculum, and monitoring progress seems inadequate. Principals' performance in communicating school goal, supervision and evaluation of curriculum, monitoring school progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, and promoting professional development is at average level.

The second purpose of this study was to investigate the dimension of instructional leadership given more priority in practice by principals of secondary schools in Assosa Zone. To testify this t-test using weighted mean was employed per the views of principal and teachers.

Table 3

Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Practiced by Principals as Viewed by Principals

As indicated in table 3, the mean and weighted mean for each dimension was calculated. The results of one

Dimensions	N	Mean	Weighted Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Defines the Mission	12	37.75	3.78*	7.387	2.13245	3.634	11	.004	7.750
Manages Instructional Program	12	53.50	3.57*	9.357	2.70101	3.634	11	.004	7.750
Promotes School Climate	12	81.00	3.24	14.973	4.32225	1.388	11	.193	6.000

sample t-test demonstrate that defining the mission (3.78, $p = 0.004$), and managing instructional programs (3.57, $p = 0.004$) were given more priority in a significant manner respectively. Nonetheless, promoting school climate (3.24, $p = 0.193$) is the dimension of instructional leadership which was given least priority by principal in the zone as perceived by principals. Similarly, the dimension of instructional leadership given more priority in practice by principals as viewed by teachers was examined by one sample t-test using weighted mean.

Table 4

Dimension of Instructional Leadership Practiced by Principals as Viewed by Teachers

Dimensions	N	Mean	Weighted mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Define Mission	141	31.5248	3.15*	6.61878	.55740	2.736	140	.007	1.52482
Manage Instructional Program	141	43.6738	2.91	10.71547	.90241	-1.470	140	.144	-1.32624
Promoting School Climate	141	69.3191	2.77	14.14836	1.19151	-4.768	140	.000	-5.68085

As indicated in table 4, the mean and weighted mean value for each dimension was calculated. The results of one sample t-test portray that the dimension of instructional leadership school principals giving more priority found to be defining the mission (3.15, $p=.007$) significantly at a level not far from expected average followed by managing instructional program (2.91, $p=.144$) at nearly an average level but not significant, and promoting school climate (2.77, $p=.000$) significantly at lower level below expected average in Assosa Zone. The results of the scores entail that both principals and teachers were corroborating that instructional leadership dimension principals were relatively giving priority in Assosa Zone was defining the mission followed by managing instructional programs. Whereas, attention towards promoting school climate is significantly low.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

Results from respondents about the current practices of instructional leadership functions: framing school goals and communicating school goal and, protecting instructional time, maintain high visibility, supervision and evaluation curriculum, and promoting professional development were among instructional leadership functions performed by principals at a better and average level respectively. Whereas providing incentive for teachers and students was performed at significantly low level by principals.

Regarding the instructional leadership dimensions, the result indicate secondary school principals were practicing defining school mission at a level not far from expected average, followed by managing instructional program nearly at average level, and promoting school climate at lower level below expected average.

Conclusion

School principals as instructional leaders should accomplish instructional functions within the three major dimensions of instructional leadership; defining mission, managing instructional program, and promoting school climate in integrated manner for the very establishment of the school. In this regard, defining mission and framing school goal and which was not sufficiently communicated were among the dimensions and function of instructional leadership given more priority in practice respectively. Managing instructional program dimension with its functions seems performed at average level. Whereas, promoting school climate with their instructional functions were found overlooked dimension of instructional leadership by principals in the zone. Therefore, one

may conclude that principals were seemed to be insufficient in performing instructional leadership practices by integrating functions in the three dimensions.

Recommendations

Success and failure of the schools depends on how principals perform the dimensions of instructional leadership; defining the mission, managing instructional program, and promoting school climate, and functions within the dimensions as effective as possible. In order to promote the existing practices of the cumulative dimension and functions within the dimension, woreda education office, zone and regional education bureau should empower their subordinates (schools, principals, teachers, and students). This can be realized through designing sustainable and need based continuous professional development programs at woreda or/and zone level with special attention at school based and school focused principals professional development programs. This may enable principals to develop empirical and basic instructional leadership skills to perform instructional role effectively. Besides, community, woreda education office, zone education and capacity office, and regional education bureau should search for an opportunity to acquaint secondary schools with required level and standards of human and material resources to perform instructional practice adequately.

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