

Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Public Secondary Schools of Ethiopia: A Study of Public Secondary Schools in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State (BGRS)

¹Abdimuhsin Hassen Alajib, ²Prof. Gara Latchanna and ³Bimeswara Kannababu D.D

^{1&3}Research Scholar, Andhra University, Department of Education
²Senior Professor, Andhra University, Department of Education

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*Corresponding Author

Email: muhsinhassen2017@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study was initiated to investigate about principals' instructional leadership in public secondary schools of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia. In order to address the objective of the study, a descriptive survey method was employed. The target population of the study were 1481, participants working in 61 public secondary schools of the region. The sample size consisted of 302 teachers and 16 principals working in sixteen public secondary schools. Stratified random sampling was used to select teachers while purposive sampling techniques was used to select principals for the study. The findings indicated that, IL is not highly implemented in the public secondary schools of the studied region. All the selected three core dimensions (defining the school mission, managing instructional program and promoting positive school climate) were moderately effective in the selected public secondary schools in the region. On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the problems.

1. Introduction

A successive body of research reports the relationship between education and development. This implies that, education plays the crucial role in eradicating poverty, ensuring sustainable development and ever lasting peace in a country. Thus, investment in education is central to promote economic prosperity, full employment and social cohesion. Individuals, institutions and nations across the globe increasingly recognize that, high level of knowledge, skills and competence are essential to their future security and success. So, this kind of highly valuable sector needs to be led with strong kind of leadership in order to achieve its objective because leadership is being viewed as pivotal element of an organization (Fullan, 2002).

Among the many leaderships practices in school, instructional leadership is being mentioned as the best leadership because of its importance in bringing school effectiveness and improving students' learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). School principals as instructional leaders play a key role in creating conducive school environment in which instructional leadership can thrive (Poirier, 2009) because of this it is clearly argued that effectiveness of school is mainly due to the leadership abilities of the principals, particularly in the area of instructional leadership (McEwen, 2003). Thus, the result of effective schooling heavily depends on the roles and activities of school principal (Elliot & Capp, 2001).

In its broader sense, instructional leadership is defined as all the actions and strategies employed by principals that are intended to impact the school's core processes with the goal of improving learning outcomes of the students (Bossert et al., 1982). Moreover, Acheson & Smith cited in McEwan (2003) defined instructional leadership as a leadership that directly related to the process of instruction; teachers, learners, and the curriculum. Specifically, Hallinger and Murphy, (1985)

conceptualized principals' instructional leadership is in terms of three dimensions: defining school mission, managing the instructional program and promoting positive school learning climate.

Literatures came up with divergent of responsibilities to be performed by school leaders. For example, research by Price water house Coopers (2007) identified a number of key roles and responsibilities of school leaders. These include strategic direction and ethos; teaching and learning; developing and managing people; networking and collaboration; operations and accountability. Moreover, Reitzug (1994) mentioned that, the roles of the school principals are providing staff development, encouraging risk taking and requiring justification of practices. For this, Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) asserted that principals should devote considerable time to coordinate and manage instruction; they should be highly visible in the school; and stay close to the instructional process. It is also stated that three-fourth of principals' time shall be allocated for instructional matters (Tompkins and Trum as cited in Temesgen, 1998).

However, other than reporting the extent and nature of principals' effects, literatures on instructional leadership in many countries have clearly reflected the existing gap between its reality and academic writings. Academic writings in many developing countries including Ethiopia indicated that though instructional leadership is a crucial element in the realization of effective schools, it is not fully practiced (Tedla, 2012; Kemal, 2015; Vilakazi, 2016 and Mestry 2017). In Tedla, (2012) study it is reported that, among the many tasks that principals perform only one-tenth are devoted to providing instructional leadership.

In Ethiopia, the decentralization reforms which were started recently have transferred important responsibilities to the District level most specifically to schools. However,

according to Ethiopian MOE (2006) the appointment of secondary school leaders in Ethiopia is still based on experience and there is lack of qualified school leaders and it was found that it is less than satisfactory in performing technical management; building school culture and attractive school compound; instituting participatory decision making and school management for teachers and students; creating orderly school environment by clarifying duties and responsibilities; and being skillful in human relations; communicating with different stakeholders. In general, Ethiopian school principals are not trained well in professional disciplines that could make them effective and efficient in performing instructional leadership activities as expected of them (UNESCO, 2013).

To correct the above problems, many major were taken by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. Among the actions taken were the successive implementation of education sector development programs (ESDP-I, ESDP-II, ESDP-III, ESDP-IV and ESDP-V). It is clearly mentioned under Education Sector Development Program [ESDP IV] that, more comprehensive capacity development programs were developed, aiming at improving the function of offices and schools. In strengthening teachers and leaders, development of school staff will focus on two groups: practicing and prospective school leaders and practicing and prospective teachers (MOE, 2010) a special Leadership and Management Program (LAMP) were initiated to build capacity of school principals and supervisors in planning and management. Even though these all actions are in place, there is still a serious challenge in the practice of instructional leadership in most Ethiopian public secondary schools in general and in all most all Benishangul-Gumuz regional State public secondary schools in particular.

Therefore, from the above statements, it is possible to summarize that Ethiopia as a country is still in need of strong research that would come up with possible recommendations to help policy makers and experts in designing policies targeted at solving the problem of leadership so as to balance the roles played by principals in the school environment. However, there seems no strong research specifically in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional state that policy makers can rely on to make policy recommendations to the concerned body to correct the situation on ground. So, this study aims to examine the principals' instructional leadership practice in secondary schools of BGRS, Ethiopia. Based on justifications above, the following research questions and hypothesis were formulated to be addressed with this study.

To what extent do school principals perform instructional leadership activities in public secondary school of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state?

Do differences exist between principals' and teachers' perception toward instructional leadership practices in public secondary schools of BGRS?

2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine principals' instructional leadership practices in public secondary schools of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia. The specific objectives are:-

- To describe the extent to which principals' practice instructional leadership elements in public secondary schools of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state.

- To examine if difference exists between teachers' and principals' perception toward the practice of overall instructional leadership and its dimensions.

3. Hypotheses

H0: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers' and principals' perception toward the practice the practice of instructional leadership in public secondary schools of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state

H1: There is statistically significant difference between teachers' and principals' perception toward the practice the practice of instructional leadership in public secondary schools of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state

4. Research Methods

Research Design

Research design is the foundation for undertaking the study that increases control over factors that could mislead the finding of the study. It helps the researcher to give effective and efficient responses to the concerns that will arise. This study adopted descriptive survey design because it generally helped to gather data with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions.

Sample size and Sampling Procedures

The investigator selected participants of this study from 16 sample schools from two of three administrative zones located in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. Within these 16 schools, 302 teachers and 16 principals were assumed to participate in the study. The cluster supervisors were considered only for qualitative study. However, from 302 teachers and 16 principals assumed to fill the questionnaire only 291 teachers and 16 principals completed the questionnaires, with a response rate 96.54%. Principals were selected using purposive sampling technique while proportional stratified random sampling procedure was applied to select sample teachers from 16 sampled schools. Those schools with principals who served less than one year in that particular school were excluded from the study because the investigator believes that, those principals under one year service in the school might not have enough work in that specific school to be measured. Similarly, those teachers who have served for less than one year after their employment/transfer to the current school, were excluded from the study because the investigator belief that teacher under one year service in the current school might not have enough information about their current school principal to fill the questionnaire in the required manner.

Instrument

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect data about principal instructional leadership practices. With this in mind, the investigator applied Hallinger and Murphey's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) survey instrument, both teachers' and principals' form, to evaluate the high school principal's instructional leadership practice. All the items on principal instructional leadership instrument were the same in content for both teachers and principals, except wording. The PIMRS is a standardized instrument which consists only of closed-ended questions with fifty items with ten sub-dimensions organized under three core

dimensions that were administered for teachers and principals in order to obtain relevant data regarding the study area. The questions were prepared based on the rating scales consisting of five scales such as 5= almost always, 4= frequently, 3= sometimes, 2= seldom and 1= almost never. The participants were requested to indicate the extent of principals' involvement on a particular item by choosing one of the five point scale.

5. Results

The study was initiated to find out the current nature of the practice of instructional leadership in the public secondary

school of Benishangul-Gumize Regional State, Ethiopia. Instructional leadership was measured by three dimensions. The dimensions are defining the school mission, managing instructional program and promoting positive school climate.

Defining the school mission

This dimension was measured by its two sub-dimensions with ten items. The two dimensions are framing the school goal and communicating the school goal. Table-1 below shows the descriptive statistics result of this dimension;-

Table: 1 the descriptive statics of the practice of defining the school mission

Sub-dimension	Respondents' Current Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frames School Goal	Teacher	284	3.37	.51
	Principal	16	3.90	.40
Communicates School Goal	Teacher	284	3.06	.48
	Principal	16	3.71	.57
Defining School Mission	Teacher	284	3.22	.39
	Principal	16	3.80	.41

Source: Researcher's Survey Result (2020)

As illustrated from teachers view in the Table above, the weighted mean value of the two sub dimensions of the dimension defining the school mission from the teachers view was found to be at an average mean level (M= 3.22 and SD=.39). Moreover the result from principals' view in the table above shows that the weighted mean value of the two sub dimensions of the dimension defining the school mission from the principals' view was found to be at an average mean level (M= 3.80 and SD=.41). To determine if there is significant difference in the perception of teachers and principals toward the practice of defining school mission, independent sample t-Test was conducted and the results presented as follows. The independent sample t-Test result was associated with

statistically significant result, $t(298) = -5.796$, $p = .000$, suggesting that significant differences existed in the perception towards the practice of defining the school mission for teachers and principals. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences in the perception of teachers and principals toward the practice of defining the school mission was rejected.

Managing Instructional Program

This dimension was measured by its three sub-dimensions with fifteen items. The three dimensions are supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring students' progress. Table-2 below shows the descriptive statistics of the result of this dimension;

Table: 2 The descriptive statistics of managing instructional program

	Respondents' Current Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supervises and Evaluates Instruction	Teacher	284	3.33	.44
	Principal	16	3.80	.40
Coordinates Curriculum	Teacher	284	3.00	.46
	Principal	16	3.60	.56
Monitors students' progress	Teacher	284	3.25	.41
	Principal	16	3.77	.46
Managing Instructional Program	Teacher	284	3.20	.26
	Principal	16	3.72	.31

Source: Researcher's Survey Result (2020)

As illustrated from teachers' view in the Table above, the weighted mean value of the three sub dimensions of the dimension managing instructional program from the teachers' perception was found to be at an average mean level (M= 3.20 and SD=.26). Moreover the result from principals' perception in the table above shows that, the weighted mean value of the

three sub-dimensions of the dimension managing instructional program from the principals' perception was found to be at an average mean level (M= 3.72 and SD=.31). To determine if there is significant difference in the perception of teachers and principals towards the practice of managing instructional program, independent sample t-Test was conducted. The

independent sample t-Test result was associated with statistically significant result, $t(298) = -7.678, p = .000$, suggesting that significant differences existed in the perception of teachers and principals towards the practice of the dimension managing instructional program. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences in the perception toward the practice of managing instructional program across teachers and principals was rejected.

Promoting positive school climate

This dimension was measured by its five sub-dimensions with twenty five items. The five dimensions are protecting instructional time, maintain high visibility, promoting professional development, providing incentive for teachers and providing incentive for learning. Table-1 below shows the descriptive statistics result of this dimension:-

Table: descriptive statistics of promoting positive school climate

	Respondents' Current Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Protects Instructional Time	Teacher	284	2.64	.38
	Principal	16	3.34	.55
Maintains High Visibility	Teacher	284	2.78	.64
	Principal	16	3.54	.60
Promotes Professional Development	Teacher	284	3.31	.52
	Principal	16	3.72	.46
Provides Incentive for Teachers	Teacher	284	2.84	.47
	Principal	16	3.30	.62
Provides Incentive for Learning	Teacher	284	3.51	.38
	Principal	16	3.79	.49
Promoting Positive School Climate	Teacher	284	3.02	.26
	Principal	16	3.54	.36

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result (2020)

As illustrated from teachers' view in the Table above, the weighted mean value of the dimension promoting positive school climate from the teachers' perception was found to be at the average mean level ($M = 3.02$ and $SD = .26$). On the other hand, the result from principals' view in the table above shows that the weighted mean value of the dimension promotes positive school climate from the principals' perception was found to be at an average mean level ($M = 3.54$ and $SD = .36$). To determine if there is significant difference in the perception of teachers and principals toward the practice of promoting positive school climate, independent sample t-Test was conducted. The independent sample t-Test result was associated with statistically significant result, $t(298) = -8.098, p = .000$, suggesting that significant differences existed in the perception of teachers and principals toward the practice of promoting positive school climate. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences in the perception of teachers and principals toward the practice of promoting positive school climate was rejected.

6. Discussion of Results

It was found that, principals' engagement on the dimension of defining the school mission in terms of its two sub dimensions such as framing the school goal and communicating the school goal were evaluated moderately by both teachers and principals. Then, the combined mean of defining the school mission in the public secondary school of the studied regional state has been found to be exercised moderately as evaluated by teachers and principals ($M = 3.22$ and $SD = 0.39$) and ($M = 3.80$ and $SD = 0.41$) respectively. Moreover, the result of this study indicated that, principals' engagement on the dimension managing instructional program

as evaluated by its three sub-dimensions was found to be moderately practiced as per teachers and principals' perception. Then, the combined mean of managing instructional program in the public secondary school of the studied regional state has been found to be exercised moderately as evaluated by teachers and principals ($M = 3.20$ and $SD = 0.26$) and ($M = 3.72$ and $SD = 0.31$) respectively. Furthermore, the result indicated that, principals' engagement on promoting positive school climate as being evaluated by its five sub-dimensions was found to be moderate as evaluated by both teachers and principals. Then, the combined mean of promoting positive school climate in the public secondary school of the studied regional state has been found to be exercised moderately as evaluated by teachers and principals ($M = 3.02$ and $SD = 0.26$) and ($M = 3.49$ and $SD = 0.36$) respectively. These findings are consistent with the findings by Kemal (2015) who found a moderate practice of the dimensions defining the school mission, managing instructional program and promoting positive school climate by public secondary school principals.

It was hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers and principals towards the practices of instructional leadership dimensions in the region.

The stated null hypothesis was not supported because significant difference was observed in the perception of teachers and principals towards the practices of the instructional leadership dimensions. The results of analysis of variance showed significant differences in the teachers' and principals' perceptions towards practice of instructional leadership dimensions such as defining the school mission; managing instructional program; promoting positive school

climate in the public secondary schools of the region. The findings of the present study supported previous literature by Millar (2014) who found a significance difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals in the three dimension of instructional leadership such as defining the school mission, managing instructional program and promoting positive school climate.

7. Conclusion

This study was initiated to investigate about principals' instructional leadership practices in public secondary schools of BGRS. The result of this study leads to conclusion that instructional leadership in the public secondary schools of BGRS is not highly visible. All the selected dimensions of instructional leadership have been performed moderately. The dimension defining the school mission as being evaluated by its two sub dimensions was performed only sometimes. Moreover, the dimension managing instructional program as evaluated by teachers and principals with its three sub

dimensions was found to be practiced moderately. Finally, the dimension promoting positive school climate is also practiced to the moderate level as measured by its five sub dimensions was found to be practiced moderately. The comparative analysis of teachers' and principals' perception indicated that, significant different existed between teachers' and principals' perception towards the practices of the overall instructional leadership and its dimension. So, it is recommended that, principals have to prioritize and recognize the importance of instructional leadership and should actively engage in the activities that will improve the performance of instructional leadership in the school environment. Further studies are also recommended.

Declaration of Conflict of interest

The researchers are confident enough to declare that no conflicts of interest connected to this research authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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