DIMENSIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE OF PRINCIPAL

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Abstract
There is a vast global literature on the multi-dimensional role of secondary school principals but the role of instructional leadership has received impetus in the recent past. However in developing countries and particularly in Pakistan, there is no or scarce research on the instructional leadership of principals. The current study analyzed instructional leadership role of principal in Government boys’ high schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Effective instructional supervision is considered vital for school effectiveness. The role of principal is characterized by frequent classroom observations; supervision; effective feedback to teachers and students on instructional related issues and involvement of staff in school-based activities. Principal is instrumental in successful curriculum implementation in school. The instructional supervision also takes cognizance of the timely implementation of curriculum, improvement of programme and monitoring of the planned objectives of the school.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, curriculum, classroom observation, supervision, monitoring and effective feedback.

Introduction

Instructional is the core technology of school, which depends largely on teaching strategies for the implementation of the prescribed curriculum. Thus effective teaching-learning process, timely implementation of curriculum and modus operandi of the activities within classroom are some of the elements that are considered in the process of instructional supervision. In order to have this supervision meaningful school leadership ought to have necessary professional knowledge and skills for the performance of this function.
According to Daresh (2002)“effective instructional leader actively promotes more effective practice in the teaching and learning processes in his/her school. The key to instructional leadership is in the principal defining his/her role in terms of recognizing instructional priorities rather than by serving as a school manager. The well-defined instructional leader is the principal who makes instructional and learning excellence the center of his/her actions, communications, and decisions. The effective instructional leader is involved in several facets of the school culture. This individual is involved in the coordination of staff development, receiving input from all stakeholders in planning and implementing staff development programming. The well-defined instructional leader supervises and evaluates all staff members by collaborating with them to set instructional goals and objectives and by meeting with them to check their progress. He/she facilitates instruction by supporting teachers who have innovative ideas and by making instruction a priority in terms of time. An effective instructional leader resolves student problems by assisting teachers with student discipline, enforcing attendance policies in order to increase instructional time, and by interacting with students daily.”

The principal is the pivotal point within the school who affects the quality of individual teacher instruction, enhanced students’ achievement and the degree of efficiency of school functioning. He makes frequent observations of classroom instruction, provides clear communication to staff of expectations relative to the instructional programme, teachers’ involvement in decision making regarding instructional programme, active participation in planning and evaluating the instructional programme and demonstrating high expectations for the effective instructional programme.

**Curriculum Implementation**

The principal is key to successful curriculum implementation in school and there is a number of direct actions, which he takes to ensure success. These include: establishing the change as a priority for the school, communicating what the curriculum implies, providing the community with information related to the need for change, clarifying roles in the change efforts, providing adequate human and physical resources
for the change, scheduling the change process to suit the local condition and providing adequate supervision to make certain that the curriculum is actually being implemented. He plays a vital role in program improvement, which is defined as the realization of valued outcomes by students.

The principal is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade level and ensures that the school academic goals are translated into common curricular objectives and these are covered by teachers within the planned time frame. The curriculum achievements are compared with those targets in specific time. The principal intervenes to take care of those students who partly miss the stipulated courses and necessary adjustment is made so that no one suffers. He visits classrooms to see that instructional time is used for learning and practicing new skills and concepts.

Girvin (2005) documented that instructional leadership role is one that promotes the goals and objectives of school with a view to enhance students’ achievements. There were three broad categories of principal’s activities: the principal as visionary (establishing practices in keeping with broader perspectives and issues), the principal as organizer (working to develop an action plan with related goals and timelines) and the principal as cheerleader (conveying support, through personal visibility and involvement in reviewing student assessments and related achievements).

Programme Improvement

The work behaviour of the principal demonstrates to develop goals for improvement of the current level of academic performance. The academic goals are framed in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them and for this purpose need assessment is done to secure staff input in development of goals. Students’ academic performance data are used when teachers develop classroom objectives. After framing the school goals, the next stage is to communicate these goals to the staff and discusses them in formal setting with teachers when making curricular decisions. The principal also ensures that the school goals are notified.
Classrooms Observations

The major task of the principal is classroom observations, which is one of the most powerful tools to collect information on students’ learning progress, not only with regard to academic achievement but also about their skills, attitudes and social behaviours. The observation also includes: random checking of homework notebooks; interviews of selected students; and identification of behavioural change in them.

According to Goslin (2009) visiting classrooms allowed the principal to recognize opportunities for improving the technical aspects of instruction. His frequent classroom visits enable him to precisely define the focus improving the school’s instructional and assessment practices. As an example, he sets a goal to enhance teachers’ review methods. Throughout the year he expresses the value of the changes and after his coaching of teachers in the new skills, he notices improvement in teachers’ abilities and students’ performance. Further, he reportedly never wavers from the goal until he feels that teachers have successfully embraced the practice.

Monitoring and Supervision

Principal holds meetings with teachers in advance about the process of monitoring creating confidence and positive thinking. He tells the staff that he plans to monitor teachers’ classroom teaching on regular basis and the visits will be planned as well as surprise. The purpose of visits is not inspection but their facilitation to meet the expectations. He enters the class silently, so that the teacher and student may not be disturbed. The teachers are not interrupted during teaching. The principal is present in the class till the end of the period, fixes time with teacher for feedback. The feedback of observations is discussed with the concerned teacher on suitable time. The teacher should listen first by asking him to reflect upon his performance, appreciate positive aspects and encourages him. Different aspects of his professional improvement are discussed with the teacher, who notes suggestions in his dairy for further improvement.

Supervision is one of the dimensions of the role of principal, which is concerned with the improvement of instructional effectiveness. This role is used to stimulate staff
development, to influence teacher behaviour in the classroom and to foster selection, development, use and evaluation of good instructional approaches and materials. An assessment programme, which has instructional improvement as its major focus, will require classroom visits as the basic ingredient. The presence of principal in the classroom is necessary for an adequate formative evaluation of the effectiveness of the school’s instructional programme. He should base his evaluation programme on four factors: the teaching, the purpose, the information he wants, and how the evaluation is to be conducted. The purpose of evaluation includes effective changes in goals and objectives, modifying procedures, determining ways of implementing procedures, improving the performance of individuals, supplying information for modification of assignments, protecting individuals in the schools, rewarding superior performance, fostering career planning and facilitating self-evaluation.

Glickman (2002) placed assessment content and methods firmly at the center of elements that influence students’ learning. He viewed that educational leaders require the tools to improve classroom instruction for improving teaching, observing classrooms, using achievement data, and considering samples of students’ work.

**Evaluation of Instruction**

One of the dimensions of instructional leadership in school is that the principal evaluates instruction by conducting formal observation in classroom on a regular basis and ensures that classroom objectives of teachers are consistent with the stated goals of the school. For this purpose he meets with teachers to ensure that they are working towards the same objectives. Students’ gains are reviewed during instructional supervision and teaching strategies of teachers are subjected to appraisal. He points out and notes specific strengths and weaknesses in teachers’ instructional practices in post-observation conferences as well as in written feedback. He notes students’ time on task and provides feedback to teacher after classroom observation.

According to Glickman’s (1990) model of clinical supervision, which he presented as a cyclical sequence of events is implemented at least twice a year. This
sequence includes (a) teacher pre-conferencing to determine the method, focus, and duration of the observation; (b) classroom observation – methods include categorical frequencies, physical indicators, performance indicators, visual diagramming, space utilization, detached open-ended narratives, participant observation, focused questionnaire and educational criticism; (c) interpretation of observation, either interpersonal or directive analysis/interpretation; (d) post- conferencing to discuss results and remedial action; and (e) critiquing.

McTighe & O’Connor (2005) highlighted seven classroom assessment practices to enhance teaching and learning (namely, using summative assessments to frame performance goals, showing criteria and models to students in advance, conducting diagnostic testing before teaching, offering appropriate choices to students in demonstrating their learning, providing feedback early and often, encouraging student self-assessment and goal-setting, and allowing new evidence of achievement to replace old evidence).

Methodology of the Study

The study attempted to identify different dimensions and perspectives of instructional supervision of secondary school principals in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It chose a descriptive methodology based on scientific method of research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied for analysis of data. The study was delimited to boys’ high schools in public sector both in urban and rural areas of Peshawar district. Girls’ schools as well as private schools were not included in the scope of the study.

The population of the study included principals, teachers and purposively selected parents of all 70 boys’ high schools in the public sector in Peshawar district. The sample of the study included twenty five (35.71%) schools with distribution of fourteen (20%) in urban and eleven (15.71%) in rural areas of Peshawar district. Of those 25 (35.71%) principals and 25 (35.71%) teachers were randomly selected in the sampled schools while 25 parents were purposively selected in order to elicit from them useful data.
Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires for collecting data from principals, teachers and parents regarding identification of the different dimensions of instructional leadership role of principal. Three types of questionnaires were framed for each category of subjects (teachers, parents and principals) using Likert Scale with five options for each question. They were handed over to participants and collected in person.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data were obtained through closed-ended questionnaires personally handed over to the principals, teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of District Peshawar. The secondary data were obtained from office records, documents and review of relevant literature both in local and global perspectives.

The analysis of data was given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The quantitative data were supported by statistical measures and converted into percentages in tabular form duly supported by graphic presentation.

Table showing Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents

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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
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The qualitative data were placed under different patterns and categories, discussed and interpreted for drawing inferences indicating that the principals must perform the role of instructional leadership. There was evident correlation in responses of all the three categories of respondents. This was further illustrated with the help of the following figure.

**Figure Indicating Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents**

![Figure Indicating Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents](image)

**Outcome of the Study**

The participants in the study confirmed with overwhelming majority that the most important role of the principals is instructional leadership in schools. Principals should ensure school effectiveness through best possible teaching learning practices. They are expected to develop a value-oriented culture in schools by promoting, celebrating and highlighting the achievements of students and staff.
References


