



IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: A CASE OF GUTU ABBA LIBAN SECONDARY SCHOOL, YABELLO TOWN

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Abstract: The study mainly investigated improving instructional leadership skills of school principal in Gutu Abba Liban secondary school, Yabello town. The aim of this study is to come up with some important improvement on the instructional leadership skills of school principal in the study area. The discussion and finding is concentrated on the factors that affect the leadership skills of school principals; ways to improve leadership skills; and roles of improved instructional leadership skills to school principals. The research is finalized by conclusion and recommendations which states that leadership skill of principals on study area is affected by cumulative aspects of various issues such as lack of training, commitment, teamwork spirit and cooperation. Hence, the challenges can be solved by awareness creation to those stakeholders.

Index Terms - Improvement, Leadership, Principal, School and Skill

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Dictionary, leadership is the position or function of a leader, a person who guides or directs a group and it is synonymous with the concepts of administration, management, directorship, control, governorship, stewardship, and hegemony. As Harvard College, leadership is the skill of motivating, guiding and empowering a team toward a socially responsible vision. Similarly, Eric Michel (2011) defines leadership as the art of empowering and mobilizing others who want to accomplish a mutually agreed-upon goal while advancing the group's integrity and morale. Leadership exists in the leaders' ability to engage the willingness of the followers to follow based on commonly shared goals and mutual effort to achieve goals.

Instructional leadership is a product of such concern by educators and the public. The concept of instructional leader is a relatively new concept that emerged in the early 1980's and called for a shift of emphasis from principals being managers or administrators to instructional or academic leaders. This shift was largely influenced by research that found effective schools usually had principals who stressed the importance of instruction (Southworth, 2002).

Instructional leadership also made inroads into the discourse of educational leadership with the increasing importance placed on academic standards and the need for schools to be accountable. Traditionally, principals were expected to be managers of school buildings and focus on handling practices like teacher evaluation, budgeting, scheduling and facility maintenance. Teacher and principal roles received increased attention during the 1980s due to a shift in consideration to educational roles. A fundamental assumption of this period was that the principal should become directly involved with the teaching and learning processes. Principals were required to interfere to ensure that teachers focused on the central mission of the school (Hallinger, 2005).

In the school system, people want to ensure that each individual from the principal to get contribution and goals of the school. The attitude of school principals towards teachers and the extent to which the principals demonstrate an understanding of the teacher was still in problems. The basic needs of personnel in institutional staff are motivated to maximum contribution (Lashway, 2002).

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the improving instructional leadership factors, ways to enhance and role of principals on instructional leadership. Peoples are still unable to identify specific causal factors that determine leadership skill success at specific times and spaces. This is because real-life situations are never static, which are changing with many variables or factors interacting at the same time. One of the key problems in school administration is not a lack of teachers' motivation. However, the administrators cannot nurture it. The attitude of school principals towards teachers and the extent to principals demonstrate an understanding of the teachers' problem is to be affected the performance of teachers (Fink and Resnick, 2001).

However, principals' instructional leadership needs full-time responsibilities that must be practiced every hour of every day. Every minute be spent wisely. Of course, doing so is not easy because principals are involved in the complexity of people. Almost all principals understand the leading and responsibility of their involvement in the challenges of others. Managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate and handling, relations with parents and community, dealing with multiple crises may not situations that are inevitable in schools (Fink and Resnick, 2001). The role of principals as instructional leadership is still in the state of transition from administrative emphasis to more instructional, democratic and participatory leadership (Marks and Printy, 2003).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section outline the plan and method that how the study is conducted. This includes population and sample, data and sources of data, theoretical framework, and method of data analysis and interpretation. The details are as follows;

3.1. Population and Sample

The individuals who participated in this study are teachers, students, experts, supervisors, and principals in the Gutu Abba Liban secondary school and education officers in the Borana zone. The reason for which researchers selected these informants was since participants are assumed to have enough knowledge about instructional leadership and the ways to improve leadership skills. Thus, the researchers collected the right and genuine information to conduct systematic action research.

A purposive sampling technique is employed to select 40 respondents out of 670 total populations. These small amounts of samples are selected due to the time and budget constraints of the researchers. Out of the samples, eight informants taken part in focus group discussion, eight participants on participative observation and 24 are interviewees among teachers, students, experts and principals.

3.2. Data and Sources of Data

In this study, the investigators used both primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data are collected from informants using data collection instruments such as observation, interview and focus group discussion. On the other hand, secondary data are gathered from published and unpublished materials such as books, magazines and newspapers.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

Early leadership theories focused on what qualities distinguished between leaders and followers while subsequent theories looked at other variables such as situational factors and skill levels. While many different leadership theories have emerged, the most can be classified as the follow.

Trait theory of leadership assumes that leadership capacity is inherent that means leaders are born but not made. The theories offer identified particular personality or behavioral characteristics that are shared by leaders. According to this theory, leaders are portrayed as heroic, mythic, and destined to raise leadership when needed. Those who possess inherent qualities and traits are better suited to leadership. Some of the identified traits of leaders can be adaptability to situations, alertness to the social environment, ambition and achievement-oriented, assertiveness, cooperation, decisiveness, dependability, desires to influence others, and high activity level (Goslin, 2009: 67).

According to Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), behavioral theory of leadership is based on the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Rooted in behaviorism, this leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders not on the mental qualities or internal states. According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation.

Philips (2006) pointed out that contingency theory of leadership focuses on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style is the best in all situations. Success depends on several variables, including the leadership style; qualities of followers and aspects of the situation. Leaders choose the best course of action based on situational variables, Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making.

According to Matthew (2007), transformational theory of leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. As proponents, the transforming approach creates significant change in the lives of people and organizations. It designs perceptions and values, changes, expectations and aspirations of employees. Transformational leadership theory is not based on a give and take relationship, but on the leaders' personality, traits and ability to make a change through the articulation of an energizing vision and challenging goals.

3.4. Theoretical Model to Improve Instructional Leadership Skills of School Principals

Based on the nature of diversity of educational system, it is too difficult to employ a single leadership model and style in a given school environment. As a result, researchers preferred to employ situational or contingency leadership model to cope up with various curriculum, instruction and teaching-learning situations.

Situational leadership is a leadership theory that merges both directive and supportive dimensions, and each of these dimensions is to be applied correctly in a given situation. Leaders operating under the situational leadership theory have to assess their employees through evaluating their commitment to accomplish a certain task. Situational leadership means that leaders have to change the degree of supportiveness and directness to their employee according to the given situation of subordinates and their level of motivation. This type of Leadership demands that leaders vary their behavior and leadership style according to their subordinate's commitment (Northouse, 2009).

Situational leadership is the mixture task behavior, worker commitment and relation behavior. Studies show that the success of situational leadership style is related to the combination of these three components must happen; it allows openness between leaders and members in addition to ensure an independence and competence in employee's decision. A situational leader tries to discover the characteristics of his/ her follower in order to know which leadership style to use with him/her (Farmer, 2012). Moreover, situational leaders are known for giving appropriate guidance and task support for their subordinates in order to accomplish the desired goals successfully. This type of leader must also handle problems innovatively and quickly in order to overcome them. This is highly correlated with the improvement of employee's productivity (Cnaff and Wright, 2013).

According to Fielder, there's no ideal type of leading, and it would be very effective for the leader to behave according to the need created with every situation. When leaders and members are in good communication, and when harmony exists between team members, the situation is considered promising. Fielder divided leaders into two kinds: Task oriented and relationship oriented (Fielder, 2007).

3.5. Method of Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, the researchers employed the descriptive and narrative methods of data analysis and interpretation. The primary data that are useful for data analysis and interpretation are collected through observation, interview and focus group discussion. The data analysis and interpretation is focused on the following main areas: The factors that affect the leadership skills of school principals in the Gutu Abba Liban secondary school; ways to improve leadership skills of principals in the study area; and roles of improved instructional leadership to school principals in the study area.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Factors that Affect the School Principals' Leadership Skills

According to most informants, one of factors that affect effective implementation of leadership skills of school principal in Gutu Abba Liban secondary school is absence of training. As responded by respondents, one of the primary factors that affected the leadership skills of school principals and leaders is lack of short term and long term training in order to acquire experience, knowledge and skills. Moreover, leadership skill training equips instructional leaders to continuously improve their leadership abilities.

In addition to enhancing the skills and knowledge of those who now hold leadership positions, leadership development and training supports in the identification of high-potential individuals who are likely to become leaders. Individuals can learn the abilities necessary to become competent and experienced leaders through leadership training programs, including teaching motivational practices and self-confident communication. While some leadership development programs offer in-service training, others offer short term training so that principals can complete the coursework when it is suitable for instructional leadership.

Almost all participants of focus group discussion replied that lack of commitment and motivation by instructional leaders to perform instructional activities is also factor that can affect instructional leadership skills of principals at Gutu Abba Liban secondary school. Lack of leadership commitment can have serious consequences such as a principal losing trustworthiness, uncertainty about goals, confusion regarding individual responsibilities and decision making process. Without commitment, there is no responsibility, mutual trust, and ability to do a given action. A lack of commitment in a workplace is considered as one of the main reasons why school fails to achieve their goals such as becoming successful in national examination. It is a result of poor implementation of plan in a school and poor leadership that fails to encourage commitment from the school community.

Furthermore, as researchers observed that the other related challenges for leadership skill of principals in the study area may include less commitment of the school committee, low financial power of the school to fulfill all the necessary facilities, poor access of teaching and learning materials, weak relationship between teachers and school committee and low access of laboratory equipment, chemicals and other facilities. This related to creating conducive teaching-learning environment for teachers and students. So, principals play a huge role in providing all necessary material and human resources.

Besides, informants indicated that poor communication of the instructional leaders with concerned bodies is a common problem that can have negative consequences and affect leadership skills for individuals, teams and school environments in the study area. Poor communication can manifest in unclear work releases, poorly scheduled time frameworks, uncertain roles and responsibilities, undecided institutional conditions, habits, dreams and outcomes. It also leads to low self-esteem, inadequate

performance of goals, loss of opportunities, and minimization of productivity. Effective communication requires listening to one another, sharing of responsibilities, becoming open-minded to differences, and transparency of actions and decisions.

4.2. The Ways to Improve Instructional Leadership Skills of Principals

According to respondents, one of the most important ways to improve the leadership skills of school principal and leaders is providing moral support and training. After short-term and long-term training, the principal could develop the capacity to lead the school and educational performance easily and effectively. This is because training is means to improve skill and knowledge of any professional in an educational setting.

Furthermore, participants of focus group discussion indicated that principals have to use various techniques concerning practice of leadership skills in order to up-date practice of leadership skills from time to time. This helps to encourage their leadership abilities to be strengthened over passage of time. In due course of action, the school principals should share responsibility to develop willingness and initiative taking to monitor activities of school. This enables the principals to increase the achievement of school goals and to create positive atmosphere in terms of instructional leadership. In addition, the town education office should provide support and guidance to principals in the areas of material and psychological aspects to enhance the courage and responsibility fulfillment.

Based on respondents' point of view, strategic finance and human resource management is a process that schools use to manage their communities. It is a way to ensure that the school human resources are used in a way that supports their goals. It is a bridge to connect human resources and the goals of the organization. Educational organizations, especially schools can more effectively manage workforces' performance and development as well as create conditions that support the school's overall system. Thus, enhancing strategic financial and human resource management is a way to improve instructional leadership skills of principals.

As informants, undertaking formal observations of activities at fixed period of time are part of the performance management process in a teaching-learning environment. The principals may have a developmental and evaluative function of performances of school communities. This provides valuable information and suggestions on how to make formal observations effective and useful is another mechanism to enhance the principals' leadership skills.

Respondents expressed that school principals have to be able to familiarize the teaching environment to school community needs, promote cooperation among teachers and involve in teacher monitoring, evaluation and professional development activities such as induction and continuous professional development programs. It plays a crucial role in improving school achievements by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers as well as the school level. Therefore, conducting monitoring, evaluation and professional development is a basic way to improve leadership skill.

Participants on focus group discussion explained that developing goal, assessment and responsibility of school community is a basic way to ensure that school principals have decision making in setting systematic activities and enhance their capacity to develop school plans and goals based on experience and practices. This is to strengthen encouragements and incentives for teachers to find themselves to helping all students to meet important officially defined criteria and achieve goals of school at some specified period of time in future.

As stated by respondents, having instructional leadership knowledge means having new conversations with other colleagues to learn a new viewpoints or experiences and help others to grow professionally. Hence, sharing good practices shapes a teachers status as a principal in the school and increases the professional significance. As a result, leading beyond the school borders and sharing experience from other schools is important method to improve instructional leadership skills of the study area.

4.3. The Roles of Instructional Leadership Skills to School Principals

Instructional leadership skills are the abilities that most educational professionals should have to encourage actions of staffs and develop confidence. It involves making specific objectives, supervising the curriculum, checking lesson plans, allocating resources, and frequently evaluating teachers' performance. The key aim of this study is to determine the role of school principals' instructional leadership skills on the teachers' teaching activities and managerial functions of principals.

As respondents, in an environment where the principal and teachers discuss teaching and learning, collegiality brings sharing, cooperation and collaboration regarding different issues, ideas and resources. Trust is the foundation of relationships and responsibilities are completed by teachers who are empowered and motivated to organize, develop, and assess their own lessons. Teacher empowerment results in responsibilities and loyalty as they take the initiative taking to discover issues and provide solutions for school problems.

Informants indicated that the first stage in planning is to clearly defining objectives or a vision to strive for achievement of the school. The following stage is to determine what modifications are required, which can be done by speaking with those concerned, reviewing records, and paying attention to what happens in a school. Principals as school administrators have primary objective to collaborate with teachers and establish an interrelated school performances.

Participants of focus group discussion explained that purpose of supervision or instructional observation is to give teachers feedback to think about and progress of teaching-learning process. Successful instructional leaders and principals can supervise and direct instruction in the classroom, but they can also take consideration of the improving it. This work is one of roles that allow principals to become even more involved in the day-to-day activities in a given school.

Finally, informants added that action research is one of the most helpful research and evaluation techniques and skills for inspiring the successfulness of educational creativities. Effective instructional principals and professionals can acquire a fortune of knowledge to help them make well-informed decisions about how to improve learning at their schools through research and program evaluation.

4.4. Action for Intervention

During observation, the researchers identified several instructional leadership skills that need improvement in the near future. These areas include modifying and posting the school's vision, mission, and values; preparing annual plans, lesson plans, and plans for clubs, committees, and CPD; providing separate toilets for male and female students and teachers; fulfilling laboratory chemical and apparatus requirements; and opening a pedagogical center with teaching aids. Additionally, they noted the need for hiring necessary human resources, selecting and organizing important committees, monitoring absenteeism, late arrivals, and student dropouts, evaluating textbooks, periodically supervising teachers, developing makeup and tutorial class plans for students, exercising co-curricular activities, implementing active teaching methods, and preparing handouts, worksheets, and modules for students.

In relation to these areas, appropriate discussions were held with school principals and other administrative bodies, including supervisors, education office experts, unit leaders, heads of co-curricular activities, and department heads. These discussions aimed to collaboratively identify and address the areas needing improvement.

Furthermore, feedback was provided to the school principals in written form, outlining the necessary improvements and specifying a timeframe for implementation. This structured approach ensures that the identified areas are effectively addressed, leading to enhanced instructional leadership and overall school performance.

4.5. Reflection/ Reporting of Changes

Improvements in instructional leadership skills are demonstrated both partially and fully based on the feedback given to school administrators and principals. Fully improved areas include the fulfillment of adequate facilities and stationeries, establishing effective monitoring systems for student and teacher attendance, creating an attractive and conducive school environment, and implementing active teaching methods. These efforts have significantly enhanced the overall educational environment, making it more supportive and engaging for both students and teachers.

However, some aspects of instructional leadership have shown only partial improvement. These include the existence of a clear school vision, mission, and values, as well as the preparation of strategic, annual, lesson, and CPD plans. Additionally, there are areas such as providing feedback on disciplinary cases, recruitment of teachers and administrators, and selection of committees that require further enhancement. Offering tutorial and make-up classes to improve student achievement, along with monitoring and reducing student and teacher absenteeism and dropout rates, also need more focused efforts.

Addressing these partially improved areas will further strengthen the instructional leadership and contribute to a more effective and cohesive educational experience. Continuous efforts to refine and strengthen these aspects will help create a more supportive and dynamic learning environment, ensuring that all members of the school community feel valued and empowered to contribute to their fullest potential.

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