LEADERSHIP ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM: THE CASE SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DILLA CITY, ETHIOPIA

Mengistu Meresa, Dilla University
Menfese Tadesse, Hawassa University
Nigussie Zeray, Dilla University
Getahun Haile, Dilla University

ABSTRACT

The study area has faced with school improvement program (SIP) implementation problems, in limited leadership roles, inadequate participation of stakeholders, lack of experience and skills among school principals, low coordination of school community that might have hindered the program from achieving its objectives in the selected schools in the study town. The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to assess the leadership roles and challenges on the implementation of school improvement program and thereby to identify the major challenges in relation to school principal role that affected proper implementation, and finding solution to ensure the success of SIP in Dilla city administration primary government primary schools. In order to achieve this purpose, mixed design-both quantitative and qualitative approach was employed as research method in the study. The study was conducted in five primary schools from a total of thirteen private and governmental primary schools in the study town administrations. Out of these, five schools was purposively selected from eight governmental primary schools found in Dilla city administration. Teachers and students were selected by simple random sampling technique where as the School principals, supervisors, District education office heads, parent Teachers Association (PTA) and others were selected by purposive sampling techniques. To gather data, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), observation and document reviews were employed. After the data were gathered, analysis was made by organizing in tables and computing using frequencies, percentage, mean value, standard deviation, t-test. The findings of study indicated that school principals role had low practice in participating with stake holders and the extent of teachers', students' and parents' in planning and implementing SIP was low; the mechanism principals used through which monitoring and evaluation practiced to support SIP implementation was not in position to effectively run SIP. Furthermore the level of participation of community members to offer necessary support was low. In addition most of activities across the four domains were implemented at moderate level and students' achievement was also improved at moderate. Hence from the result of the study the overall principals role in the implementation of SIP was moderate. There was Shortage of budget, insufficient school facilities, Inability of school improvement committee to properly play their role, inadequate planning and low involvement of stake holders in the implementation of SIP and inadequate monitoring and evaluation were major factors that negatively affect SIP implementation.

Keywords: Leadership Roles, School Improvement, Primary Schools, Challenges, Dilla Town, Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Education is now recognized to be a key instrument for the overall development of a country. In this respect Lockheed & vekspoor (1991) argued that, education is a corner stone of economic and social development, it improves the productive capacity of and their political economic and scientific institution. In the same argument in the Ethiopian context also education is highly expected to contribute much for over all national development. The education and training policy of 1994 states that, education enables individuals and societies to make all rounded participation in the development process by enabling learner's to acquire knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes. In line with the attention give to education, the importance of leadership is a major concern for it is considered as a vehicle for the change and educational development (Musaazi, 1988) with the increased value put on educational leadership, what comes to vision is the school as an environment of change the productivity of which depending mainly on the ability of its leader to analyze existing conditions and future challenges and implement strategies for attaining the goals (Ubben & Hughes, 1997).

The Ethiopian Government has given more emphasis to School improvement program, the growth and transformation plan of Ethiopia has also forwarded that improving and ensuring the quality and efficiency of education at all levels will be an important priority. Implementing of this program effectively in a school means, there is an effective leadership in the school.

In the Ethiopian case, although an attempt has been made to make the educational management system decentralized and professional, still a lot remains to be done, particularly in the area of training and professionalizing principal ship. As to Musaazi (1988), inadequate leader ship at the school level is the one that adversely affects the progress of education because success in any educational institution depends Successful school improvement involves building leadership capacity for change by creating high levels of involvement and leadership skillfulness. Because of this, the purpose of this study was assessing leadership roles and challenges in the implementation of school improvement program in the primary schools of Dilla city Administration. In this chapter, the researcher attempt to indicate the back ground information about Leadership roles in school success, Education and Training policy of Ethiopian and its implementation, and school improvement program initiatives in relation to theoretical context. Likewise, the researcher tries to state the problem that existed in the education system in Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular. Furthermore the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the limitation of the study, and the scope of the study will equally treat as issue in the study (Hassen, 2014; Khosa, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Theories

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interest and elevates the follower's level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization and the well-being of others. The transformational leaders achieve this through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, influential stimulation and individualized consideration (Richards & Clark, 2006). Transformational leaders form a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that covers followers in to leader and may

convert leaders in to moral agents. As articulated by Bass (1991) four factors characterize the behavior of transformational leaders, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Marzano et al., 2005; Huber, 2010). Hawley & Rollie (2007) stated that transformational leadership is concerned with developing a vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, and providing intellectual stimulation.

Pedagogical (Instructional) Leadership

The term *'instructional leadership'* has been used to focus principals on teaching (Leithword et al., 1999) and other organizational variables like school culture, exchange between leader and group members, leader provides resources and rewards in exchange for motivation, productivity, effective goal, or task accomplishments (Mortimore, 1993). The most frequently used conceptualization of instructional leadership was developed by (Hallinger, 2002). His model consists of three dimensions which are further delineated into several specific leadership functions: defining the school mission includes framing and communicating the school goals; managing the instructional programme includes supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress; and   promoting a positive school-learning climate includes protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2000; Anderson, 1992; Gill, 2006).

Moral Leadership

Morality in leadership matters a lot. The moment you accept a leadership position, you have to be prepared to be in public gaze. Your conduct needs to be impeccable. What you say and do needs to be measured. As a leader, you are accountable to the employees and to the society at large. Every word or action of a leader is watched by countless followers. The implication and impact of anything that a leader says and do can range from small to immense. Leadership, therefore, comes with responsibilities to take care of and being extra cautious.

Leadership Challenge in Improving Learning in the School

Leadership matters and is changing (Leithwood et al., 2006; NCSL, 2007). School leadership needs to be smart; it needs to be evidence-based and shared. Successful school leadership is about building leadership capacity. School leadership today is more data-and evidence-based than ever before. Australian evidence demonstrates that leadership that makes a difference is both position-based and distributive (Day & Sammons, 2013; FDRE, 1994).

Successful school leadership is by definition, the prime vehicle for linking all three elements. School leadership needs to be smart; it needs to be evidence-based and shared. Successful school leadership is about building leadership capacity (NCSL, 2007).

Leadership Role on School Improvement in Developing Countries

Stephen Anderson & Karen Mundy (2014), stated that, the experience of the AKDAN and others, it synthesizes evidence, experiences, and lessons learned in the broad field of pre-preparatory, primary and secondary school education and improvement in eight areas: overall approaches to school improvement, student learning, teacher development, school management, parent community involvement, early child hood education, gender in education, and monitoring

and evaluation. The literature on school leadership and quality in developing countries emphasizes the principal's role and skills in addressing basic resource challenges such as, quality of school facilities, teaching and learning materials, funding and in the enactment of basic management tasks (Fullan, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Local Studies

The role of school principals is central in the success or failure of the school system at school level, and it plays an important role in school improvement programmes in the areas of managing resources, support staff and teachers for improving student achievement (Mpoksa & Ndaruhutse, 2008). School leaders, together with teachers, have the most influence in the learning of students (UNESCO, 2013, Chendan, 1987).

A study conducted by Yalew et al. (2010) cited in Bedilu (2014), the cause of low academic achievement in grade 8th regional examination, including school leadership issues and introduction of recent innovation in school such as school improvement program. In his study stated that teachers' success depends on the quality and effectiveness of the school leadership. The result of the study indicated that the direct participation of the principals in the teaching and learning is immense (Beatriz et al., 2008; Deighton, 1971; Koontz et al., 1998).

MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Location of the Study Area

The research was conducted in Ethiopia, Dilla town administration. Geologically, Ethiopia is located between the Equator and Tropic of Cancer and at the North Eastern part of the African continent or what is known as the *"Horn of Africa"* Astronomically, Ethiopia is located between 6^020'- 6^032' N latitude and 38^014'- 38^024'E longitude (EMA, 1987). Dilla town administration (the study area) is found at about 360 kms south of the capital Addiss Ababa.

Design and Research Approach of the Study

Mixed-methods approaches were used in this study, combining both qualitative and quantitative components. Since qualitative method was appropriate to study, the selected issue in depth and to assess attitudes, behaviors, and opinions of the respondents, on the other hand quantitative method helps the researcher to study selected issue in breath. The main objective of this study was to assess leadership roles and challenges in the implementation of school improvement program in primary schools of Dilla city administration Gedeo zone, SNNPR. To achieve this objective a descriptive survey research design was employed. The rationale behind the selection of this design was description, interpretation, and clarification what in the present-often done with surveys, for qualitative research design, attempted to understand peoples' perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation. Questionnaires were distributed for selected primary school teachers and students. School principals, Woreda education office head and Dilla city administration were interviewed. Steering committee, Cluster supervisors, PTA leaders and KETB heads were also participated through focus group discussion (Ahmed, 2011, Bush & Jackson, 2012; Frew, 2010).

Sample size Determination

The study was conducted in government full cycle primary schools in Dilla city administration. According to the annual report of this city administration report (2015), there is a total of 13 full cycle primary schools, from these 5 government full cycle primary schools were selected by using purposive sampling technique. This was because, among 13 primary schools, 8 schools were private schools and only 5 schools were public schools. The researcher was used those 5 public primary schools for the study in the Table 1.

To determining the sample size, the researcher used Kothari (2004) formula.

Where N= Population size

$\quad$ n= sample size

$\quad$ z= confidence 93%

$\quad$ p= estimated characteristics 0.5

$\quad$ q= 1-p

$\quad$ d = level of statistical significance sets (margin of error 0.07)

In this case, $\quad n = z^2pq/d^2$

$\quad n = 1.81^2 \times 0.5 \times (1\text{-}0.5)/ 0.07^2$

$\quad n = 3.28 \times 0.5 \times 0.5/0.0049$

$\quad n = 0.82/0.0049$

$\quad n = 167$

So that, the total sample size of the research for questionnaire distribution was 167.

Table 1
FREQUENCY OF SAMPLE RESPONDENTS

No	Sample unit	No. of Population(N)	Sample Size(n)	Data collection tool	Sampling technique
1	Steering committee	7	5	FGD	Purposive
2	Educational leaders	11	5	Interview	Purposive
3	Teachers Association	4	2	FGD	Purposive
4	Parent teachers Association	20	5	FGD	Purposive
5	Teachers	214	20	Questionnaire	Purposive
6	Students	1,844	167	Questionnaire	Systematic Random sampling
7	Kebele education training board	15	5	FGD	Purposive
	Total	2115	167		

Source: field survey 2019.

Data Gathering Instruments

The data gathering instruments were questionnaire, Interview, Focus Group Discussion and observation. A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher in English language and it was translated in to Amharic language for the student respondents for more understandable. The

interview was a useful tool because it was an active process which directly involved the interviewer and interviewee. The focus group discussion was conducted with the steering committee, cluster supervisors, educational office experts, PTA and KETB in two groups to collect information about leadership practices and challenges of school improvement program.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed by using figures, Tables and descriptive statements. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. It was also analyzed and processed through both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data were fed in to a computer and analyzed using SPSS version 20 statistics software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2
TEACHERS RESPONSE FOR FOSTERING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Items	Very low extent		Low extent		Moderate		High extent		Very high extent		Total		Mean	St. Deviation	P-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%			
V2.1.1	5	25	7	35	3	15	1	5	4	20	20	100	2.60	1.465	0.000
V2.1.2	9	45	2	10	4	20	3	15	2	10	20	100	2.35	1.461	0.000
V2.1.3	7	35	2	10	5	25	3	15	3	15	20	100	2.65	1.496	0.000
V2.1.4	1	5	8	40	1	5	8	40	2	10	20	100	3.10	1.210	0.000
V2.1.5	12	60	4	20	1	5	2	10	1	5	20	100	1.80	1.240	0.000

Source: questionnaire survey 2019

As it can be seen in above Table 2; item v2.1.1; from the total sample of teachers 25% of them have very low extent, 35% of them have low extent, 15% of them have moderate extent, 5% of them have high extent and 20% of them have very high extent beliefs that their school principals strive to build trust among the staff. Similarly the mean shows that 2.6; which have believed on their school principals that he strive with low extent to build trust among the staff. And also the p-value of 0.000 clearly shows that the respondents had significant idea difference on this variable. As it can be seen in Table 2; item v2.1.2 ; From the total sample of teachers 45% of them have very low extent, 10% of them have low extent, 20% of them have moderate extent, 15% of them have high extent and 10% of them have very high extent of believes that their school leader foster positive working relationships between staff. Similarly the mean were 2.35 which means teachers had low extent of believes on their school principals that in fostering positive working relationships between staff. Consequently the p-value of 0.000 shows that respondents had not significance idea difference among respondents (Harris, 2002).

Table 3
TEACHERS RESPONDENTS ON PROVIDING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Items	Very low extent		Low extent		Moderate		High extent		Very high extent		Total		Mean	St. Deviation	P-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%			
V2.3.1	5	25	6	30	3	15	4	20	2	10	20	100	2.60	1.353	0.000
V2.3.2	2	10	7	35	3	15	3	15	5	25	20	100	3.10	1.410	0.000
V2.3.3	3	15	9	45	3	15	2	10	3	15	20	100	2.65	1.309	0.000
V2.3.4	3	15	5	25	4	20	5	25	3	15	20	100	3.00	1.338	0.000

V2.3.5	6	30	5	25	6	30	2	10	1	5	20	100	2.35	1.182	0.000
V2.3.6	8	40	5	25	3	15	3	15	1	5	20	100	2.20	1.281	0.000
V2.3.7	4	20	5	25	6	30	3	15	2	10	20	100	2.70	1.261	0.000
V2.3.8	6	30	7	35	2	10	3	15	2	10	20	100	2.40	1.353	0.000
V2.3.9	10	50	3	15	3	15	3	15	1	5	20	100	2.10	1.334	0.000
V2.3.10	6	30	6	30	3	15	3	15	2	10	20	100	2.45	1.356	0.000

Source: questionnaire survey 2019

As it can be seen in Table 3, item v2.3.1; from the total sample of teachers 25% of them have very low extent, 30% of them have low extent, 15% of them have moderate extent, 20% of them have high extent and 10% of them have very high extent beliefs that their school principals Visit the classroom to ensure classroom instructional align with the School goals. As the mean in the above Table 4, shows that 3.10; which have high extent of believes on their school principals that he has high extent of evaluating teachers to improve instructional practices. And also the p-value of 0.000 clearly shows that the respondents had no statistical significant idea difference on this variable of item.

Table 4
TEACHERS RESPONSE ON MANAGING SCHOOL OPERATIONS AND RESOURCES

Items	Very low extent		Low extent		Moderate		High extent		Very high extent		Total		Mean	St. Deviation	P-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%			
V2.5.1	7	35	7	35	3	15	2	10	1	5	20	100	2.15	1.182	0.000
V2.5.2	7	35	5	25	2	10	4	20	2	10	20	100	2.45	1.432	0.000
V2.5.3	2	10	9	45	4	20	2	10	3	15	20	100	2.75	1.251	0.000
V2.5.4	7	35	6	30	3	15	3	15	1	5	20	100	2.25	1.251	0.000
V2.5.5	5	25	9	45	1	5	2	10	3	15	20	100	2.45	1.395	0.000

Source: questionnaire survey 2019

As it can be seen in Table 4, item v2.5.1; from the total sample of teachers 35% of them have very low extent, 35% of them have low extent, 15% of them have moderate extent, 10% of them have high extent and 5% of them have very high extent beliefs that their school principals Effectively plan, organizes and manages human, physical and financial resources of the school. As it can be seen in Table 4, item v2.5.2; from the total sample of teachers 35% of them have very low extent, 25% of them have low extent, 10% of them have moderate extent, 20% of them have high extent and 10% of them have very high extent beliefs that their school principals Ensure that school operations align with legal frameworks. As the mean in the above Table 4 shows that 2.45 which have believes on their school principals that he had low extent Ensure that school operations align with legal frameworks. Therefore, the p-value of 0.000 in Table 5 clearly shows that the respondents had no statistical significant idea difference on this variable of item.

Table 5
TEACHERS RESPONSE ON LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total		Mean	St. Deviation	P-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%			
V3.1	2	10	2	10	4	20	5	25	7	35	20	100	3.65	1.348	0.000
V3.2	3	15	4	20	1	5	6	30	6	30	20	100	3.40	1.501	0.000
V3.3	2	10	2	10	3	15	5	25	8	40	20	100	3.75	1.372	0.000

V3.4	2	10	1	5	3	15	9	45	5	25	20	100	3.70	1.218	0.000
V3.5	1	5	3	15	2	10	5	25	9	45	20	100	3.90	1.294	0.000
V3.6	1	5	2	10	2	10	8	40	7	35	20	100	3.90	1.165	0.000
V3.7	2	10	0	0	3	15	2	10	13	65	20	100	4.20	1.322	0.000
V3.8	1	5	2	10	2	10	6	30	9	45	20	100	4.00	1.214	0.000

Source: questionnaire survey 2019

As it can be seen in Table 5, item v3.1; from the total sample of teachers 10% of them strongly Disagree, 10% of them Disagree, 20% of them Undecided, 25% of them Agree and 35% of them Strongly Agree that their school principals had lack of understanding and interrelates the school context, organization and leadership of the school. As the mean in the above Table 6 shows that 3.65 which means teachers agree on their school principals that he had lack of understanding and interrelates the school context, organization and leadership of the school. And also the p-value of 0.000 clearly shows that the respondents had no statistical significant idea difference on this variable of item.

Table 6 STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIP															
	Very low extent		Low extent		Moderate		High extent		Very high extent		Total				
Items	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	Mean	St. Deviation	P-value
V2.11	55	32.9	54	32.3	28	16.8	20	12	10	6	167	100	2.26	1.207	0.000
V2.12	57	34.1	48	28.7	29	17.4	23	13.8	10	6	167	100	2.29	1.237	0.000
V2.13	84	50.3	61	36.5	10	6	7	4.2	5	3	167	100	1.73	.966	0.000
V2.14	57	34.1	62	37.1	19	11.4	16	9.6	13	7.8	167	100	2.20	1.228	0.000
V2.15	78	46.7	55	32.9	16	9.6	13	7.8	5	3	167	100	1.87	1.065	0.000
V2.16	69	41.3	46	27.5	27	16.2	17	10.2	8	4.8	167	100	2.10	1.188	0.000
V2.17	65	38.9	51	30.5	31	18.6	11	6.6	9	5.4	167	100	2.09	1.150	0.000
V2.18	56	33.5	55	32.9	27	16.2	17	10.2	12	7.2	167	100	2.25	1.225	0.000
V2.19	68	40.7	72	43.1	18	10.8	7	4.2	2	1.2	167	100	1.82	0.873	0.000

Source: questionnaire survey 2019

As shown in the above Table 6, item v2.11; from the total population of students response the extent their school leaders which give awareness of education policy, rules and regulations of the school to the school community responded that 32.9% very low extent,32.3% low extent, 16.8% moderate, 12% High extent and 6% very high extent. Student's response mean shows that 2.26 that school leaders have low extent in giving awareness of education policy, rules and regulation to the school community. The p-value is 0.000 that is the student's response does not have statistical significant idea difference.

Findings

1. The finding of the study indicates that conducting self-evaluation and prioritizing problems to develop strategic plan of SIP was weak in the study schools.
2. The study indicates that the SIP plan was developed by individual school leaders or a few individuals involved in planning process. The involvement of stake holders (teachers, students and parents) in the planning of SIP was also too low.
3. The findings showed that involvement of stake holders in SIP implementation were not at the required level.

4. The findings showed that the allocation of budget for schools to implement SIP is low and insufficient school facilities to carry out SIP implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that successful school improvement is related to school leaders systematically planning, monitoring and evaluation process which enable to increase student's achievement. Hence, the key stake holders (teachers, students and parents) should also be encouraged to have active participation in SIP planning and implementation by continuously aware them. This research recommendation has been formulated on regular basis for primary school leaders to achieve the aim of the research objectives on the role of leadership and challenges on the Implementation of SIP. As discussed on earlier in the literature and based on the conceptual frame work; the central focus of SIP was improving student's achievements. In order to improve academic achievements of students, therefore, the schools leaders should implement school improvement program properly by making awareness creation for stake holders on collaborative planning to develop the accountability and responsibility in all stakeholders, to implement and improve the four domains of SIP, perform continuous monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of SIP and identifying challenges that affect the implementation of SIP.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions the following recommendations are forwarded by the author:

1. The school principals have to give attention to planning, and should initiate commitments in developing strategic plan that entirely involves conducting self-evaluation by participating key stake holder (teachers, students and parents) and deploy by building consensus among stake holders for effective program implementation.
2. To improve the problems related to planning on the implementation, all stake holders should be involved in planning process. To do so primary school leaders are expected to mobilize the stake holders to actively participate in planning process.
3. In order to improve student's achievements in teaching learning process, Practicing and developing the extent, SIP implementation is crucial.
4. School leaders should make the stake holder's participation functional for its better contribution to the success of SIP plan.

On top of this, the government should allocate additional budget to the school grant for successful SIP implementation and moreover, in order to solve their problems of finance and material resource, the schools should design income-generating mechanisms by taking in to account the available school facilities and technical experts to make involvement of all the school stakeholders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

the development, improvement and complete of this manuscript.

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this article/review work entitled as "*Leadership roles and challenges of school improvement program: The case of selected primary schools in Dilla Town, Ethiopia*" is our original work and has not been published by/in any other local or international publishers, and that all sources of materials used for the study have been fully acknowledged, Declared by:

Mengistu Meresa[1]*; Menfese Tadesse[2]; Nigussie Zeray[3].

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