

Instructional Leadership Challenges in Public Secondary Schools in Sudan

Ismail Hamad, (Bahir Dar University)

ladam1398@gmail.com

Getnet Demissie, (Addis Ababa University)

getnetdb@yahoo.com

Reda Darge, (Bahir Dar University)

Reda-darge@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate Instructional Leadership Challenges in Public Secondary Schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State; Shekan Locality (Elobeid city). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a descriptive survey method was employed. The population of the study was 451 teachers and 12 Principals. From this population, 222 teachers and 12 principals were used as a sample using simple random and comprehensive sampling techniques. Data collected from respondents were analyzed and interpreted using percentage, one-sample t-test, and weighted mean. The findings revealed that there are significant challenges for instructional leadership such as school dropout due to the living and economic conditions and the delay of some teachers for classes because of transportation. Lack of financial support has been a cause for inadequate educational facilities and laboratories and a poor school environment. Recommendations are forwarded to address the gaps encountered in the instructional leadership practices which mainly focusing on empowering principals, teachers and schools.

Keywords: Instructional, leadership. challenges; Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Education is the bedrock of political development. However, all the various levels of education including the educational institutions must be administered and managed in order to produce vibrant outputs (students) that will contribute effectively towards national development (Ikegbusi & Nonye, 2016).

Instructional leadership has particular importance in educational administration because of its far-reaching effects on completing school programs, objectives and educational goals. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students (Bush, 2003). Moreover, instructional leadership focuses on the schools' core business – teaching, learning, pupils' progress and achievements (Edamo, 2018). Different researchers have identified strong leadership as one of the essential factors of effective and successful schools (Salfi, 2011). That is, the success of schools fundamentally depends on school leaders. School leaders are being taken accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn (Kurland & Lazarowitz, 2010).

To attain the intended objectives of schools, principals are expected to exhibit the instructional competency, knowledge, skill and ability expected of them. Their effectiveness is believed to be critical for the successful performance of the schools they are leading. In today's rapidly changing academic environment, experienced school leaders with skills needed to address fundamental challenges and raise students' achievement have become an essential component of the paradigm shift (Mansoor, 2015). Accordingly, the conceptual framework for this study is based on Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model (1985). The study attempts to hold instructional leadership practices and challenges related to three dimensions of instructional leadership described in the Hallinger and Murphy model. They stated that instructional leadership comprises three broad categories, defining the school mission, managing the instructional program and promoting school climate.

Three dimensions with ten functions are proposed by Hallinger (2003) as being inherent in instructional leadership. The first dimension defines a school's mission, comprised of the two functions of framing and communicating the school's goals. The second dimension is managing the instructional program, comprised of the three functions of supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The third dimension is promoting a positive school learning climate, comprised of the five functions protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, developing high expectations and standards, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2003). Also, Hallinger has developed these ideas by reviewing previous researches describing the relationship between principal leadership and students' achievement.

Schools consist of people; community, students, teachers, administrators and support staff. Although all these people have their objectives to attain by being in school, the core task of schools is teaching and learning. Thus, the effectiveness and success of schools are measured in terms of their performance. The critical business of schools is teaching, learning and its effects on students' academic and overall achievement (Phillips, 2011). Secondary schools in Sudan consist of pupils from ages 14 to 16 who can attend secondary education, which lasts three years and comprises nine core subjects (including Islamic studies, English, history and mathematics and optional subjects in computers, agriculture, commercial science, etc.). The first two years are familiar to all students. In the last year, students have to choose between two different paths: arts or science. At the end of the secondary level, students sit for the Sudan School Certificate examination (Singh, 2011).

Instructional leadership plays an essential role in improving students' learning outcomes, teachers' profession and produce well-educated citizens at all levels. So it is crucial to create an environment that will help school leaders practice effective instructional leadership in their respective schools. Challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership might be associated with followers, leaders, communication, and other situational factors. There are other problems, such as the problems of low academic achievement of students in the examinations, which is one of the most challenging problems that face students and teachers. Furthermore,

Hallinger and Murphy (1987) state that four obstacles restrict principals from practicing instructional leadership, namely lack of understanding of curriculum and instruction, professional norms, expectations of a school district, and role of diversity.

Population displacement, conflict and a lack of technical and financial resources have made data collection a severe challenge in Sudan. The key issues affecting the implementation are mainly related to limited educational resources. Lack of investment in education is translated into schools, lacking basic supplies and a decent and safe environment with sufficient sanitation facilities. The shortages of learning spaces and qualified teachers are another issue (UNICEF, 2009). Besides, the teacher training assessment, poverty and child labor turn out to be severe challenges in terms of accessing education. Also, societal attitudes towards education still prevent children from accessing school. Finally, the limitations of available data, including disaggregated and data on national assessment, is a significant obstacle to measuring learning outcomes (World Health Organization, 2017).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are some findings of previous studies, such as the study of Beyene (2018) on the assessment of instructional leadership practices in the school, which shows that most school leaders had less experience and qualification. Findings of a study conducted by Mansoor (2015) showed that the main challenges confronting the instructional leadership in the state sector schools include infrastructure and resources, teacher recruitment, school organization, and student enrollment, parental involvement, and political pressure.

The study of McEwan (2002) 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 principals, and lack of vision, will or courage from principals toward instructional activities. A similar study by Elamin (2014) showed that the principals of secondary schools in the Northern state in Sudan face difficulties in their administrative work related to the curriculum of those schools in the state. A weak relationship between the principals characterizes the obstacle facing the local society.

In light of this, secondary school principals are expected to perform well with instructional leadership activities. School principals may face many challenges. The instructional leadership suffers from problems that it encounters during the functioning of the schools. Schools differ from one to another and from one educational stage to another.

In Sudan, limited research has been conducted on principals' instructional leadership practices and challenges in secondary schools. Rather than focusing on instructional leadership, they focused on administration and management. The researcher visited the secondary schools in Kordufan state, Shekan locality (Elobeid city) through the practical training sessions. As it is noticed from personal observation of the researcher, there are serious challenges facing school leaders. Hence, the researcher is initiated to study instructional leadership challenges in public secondary schools of Kordufan state, Shekan locality (Elobeid city).

The study deals with identifying instructional leadership challenges of the public secondary schools based on the facts mentioned above that can commonly appear as major challenges of the learning environment. The researchers were encouraged to investigate when and how frequently instructional leadership supports teachers at different experience levels and how adequately it has been conducted to enhance students learning achievement. This prompted the researcher to investigate the problem guided by the following fundamental **questions**:

1. Are there challenges related to lack of school resources and problem of school climate (all of them are aspects of leadership challenges) in secondary schools?
2. What is the status of challenges related to instructional support for school leaders?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the challenges affecting principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools. Precisely, the objective of the current study is to identify the main challenges related to lack of school resources, lack of school climate and challenges related to instructional support for school leader's practices in secondary schools of Shekan Locality.

2. The research methodology

The research approach employed for this study is a descriptive survey design. Mixed methods design is employed which uses procedures for collecting, analyzing, and linking quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Creswell, 2005). The qualitative method enriches the quantitative one as it includes direct interaction between the participants and the researcher. Besides, qualitative methods help the researcher obtain a more holistic impression and a complete picture of a particular subject to fully understand participants' experiences and points of view (Creswell, 2013). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously in the same visit to the field, then taking the results and looking to see how they connect or what they tell about the whole picture of instructional leadership in the school. This is also helpful in identifying an accurate description of the challenges encountered in the schools' current instructional leadership practices.

Data Sources

Data for this research were collected from primary and secondary sources – the primary sources of data were used by administering questionnaires for teachers and interviews for principals. The secondary data sources used journal, articles, books, action research, feedback, reports, and websites. School document analysis was also used which helped to understand teachers' perceptions about instructional leadership practices in their schools.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

North Kordufan state is one of the largest states in Sudan; it has a unique position within other states. Elobeid city is the capital of North Kordufan state, in Shekan, which is located in a distinct geographical position. There are 23 secondary schools in Elobeid city. The total population of schools is 547. The researcher selected 12 secondary school principals as sample size and 222 teachers from the total population of 451 teachers in the 12 schools through stratified random sampling technique.

Data Gathering Instruments

In this study, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews as research data gathering instruments. A questionnaire with a five-point scale was designed for teachers due to their important role in contributing for a better instructional leadership. The questionnaire contained three parts designed to address the variables in the study and provide information on principals' instructional leadership challenges. The questionnaire was tested for its reliability using Cronach's Alpha. The Alpha value was 0.709 which indicates good level of reliability.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview to collect data from 12 principals of the schools. It is designed for principals responsible for setting school improvement agendas and teachers' workplace conditions and ensuring that the school performs according to state national policies and community expectations. Interview notes were summarized and translated into English.

Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the collected data. Percentage, one-sample t-test and weighted mean are used to indicate the extent principals are performing the functions of instructional leadership activities and to show the dimensions of instructional leadership principles. The interview responses were analyzed thematically.

4. Results of the Study

4.1 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	121	54.5
	Female	101	45.5
	Total	222	100
Qualification	Diploma	8	3.6
	Bachelor	170	76.6
	Master	31	14.0
	Doctorate	13	5.9

	Total	222	100
Years of experience	1 – 5 years	23	10.4
	6 – 10 years	81	36.5
	11 and above	118	53.2
	Total	222	100

From table 1, the distribution of participants shows that there were 101(45.5%) females out of 222 teachers. Concerning qualification, the majority of the teachers (76.6%) have bachelor degree. More than half of teachers (53.2%) have served in the teaching profession for 11 years and above. This indicates the sampled teachers have a good work experience which helped them to provide us a well informed response to the study.

Mean score and one sample t-test analysis were conducted to determine the significant challenges that principal's instructional leadership faced.

Table 2: One sample t-test results for principal’s instructional leadership challenges

		Test value = 3					
No	Variables	N	Mea n	St. Dev.	Df	T	Sig
1	Challenges related to lack of school resources	220	3.87	1.087	219	10.74	.000
2	Challenges related to school climate	22	3.13	0.869	22	2.353	.01

A one sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there is a principals’ instructional leadership challenges in terms of two variables as compared to the defined t-value (t=3). That is, challenges related to school resources and school climate. As indicated in table 2 above, the mean value for school resources (M=3.87,

SD=1.087) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(219)=10.741$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for school climate ($M=3.13$, $SD=0.869$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)= 2.353$, $p=0.019$. Therefore, the analysis of the two explanatory dimensions was found statistical significant in affecting the principal's instructional leadership.

The result was supported by the interviews conducted with principals. Some of the participants' voices are presented below.

Participant (1) said that:

Situational factors for teachers are the most significant challenges which included the difficulty of communicating with teachers due to lack of understanding and lack of belief in the profession. It also included problems in communicating with the families of students as well as teachers' poor performance due to lack of training. School dropouts due to the living and economic conditions, and the delay of some teachers for classes during the day because of transportation are other challenges affecting the instructional leadership.

Also, participant (2) said that: *the challenges facing principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools are financial support, inadequate educational facilities and laboratories, poor school environment and the lack of a textbook.*

Participant (3) said that: *About working with these challenges in their leadership usually, school principals discussing the challenges that faced them with teachers and parents by clarifying the problems and seeking to find the solution.*

Participant (4) said that: *It is necessary to appeal to the families of the children to communicate with the school to know the children's performance and think about their future.*

To support the teachers in overcoming problems with students during teaching-learning activities, Participant (5) said: *Most managers can be provided with continuous advice, follow-up, mentoring and mentorship.*

Participants (6) said that: *It is essential taking into account individual differences, encouraging competition, and creating an answer from teachers for all problems.*

Participant (7) said: *It is necessary to deal with kindness, taking into account the psychological aspects.*

Another participant also said: *Students should be educated by reminding and urging them to deal with teachers and giving teacher's new training.*

Table 3: One sample t test results of the status of challenges related to instructional support for school leaders

No	Variables	N	Mean	St dv	Df	T	Sig.
1	The school leader doesn't have the training to develop the instructional program	221	3.40	1.281	220	5.634	.000
2	The school leader lacks instructional leadership competences	220	3.37	1.326	219	5.381	.000
3	The school doesn't help students when they face problems	221	3.06	1.520	220	4.274	.000
4	The school is facing problem in defining the school's mission	221	3.09	1.374	220	4.769	.000
5	The school doesn't provide teachers with feedback to consider & reflect upon	222	3.33	1.327	221	5.345	.000
6	The school leader doesn't have enough time to support all teachers instructionally	222	3.42	1.436	221	5.066	.000
7	The school does not recognize the best performance in improving students'	221	2.69	1.387	220	4.123	.000

achievements

Table 3 shows the challenges related to instructional support for school leaders. The mean value for the school leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers instructionally ($M=3.42$, $SD=1.436$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=5.066$, $p=0.000$.

The mean value for the school leader does not have the training to develop the instructional program ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.281$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(220)=5.634$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for the school leaders' lack of instruction leadership competences ($M=3.37$, $SD=1.326$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(219)=5.381$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for the school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.327$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found statistically significant at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=5.345$, $p=0.000$.

Finally, the total of the four explanatory dimensions was found statistically significant on challenges related to instructional support for school leaders. This implies that school leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers, and they do not have the training to develop the instructional program. Moreover, school leaders lack instruction leadership competences and the school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon.

5. Discussion

From the results obtained in this study, it was found that principals faced instructional leadership challenges in secondary schools. The one sample t-test showed the principals' instructional leadership challenges related to school resources and school climate. The majority of the respondents agreed on the inadequacy of the allocated budget and problems in managing the resources in school. Moreover, school

communities experienced resource constraints that impacted on principals' abilities to recruit teachers and maintain instructional programs.

The interview results indicate that the most significant challenges for principals are the difficulty of communicating with teachers due to lack of understanding and lack of belief in the profession. The challenges are communicating with students and teachers' families and poor performance due to lack of training. The findings of the study are in line with the results of previous studies on the area. For example, Mansoor (2015) showed that the main challenges confronting the instructional leadership in the public schools include issues related to resources, teacher recruitment, school organization and student enrollment, and parental involvement.

A local study by Ahmed (2017) found out that transportation in that area is a significant factor affecting the school administration. The other obstacles include poor communication between management and teachers, inadequate teacher training to communicate with the community, administrative obstacles, lack of professional incentives to school principals, inadequate training programs for the principals with the school reality and large class size. McEwan (2002) also described challenges affecting the effectiveness of instructional leadership which included lack of skill and training for teachers and principals as well as lack of teachers' cooperation.

The most common challenges related to school climate reported by teachers were: working condition is not suitable for practicing instructional leadership, and the challenges of the schools to make professional balance and align it with the community culture. In addition, the researcher found that the major challenges that faced secondary schools in the locality were related to parents' problem to financially contribute to textbooks, school uniforms and examinations fees.

The interview results also indicate that the major challenges which they are facing are financial support which results in inadequate educational facilities and laboratories and a poor school environment. A similar study by Elamin (2014) showed that the principals of secondary schools in the Northern state faced similar difficulties in their administrative work.

The results of this study also showed the challenges related to lack of instructional support for school leaders. More specifically, the findings indicated that school leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers; the school leaders lack instructional leadership competences; the school leaders do not have the necessary training to develop the instructional program; and the schools do not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon.

IJSER

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Instructional leadership in public secondary schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State, Shekan Locality (Elobeid city) faced numerous challenges related to resources and insufficient training. Poor academic performance of students due to lack of teachers training, high school dropout, low status of living and economic conditions, the delay of some teachers for classes during the day because of transportation, and lack of financial support, inadequate educational facilities, and a poor school environment were the causes of the major challenges of instructional leadership practices.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were drawn by the researcher to mitigate the challenges that impede instructional leadership practices in public secondary schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State, Shekan Locality (Elobeid city).

1. The findings of the study revealed that the schools suffer from a lack of resources. Therefore, it is recommended that the locality educational bureau should develop the necessary required materials and facilitate the implementation process.
2. It is recommended that the Regional Bureau should support and train the teachers by The school leaders should enhance and promote the school as a positive and conducive learning environment by improving teachers' engagement, instructional issues, and students' achievements providing them better skills and professional courses.
3. The school leaders should enhance and promote the school as a positive and conducive learning environment by improving teachers' engagement, instructional issues, and students' achievements.
4. To achieve improvements in instructional leadership we should be focused on empowering learners by enhancing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and making them more socially responsible.

Limitation of the Study

The following points were some of the limitations that the researcher encountered during the course of the study.

Lack of adequate resources had limited the size and nature of the subject that have been included in the sample population. If the study included all of the instructional leaders in schools, student, and parents from all schools of locality it would have come up with more comprehensive findings. The major source of information for this study was only the opinion of principals and teachers. It might not provide all the necessary information for the study and some respondents responded carelessly particularly in open-ended questions and some respondents assume it consumes their time. Lack of recorded documents about the practices and challenges of principals in the sample area of this research study. Besides, shortage of time and finance with held the researcher from conducting testing of the instrument. Then the study was managed based on the comments given by the thesis advisors and giving to correct.

References

- Ahmed, K. A. (2016). Instructional leadership practices in secondary schools of Assosa Zone, Ethiopia. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Review*, 4(7), 191-211. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/>
- Beyene, (2018). *Assessment of B. Ed Guide No.1 Kwa Dlangezwa*, (Master Dissertation), University of Zululand.
- Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management*. London, Thus and Oaks, New Delhi: Sage. Publication
- Coombs, P.H., (1969). *Time for a change of strategy*. In Beeby, C. E. (Ed.), *Qualitative aspects of educational planning*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, (pp.15-35).
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating qualitative research* (2nd Ed.). NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Edamo, D. L. (2018). Principals' instructional leadership performance in Hawassa city administration secondary schools, Ethiopia. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 23(1), 13-22. Retrieved from <http://www.iosrjournals.org/>

- Firmaningsih-Kolu, Y. (2016). *The role of the principal's instructional leadership at schools in Indonesia.*(Master Dissertation), University of Jyvaskyla.
- Hallinger, P. & Murphy, J. (1985).Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217-247.Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/461445>
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of education*, 33(3), 329-352. DOI: 10.1080/0305764032000122005
- Ikegbusi, N. G., Eziamaka, C. &Nonye, C. (2016).The impact of supervision of instruction on teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Education & Technology (IJARET)*, 3(3), 12-16.
- Mansoor, Z. (2015). The paradigm shift: Leadership challenges in the public sector schools in Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(19), 203-211.Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079537.pdf>
- McEwan, E. K. (2002). *Seven steps to effective instructional leadership*. Corwin Press.
- Phillips. (2011).*Manager-Administration to Instructional Leader: Shift in the Roles of the School Principal*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Salfi, N. A. (2011). Successful leadership practices of head teachers for school improvement: Some evidence from Pakistan. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(4), 414-432.DOI 10.1108/09578231111146489.
- Singh, J. P. (2011). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).London and New York.
- UNESCO, I. (2010). World data on education. *Principles and General Objectives of Education*.
- World Health Organization. (2017). *Transformative accountability for adolescents: accountability for the health and human rights of women, children and adolescents in the 2030 agenda*. World Health Organization.