

**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, Ethiopia. In order to address the objectives of the study, a 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 these respondents was analyzed and interpreted using Percentage, one sample t-test, weighted mean and mean ranking. 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 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 poor. On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the challenges the principals' faced 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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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 (Musaazi, 1988). 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). On top of this, principals should be well qualified, competent, and experienced in performing instructional leadership functions; framing and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating of instruction, coordinating of the curriculum, monitoring of student progress, protecting of instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentive for teachers, promoting professional development, and providing incentive for learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Schiefelbein, 1990).

However, in implementing the above instructional activities and in bringing changes in the school systems as effective as possible, school principals may face many challenges; the divergent challenges and needs that evolved from discontinuous environmental changes including globalization introduce new trends of instruction in schools. This in turn will create challenging burden upon the effectiveness of school leaders, teachers, and students.

In this regard, to overcome the bottleneck challenges faced by principals and improve instructional leadership, there might be strategies used by principals. Instructional leaders to improve instructional leadership should do the following: design or establish completely accepted goals, able to keep and use a definitive records of progress of the school, disseminate leadership through the school members, develop sense of responsibility to the group, develop habit and skill of critical and self evaluation, and understand group process and awareness of values and skills in achieving them (Faunce, 1955).

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(post graduate), five year experiences in instructional activities and commitment aspects of teachers to be school principal (MoE, 2000).

In Ethiopia, although an attempt has been made to make the instructional leadership decentralized and professional, still a lot remains to be done in training and professionalizing principal ship. Owing to this fact, principals failed to play their pivotal instructional leadership role (MoE, 2013).

With regard to Assosa Zone, a substantial expansion of secondary education took place under ESDP II & III. Nevertheless, quality of secondary education 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 of major problems of secondary schools principals in instructional leadership.

Therefore, the study attempts to measure instructional leadership practices and challenges 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. Besides, the study identifies challenges affecting principals' instructional leadership practices and strategies used by principals to improve instructional leadership practices.

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 (MoE, 1994).

However, in implementing the instructional leadership to bringing changes in the school systems as effective as possible, school principals may face many challenges; the divergent challenges and needs that evolved from discontinuous environmental changes including globalization introduce new trends of instruction in schools. This in turn, will create challenging burden upon the effectiveness of school leaders, teachers, and students. To strengthen this idea, Morphet (1982) stated that principals in secondary schools face many challenges due to their position; their position is vulnerable to many types of challenges. For example, pressure from their super ordinates to meet the goals of the organization, from the teachers to meet their personal needs, and from the environments both internal and external. Similarly, McEwan (2003) also described five challenges affecting the effectiveness of instructional leadership. These are: lack of skill and training for principals, lack of teachers' cooperation, lack of time to perform instructional activities, lack of support from superintendents, and lack of vision, will or courage from principals toward instructional activities.

Research findings show that majority of school principals in Ethiopia, were trained in subject area, they have not been trained in professional disciplines that make principals in secondary schools face many challenges in performing instructional leadership activities as expected of them. For example, pressure from their super ordinates to meet the goals of the organization on the one hand and from the teachers to meet their personal need on the other (UNESCO, 2006).

Similarly, another local research indicated that most of secondary school principals did not have the required qualification for secondary school principal ship and they did not get educational leadership training which make them adequate in instructional leadership practice (Feseha, 2005). Further, Fekadu (2009), in his study indicated that principals were challenged by internal challenges such as lack of cooperation of teachers, shortage of instructional resources, lack of principals experiences in principal ship, and heavy work load, and external challenges like interference in principals' decision making process by superintendents, and

lack of technical support from the superintendent in performing instructional leadership practices.

Hence, as Assosa zone is one of the zones in Ethiopia is not free from lack of effective and efficient instructional leadership in secondary schools. This is found to be weakness in instructional supervision and implementation capacity of school principals (BGREB, 2013).

Though, from the above notions one may depict that the existing situation could affect the quality and practices of instructional leadership in secondary schools, until now there are not enough studies that can show the status of instructional leadership practices in Assosa zone.

Therefore, this study attempts to make an assessment on practices of instructional leadership in secondary schools of Assosa Zone, Benishangul Gumuz Region 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. What are the major challenges affecting principals in performing instructional leadership?
4. What are the strategies being used by school principals to improve instructional leadership practices?

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to assess the practice of instructional in secondary schools of Assosa zone, Benishangul Gumuz Regional state, Ethiopia. It also, intended to indicate strategies used by principals to improve instructional leadership practice at secondary school level.

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.
3. To identify the challenges affecting principals in performing instructional leadership activities and
4. To find out the strategies being used by school principals to improve instructional leadership practices.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

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 where teachers, learners, and the curriculum (Acheson & Smith in McEwan, 2003). To strengthen this idea sister Catherine Wingert in McEwan (2003) also sighted as: "instructional leadership is the creation of climate where the principal, faculty, students, parents, and school board are able to work together to accomplish the task of education". From the thoughts of scholars, one could deduce that instructional leaders (principals) should have to play instructional role to make the school effective. To do so, the principal should provide or arrange programs for teachers' professional development programs and must be knowledgeable about learning theories, effective instruction, and curriculum with the goal of improving teaching and learning activities to be performed effectively.

Model of instructional leadership

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; Hallinger & Murphy in Miechelle, 2003).

3. Challenges for effective instructional leadership practices

Barriers or challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership might be associated with followers, leader, communication and other situational factors (Tilaye, 2009). Similarly, McEwan (2003) also described five challenges to the effectiveness of instructional leadership. These are: lack of skill and training; lack of teacher cooperation; lack of time; lack of support from superintendents, school board and community; and lack of vision, will or courage. Thus, there will be challenges; associated within the control of instructional leaders environment (Internal challenges) and beyond the control of instructional leaders environments (external challenges) to challenge the effectiveness of instructional leadership. Therefore, every challenge to the effectiveness of instructional leadership could not be beyond internal and external categories

4. Strategies to improve the effectiveness of instructional leadership

There might be different strategies in order to improve the effectiveness of instructional leadership. These are design or establish completely accepted goal; able to keep and use a definitive records of progress; disseminate Leadership throughout the school members; develop sense of responsibility to the group; develop habit and skill of critical and self-

evaluation, and understand group process and awareness of values and skill in achieving them (Faunce, 1955). Details are empowerment, professional development, delegation, effective communication, evaluation based management, and motivation.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To study the existing practices of instructional leadership in secondary schools of sampled woredas of Assosa zone, descriptive survey method was employed. This method is selected because it enables the researcher to describe what sort of relationship that would exist among different variables related to the topic under the study and it is also convenient to gather data from a relatively large scale of respondents at a particular time to arrive at better generalization of the existing situation. Strengthens this assumption Seyoum and Ayalew (1989) expressed that: “the descriptive survey method of research is more appropriate to gather several kinds of data of broad size”. 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. In addition, the challenges of instructional leadership and strategies to improve instructional leadership also addressed per the instruments developed by researcher per review of related literature for teachers and principals respectively.

Furthermore, though the instructional management rating scale regarding instructional leadership practice was tested by the author, pilot instrument composed of 63 items including

questions regarding challenges and strategies was asked to 25 teachers and 3 principals to indicate their observation in five likert scale and open ended items.

Besides to the questionnaire, a structured open ended 7 items was used for interview guide to collect data from woreda experts. Interview was selected to give an opportunity to the researcher and respondents' in securing wide range of information to support data collected through questionnaire. 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, and mean ranking to show the major challenges affecting principals instructional leadership in secondary schools of the zone.

6. 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 and the results presented in table 1 and 2 blow:-

TABLE 1 - The Functions of Instructional Leadership Activities Performed By Principals 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 can be seen the principals mean value in Table 1, the results of one sample t-test 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 and the results are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2 - The Functions of Instructional leadership Activities Performed By Principals As Viewed By Teachers

| 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 |

As indicated in Table 2, the results of one sample t-test shows teachers' ratings of framing school goals function 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, teachers, and both in table 3 and 4 respectively below

TABLE 3- Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Practiced by Principals as Viewed by Principals

| 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 |

As indicated in Table 3, the mean and weighted mean for each dimension was calculated. The results of one 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 and the result is presented as follows.

TABLE 4 - Dimension of Instructional Leadership Practiced by Secondary School 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.

TABLE 5 - Challenges Affecting Principals Instructional Leadership Practice as Viewed by Principals

| Challenges | N | Mean | Ranks |
|--|----|--------|-------|
| Heavy work load on instructional leaders | 12 | 4.3433 | 1 |
| Lack of instructional materials | 12 | 4.3333 | 2 |
| Poor communication with superintendents | 12 | 4.1000 | 3 |
| Insufficient utilization of available instructional materials | 12 | 4.0000 | 4 |
| Shortage of time to perform instructional activities | 12 | 3.8333 | 5 |
| Unsatisfactory communication with staffs within the school | 12 | 3.7500 | 6 |
| Lack of in-service training in the area of instruction | 12 | 3.6767 | 7 |
| Inconsistent operation of instructional activities | 12 | 3.6667 | 8 |
| Interference by superintendents in decision making process | 12 | 3.5833 | 9 |
| Lack of courage and commitment by instructional leader to perform instructional activities | 12 | 3.4167 | 10 |
| Lack of cooperation of teachers | 12 | 3.2500 | 11 |

As indicated in Table 5 the results of principals mean ranking of major challenges that affect principals instructional leadership practices exhibited that heavy work load (4.3433), lack of instructional material (4.3333), poor communication with superintendent (4.1000), insufficient utilization of available instructional materials (4.0000) ,and shortage of time to perform instructional activities (3.8333) were major challenges identified by principals that affect principals roles of instructional leadership activities. On the other hand, lack of cooperation of teachers (3.2500), lack of courage and commitment to perform instructional activities (3.4167), and interference by superintendent in decision making processes (3.5833) were the least challenges identified by principals in their instructional leadership practices. Similarly, teachers were asked to provide their testimony of major challenges that affect principals' instructional leadership practices.

TABLE 6 - Challenges that Affect Principals Instructional Leadership Practice as Viewed by Teachers

| Challenges | N | Mean | Ranks |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Lack of instructional materials | 141 | 3.8298 | 1 |
| Insufficient utilization of available instructional materials | 141 | 3.8227 | 2 |
| Poor communication with superintendent | 141 | 3.5603 | 3 |
| Lack of in-service training in the area of instruction | 141 | 3.5319 | 4 |
| Lack of courage and commitment by instructional leader to perform instructional activities | 141 | 3.4468 | 5 |
| Interference by superintendents in decision making process | 141 | 3.3688 | 6 |
| Inconsistence operation of instructional activities | 141 | 3.2908 | 7 |
| lack of cooperation of teachers | 141 | 3.1986 | 8 |
| Unsatisfactory communication with staffs within the school | 141 | 3.0142 | 9 |
| Heavy work load on instructional leaders | 141 | 2.7730 | 10 |
| Shortage of time to perform instructional activities | 141 | 2.5957 | 11 |

As indicated in Table 6 the results of mean raking of major challenges that affect principals instructional leadership practice as perceived by teachers indicated that lack of instructional materials (3.8298), insufficient utilization of available instructional materials (3.8227), poor communication with superintendents (3.5603), lack of in-service training (3.5319), and lack of courage and commitment (3.4468) were major challenges identified by teachers that affect principals instructional leadership practice.

On the other hand, shortage of time to perform instructional activities (2.5957), heavy work load on instructional leaders (2.7730), and unsatisfactory communication with staffs within the school (3.0142) were the least challenges identified by teachers which affect principals' instructional leadership practices. The result suggest that both principals and teachers are corroborating that lack of instructional materials, insufficient utilization of available instructional materials , and poor communication with superintendents were major challenges affecting principals instructional leadership practices.

In addition, teachers and principals were asked to list if there are any more challenges related to instructional leadership that affect principals' instructional leadership practices in the secondary schools through open- ended questions. Respondents listed the challenges as lack of timely open discussion between teachers and principal, hesitation between teachers and principal, lack of required experience and qualification of principals for leadership position, high teachers turnover, mist behaviour of students, lack of separation of responsibilities

between principals and teachers, low community participation in instructional activities, schools structural problems: the schools consists three and four cycles in one compound, intervention of local political leaders in the instructional leadership activities, lack of experience sharing among schools, schools were not empowered to make decisions like hiring and firing of staffs, poor immediate feedback from superintendents, large class size, shifting of teachers from one school to other school by woreda without permission of schools, and almost all sampled schools were not equipped with plasma television.

Furthermore, woreda experts were asked about challenges affecting instructional leadership practices in secondary schools of the woreda, and responded that challenges affecting secondary school principals were different teachers' needs, high conflict among teachers, shortage of school budget, lack of principals' commitment on instructional activities, problem of principals time allocation on instructional and administrative activities, conflict between teachers and principal, lack of principals capacity and experience, heavy work load on principals, lack of teachers cooperation, large class size, interference of woreda, zone and regional offices in transferring teachers from school to school, high teachers turnover, shortage of instructional materials. The above results may show that the major challenges affecting instructional leadership practice in secondary schools of the zone were lack of instructional materials, principals poor communication with superintendents and teachers, insufficient utilization of available instructional materials, lack of training for principals, lack of required qualification and experience of principals for principal ship, school structural problem, lack of principals commitment and courage on instructional activities, interference of superintendents in principals decision especially in transferring teachers from schools, large class size, and principals heavy work load.

The last purpose of the study was to indentify the strategies used by secondary school principals to improve instructional leadership practices. To do this, open-ended question and interview guide were used. The result portrayed that principals used the strategies like discussion with teachers, students, and parents on instructional concerns, inviting concerned bodies to deal in the school problems and opportunities, using check list to see the progress of the students on the subject matter, teaching students using shift to solve class size problem, assigning diploma teachers at secondary school level until degree teachers were assigned by

woreda, and counselling and guiding students to improve instructional leadership practice in secondary schools of Assosa zone.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

1. 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 lower level by principals.
2. Regarding the instructional leadership dimensions, the result indicates 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.
3. Per the result of mean ranking of challenges hindering principals' instructional leadership practices, lack of instructional materials, poor communication with superintendents and subordinates, lack and insufficient utilization of available instructional materials, lack of training in instructional areas, and lack of courage and commitment from both teachers and principals were found challenges faced by principals to accomplish instructional leadership roles. Moreover, large class size, hesitations between teachers and principal, lack of experiences by principals for principalship, high teachers turn over, school structure problem, poor immediate feedback from superintendents, and interference by superintendents in principals decision making were other challenges affecting principals in performing instructional leadership activities.
4. Finally, results from respondents demonstrate that secondary school principals used discussion with teachers, students, and parent, promoting education to public, inviting concerned bodies to deal with the school problems and opportunities, using checklist to see the progress of the students on the subject matter, teaching students using shift,

making students use available instructional materials properly, reinforcing students through different awards and assigning diploma teachers instead of degree until hired by the woreda education office as strategies to improve instructional leadership practices.

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. Promoting school climate with their instructional functions were found overlooked dimension of instructional leadership by principals in the zone. Managing instructional program dimension with its functions seems performed at average level. Therefore, one may conclude that principals were found to be inadequate in performing instructional leadership practices by integrating functions in the three dimensions.

Had it been the practice in place, principals tried to employ strategies: shifting method of teaching, assigning diploma teachers, and preparing checklist to monitor student progress to reduce the impact of the major challenges; interference of superintendents in decision making process, large class size, heavy work load, poor inter and intra school communication, and lack of and insufficient utilization of instructional materials which may not add assort of value toward the improvement of instructional leadership practices in the school. This may show that principals were seemed unable to link the dimensions of instructional leadership and functions for the better expected outcome of the schools in the zone.

Recommendations

1. 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.

2. Regular monitoring and evaluation of instructional activities, and monitoring school progress are among the vital functions of instructional leadership. This may help to improve communication between and among school communities so as to foster the overall progress of school. To this end, principals, woreda education office, zone education and capacity building office, regional education bureau should establish a regular monitoring and evaluation system of the school system to follow and provide feedback for the success of school progress in the zone.

Rewards and incentives are among the strategies to implement organizational goal through shaping individuals and group behaviour. This should be done at a regular frequency based on the level of achievements of shared and communicated goal of school. Thus, woreda education office, zone education and capacity building office, regional education bureau, and secondary school principals should design appropriate motivation system to their immediate subordinates. This may lead to maintain progressive effectiveness of principals in performing instructional activities in courageous and commitment manner. This in turn may contribute to the very success of the school system at large.

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