



A look in to leadership and leadership development practices in Ethiopia: A stakeholder analysis

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Abstract

The ultimate purpose of this study was to assess the leadership and leadership development practices in Ethiopian schools. A cross-sectional survey research method was used to conduct the study. A sample of teachers, students, principals, supervisors and TDP core process owners were participated as respondents. Questionnaire, interview and FGD were the main data collecting tools employed. Frequency and mean score was the method of quantitative data analysis while verbatim was used to analyze the qualitative data. Finally, the result of the study revealed that the actual practices of school leadership practices and development has deviated from what was intended. Hence, the mean score of respondents on distribute leadership was found to be low (Mean: 2.44). On the leadership development practices the result of the study revealed that it was low (2.61). On top of this the leadership development program was found to be fragmented and lacks uniformity. The study also portrayed that the way school leaders come to the position lacks clarity; it was neither merit nor seniority based. Concerning the competence of school leaders the mean score was low (mean: 2.35) showing school leaders were not capacitated and acquainted with the required skills. Moreover, the succession plan and its practices were found to be very low (Mean: 2.55). Therefore, it can be concluded that school leadership practices including recruitment, selection, development and succession planning was not on the right track. Hence, the education offices at various levels and schools themselves need to internalize school leadership is a profession and merit based. On the other hand there has to be a succession planning for further development of school leadership.

Keywords: school leadership, recruitment, profession, leadership selection, succession plan

1. Introduction

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agenda internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. These days, as countries are seeking to adapt their education systems to the needs of contemporary society, expectations for schools and school leaders are changing.

At the same time, the requirement to improve overall student performance while serving more diverse student populations is putting schools under pressure to use more evidence-based teaching practices and the leaders to gear teaching practice toward this. As a result of these trends, the function of school leadership across the globe and locally is now increasingly defined by a demanding set of roles which include financial, material, and human resource management and leadership for learning. In this connection, Ethiopia has made a great progress in the areas of teacher education and education leaders training program. Since the introduction of the current education and training policy in 1994, a lot has been done to enhance school leadership. The professionalization of teachers and educational leadership which includes the movement to upgrade the status, training, and working condition of education leaders have received a great deal of interest in recent years. Still now, leadership training and management development practices have also remained an outstanding feature in the education system of Ethiopia (MoE, 2016) [5, 11]. But, apparently there is still considerable work that needs to be done in this area.

Conceptualization of the Problems

There are concerns across the levels of education that the role of principal as conceived for needs of the past is no longer appropriate. In many places, principals have heavy workloads; many are reaching retirement, and it is getting harder to replace them. In principle, school leaders are expected to direct people in the sense that they work on the issues of directives and the guidance and overseeing of teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders.

However, potential candidates often hesitate to apply, because of overburdened roles, insufficient preparation and training, limited career prospects and inadequate support and reward system. On top of this, the practice of school principal assignment to be incumbent is still more confined to nomination from among teachers without any pre-school leadership training. Issues related to school leadership assignment whether it is merit based or appointment is a lingering problem. The other challenge is nothing was known for what will happen for a school leader if he/she left the position. Because of this, many competent people were not attracted to the position of school leadership.

The other pressing problems of school leadership were the core responsibilities of school leaders were though defined and delimited; they were not strictly implemented in schools. As a result they could not plan strategically and be focused. Therefore, the ultimate objectives of this stakeholder analysis were:

- To gather in-depth information in relation to school leadership program in Ethiopian education system.
- To share and to elicit pertinent problems pertaining to school leadership and forward for policy input.

This stakeholder analysis is believed to have a significant importance as a theoretical and empirical input to fill the gaps in the body of knowledge in the execution of education leadership preparation practices in Ethiopian Education systems. On top of this, the study also sheds light on the modalities of leader training and development program at all levels. This will help the policy makers as an input to take any intervention activities for the betterment of the services. From the application point view, the output of this stakeholder analysis could serve the education sector top management and core process owners to design and implement a viable school leader education program that enable them to gain a motivated and committed management workforce in Ethiopian schools.

2. Approach of the Study

This supports to establish the real context of the desired school leadership status for policy viability starting from desk review followed by focus group discussions to generate opinions and segments of life stories connected with the leadership education, leadership profession and leading practices.

2.1 Site Selection, Samples and Tools

South West and West cluster areas including Keffa, Jimma, Gambella and Ilu Ababora were treated in this study. A sample of teachers, students, principals, supervisors, PTAs and TDP core process were participated. Questionnaire, Interview, FGD and Document Analysis were carried out to collect data.

For the purposes of this stakeholder analysis, the framework constituted the following: school leadership responsibilities, focusing on roles that can improve school results, distribute school leadership, engaging and recognizing broader participation in leadership teams, develop skills for effective school leadership over different stages of practice, and make school leadership a more attractive profession by ensuring appropriate wages and career prospects.

2.2 The survey questionnaire

The main source of information about teacher education and school leadership training policy analysis was based on questionnaires, referring to the training events and soliciting the opinion of different groups of educational staff on, and their experience with, the present teacher education and leadership practices, as well as their preferences for training provisions.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from stakeholders was subjected to different kinds of analysis to be performed, comparing the different responses of stakeholders reviewing their answers to common questions and providing similarities and differences between different respondents.

3. Result and Discussion

This part if the study presented the quantitative data obtained from respondents through various means. Accordingly, the first table dealt with the practices of school leadership which actually existed in Ethiopian schools.

Table 1: Distributed Leadership Practices

| Practices of Distributed Leadership | Current Situation (Mean) | Future Intention (Mean) |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Distribution of leadership tasks | 2.67 | 4.14 |
| Efforts made to attract potential leader | 2.44 | 4.12 |
| Accountability issues of leaders | 2.74 | 4.09 |
| Teamwork formation in schools | 2.39 | 4.11 |
| Structural arrangement for dev.t | 2.82 | 4.18 |

On the practices of participatory leadership, the result revealed that tasks remain in principal office where school leadership does not encourage teacher and other stakeholders to get part and everything is decided by the principal excluding teachers, students, parents... With regards to the incentives for staff to participate in school leadership, the staff members are not happy and their mean score was found to be low (Mean =2.44) and standard deviation of 1.17. However, majority of the staff members have an interest to reverse this scenario with a higher mean score of 4.12 and

standard deviation of 1.02. This implies although staff members have an interest to take part in school leadership, there was no support and encouragement to involve teachers in leadership activities. However, majority of the staff members have an interest to reverse this scenario with a higher mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 1.02. This implies although staff members have an interest to take part in school leadership, there was no support and encouragement to involve teachers in leadership activities.

Table 2: Leadership Development Practices

| Practices of leadership Development | Current Situation | Preferred Future |
|---|-------------------|------------------|
| Development through all the stages | 2.51 | 4.06 |
| Balance of theoretical and practical knowledge | 2.61 | 3.99 |
| Focus on strategic, financial and human resource management | 2.74 | 4.23 |
| Selection of the right candidates for initial leadership training | 2.63 | 4.22 |
| The focus on skills for goal setting, assessment and accountability | 2.81 | 4.23 |
| Attempts to address contextual factors | 2.75 | 4.02 |
| Incentives for principals development | 2.41 | 4.06 |
| Need based leadership development practices | 2.44 | 4.08 |

In relation to the career development of school leaders throughout all the stages in leader’s career, the first issue raised for respondent was whether there is a balance between

the practical skills and theoretical knowledge in leadership development. In the process of leadership development there is an imbalance between theoretical and practical knowledge

(Mean=2.61). The provision of leadership development shifts either towards theory or practice. Similarly, FGD participants mentioned that the kind of training school leaders was so fragmented as (PGDSL, PGCSS, PGCPs, SCL....). From the analysis it was found out that the strategic, financial

and human resource management was not properly addressed by the school leader (Mean=2.74). This could be due to scarcity of time for school leaders as they devoted much of their time on meeting other non-instructional activities.

Table 3: Leadership Recruitment and Selection Practice

| Leadership Recruitment and Selection Practice | Current practice | Future Intention |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| A wide range of tools and procedures is used to assess leadership candidates. | 2.61 | 4.11 |
| Recruitment panels receive guidance and training for assessing the knowledge, skills and competencies of leadership candidates. | 2.60 | 4.00 |
| There is a clear procedure on how to higher school leaders | 2.35 | 4.12 |

With regards to recruitment and selection practice of school leaders, FGD participants portrayed that currently the way people come to school leadership is not clear or no transparency. No one knows the way the school leader come to the position. Due to this, competent people are not coming to the position. We often see people hold the position, the participants responded. On top of this, the quantitative data

shows the recruitment and selection panels did not have the necessary guidance and training on how to assess the competencies of candidates (Mean=2.60). The practice was not as per the principle of recruitment and selection where it stated those who are on the hiring side of recruitment panels also need guidelines and training.

Table 4: Competence of school Leaders

| Indicators | Current condition | Future Aspiration |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Support the design, implementation and monitoring of policy | 2.76 | 4.08 |
| Support the review of school curriculum | 2.80 | 3.97 |
| Analyze the environment and use it as an input | 2.53 | 4.04 |
| Lead program development and implementation | 2.87 | 4.23 |
| Evaluate program and institutional policy | 2.88 | 4.00 |
| Convince superior to draw resources | 3.07 | 4.20 |
| Actively involved in developing and implementing reforms | 2.67 | 4.17 |

The effectiveness of school leaders in the design, practice and monitoring of curriculum and institutional policy is not to the required level (M=2.76) and Std. deviation of 1.36. This indicates that one of the strategic tasks of the school leadership is missing.

far school leaders analyze their environment while designing school policy and respondents shown their dissatisfaction (M=2.53; Std. 1.38). This implies that school leaders were found to be ignorant of the school environment and the community while designing school curriculum and policy.

Respondents were also asked to portray their views on how

Table 5: Items Compensation and Benefits

| Items Compensation and Benefits | Current Practice | Preferred Future |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| | Mean | Mean |
| Talent is considered as important as seniority in considering candidates for school leadership. | 2.60 | 4.06 |
| Renewable fixed-term contracts are available to school leaders. | 2.64 | 4.02 |
| A principal's salary is sufficiently greater than a teacher's salary. | 2.63 | 4.07 |
| Financial incentives are offered to school leaders in difficult areas. | 2.35 | 4.16 |

Concerning the candidates for leadership, respondents were asked whether talent is given equal consideration with that of the seniority and mean response was low (Mean=2.60, Std. = 1.24) showing talent was not as important as that of seniority in getting the position of school leadership in the current scenario. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on the extent to which salary of principal is sufficiently greater than that teacher salary where the response was negative (Mean= 2.63). This low level of mean score indicates that the comparison made to set the

salary of school leader is below the expectations. The other questions presented to respondents were whether there is a financial incentive to school leaders or not. Accordingly, the mean value was low (Mean=2.35, Std. =1.06) showing that either the absence of or weak financial incentives for school leaders is one difficult area. On the other hand they felt that there has to be financial incentives for school leaders depending on the conditions under which they operate with a higher mean value of 4.16 and Standard deviation of 0.91.

Table 6: Succession planning and practices

| Succession planning and practices | Current Situation | Preferred Future |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| | Mean | Mean |
| Potential leaders are identified and encouraged to develop their leadership practices. | 2.71 | 4.15 |
| Opportunities for diverse career pathways are available to school leaders. | 2.55 | 4.00 |

With regards to the assessment of practices of compensation and reward system for school leadership, respondents were asked if there is a practice of identifying and encouraging future leader's development and the data reveals succession planning is not there (Mean=2.71). On top of this, participants had the higher aspiration for the development future leaders with mean score of 4.15. This higher mean score indicates that the participants need a careful identification and encouragement of future leaders.

Furthermore, participants of the study were also asked whether there is a diverse career path ways for school leaders and the result shown that there is no diverse opportunities for career pathways of the school leadership (Mean= 2.55). They also supplement that there is a need for a variety of career pathways for future school leaders with a higher mean score of 4.00. This higher mean score indicates that opportunities must be created for school leaders to enhance their leadership skills

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

From the quantitative data analysis and the narration of qualitative information, the following conclusions were drawn:

With regard to the time of principals for supporting teachers, how much of their time do schools principals invest on supporting instruction and on administrative issues were not well understood by every stakeholder. The extent to which teachers are empowered to contribute in decision making was also missing in the school leadership and leadership development practices. Due the existing blurred understanding on whether school leadership is a profession or not, principals were not capable enough to address contemporary challenges such as diversity, ethics, equity, equality, academic freedom, academic dishonesty and local as well as global competition. On top of these it can be concluded that the practices of distributed leadership was not to the required level.

The recruitment and selection of school leadership in Ethiopia was known to be merit based at least at face value. Therefore it can be concluded that the professional standards for school leadership and the extent of their use were found to be nominal. The development and implementation of strategic plans at school level was not given the necessary attention in schools.

Licensing and relicensing of school leadership was found to be an aborted attempt to ensure the quality of the manpower we had in school and education offices. The management and leadership of school were left for unqualified and less professionals out of the education sector. Therefore, it can be concluded that school leadership autonomy and academic freedom was eroded. The attempts made to prepare tomorrows a head was very low.

4.2 Recommendations

- 1. Professionalize School Leadership:** The first and the most important action to be taken is clear understanding on the professionalism of education leadership at all levels as per MoE blue print 2007 which stated school leadership is a profession that involves a program of training.
- 2. Recruitment/Hiring:** The study shows, this was one of the gray areas that needs due attention. There has to be a

transparent procedures and guideline on how to bring people to the leadership position.

- 3. Role Shifting:** There is a need to transform the school managers to instructional leaders. Because what principal are intended to do and what they are doing was found to vary. There has to be a proper balance between the administrative and instruction time. Because school leaders spent most of their time out of school on other social or other issues, they were not able to discharge the role of delivering instructional support.
- 4. Accountability and Autonomy:** School leadership responsibilities should be monitored through an understanding of the practices most likely to improve teaching and learning. School leaders need time, capacity and support to focus on the practices most likely to improve learning. There has to be a greater degree of autonomy which should be coupled with new models of distributed leadership, new types of accountability, and training and development for school leadership.
- 5. Training and Development:** The training and development program for school leaders need to give due attention on HRDP and skills inventory (what is available, what is missed, how to address the gaps). It is also good to revisit the current models of training school leaders, especially summer. Moreover, providing career development prospects for school leaders can help avoid principal burnout and make school leadership a more attractive career option.
- 6. University/College Practices:** School leaders have also a negative ambivalent on the way universities manage the training. Most often, instructors were not fully applying the directions, guidelines, and procedures set in the curriculum of the program (cases, projects, scenarios, assessment strategies and evaluation).
- 7. Team Work:** School leaders have to be able to adapt the teaching programmes to local needs, promote teamwork among teachers and engage in teacher monitoring, evaluation and professional development. School leaders are expected to treat teachers as colleagues and try to develop team spirit among school teachers.
- 8. Promotion Practices:** To make the profession more flexible and mobile, allowing school leaders to move between schools as well as between leadership and teaching and other professions is one strategy. There has to be also alternatives to lifetime contracts through renewable fixed-term contracts for school leaders.
- 9. Succession Planning:** Lastly, the unclear and uncertain recruitment procedures and career development prospects for principals may also deter potential candidates. The challenge here is to improve the quality of current leadership and build sustainable leadership for the future. Hence, proactively identifying and developing potential and future school leaders can boost the quantity and quality of tomorrow's school leaders.

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