Role of Instructional Leadership in Successful Execution of Curriculum: Head Teachers' Perspective

Moafia Nader
Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Lahore College for women university, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Fakhra Aziz
Assistant Professor, Department of Education Lahore College for women university, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email; fakhraaziz@hotmail.com

Afifa Khanam
Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Lahore College for women university, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract   *Transformational leadership has been characterized by vision and inspiration while the emphasis of instructional /pedagogical leadership is on framing clear goals and objectives and then achieve them through careful planning and monitoring. Headteachers play the leading role in school improvement and increase and maintain instructional effectiveness. Their prime focus is on learning outcomes and enhancing the quality of the teaching-learning process. A qualitative research design was applied to get headteachers' perspectives about role of instructional leadership in successful execution of the curriculum. Purposively 14 headteachers were selected to conduct interview. Among them 7 were female headteachers and 7 were male headteachers. The interview protocol was developed after reviewing literature and discussing role of instructional leaders in successful execution of curriculum with experts in the area and renowned educationists. It was revealed that school heads as instructional leaders have an important role in successful execution of curriculum*

Key Words

Instructional Leadership, Successful Execution, Curriculum, Head Teachers' Perspective

Introduction

Leadership means the ability to influence a group of people towards achieving their goals. It is an art of making others to make their best efforts for the achievement of the shared objectives. Leadership behavior plays a pivotal role in bringing an effective change in organizational settings that is significant in the emergence of effective instruction. Particularly the role of a principal is vibrant and effective in the school as an instructional leader. According to Hallinger (2011) "I have never seen a good school with a poor principal or a poor school with a good principal. I have seen unsuccessful schools turned around into successful one and, regrettably outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline. In each case the rise or fall could be readily be traced to the quality of the principal."

An instructional leader has to wear multiple hats for achieving the curriculum's effectiveness through being a manager, administrator, guide, helper, and mentor for teachers and students. The focus of instructional leadership is effectiveness of outcomes rather the process of achieving the goals. Following are the major participants in the instructional leadership:

- Superintendent, curriculum coordinator, etc.
- Principals and assistant principals
- Instructional coaches (Edmonds, 1981).

Daria et al. (2018) suggest the components of instructional leadership as analysis of evidence, analysis of impact, determine a focus and implement and support which are interconnected. Instructional leadership differs from that of a school administrator or manager in a number of ways. Instructional leadership is different in many ways than other leadership roles. Here, the head remains close to the teaching-learning process through planning, implementing, providing resources, implementing lesson plans and finally evaluating the outcomes. The tasks are distributed among teachers keeping in mind their abilities, interests, and dedication towards the subject. She attains the vision of quality learning through managing strategies and keeps teamwork at priority. The instructional leadership is so focused on learning quality rather on teaching, that some people have tagged it as 'learning leadership' instead of 'instructional leadership' (Dufour, 2002).

Unlike other leaders who spend most of their time in managerial tasks, instructional leaders concentrate on reviewing and reviving the teaching-learning process and exert their utmost efforts to bring forth curriculum outcomes for the benefit of learner and community. The product-focused rather

than being process-oriented. Therefore, they facilitate, encourage and support results instead of focusing strictly how teachers spend their time and how resources are used in the school. Thus, instructional leadership is a balance of management and vision. Learning and teaching are important issues that many school leaders allocate the maximum time and resources. A leader's involvement and utmost attention should be on continuous professional development to keep him/her update and to meet the challenges of time while focusing on the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and standards.

Headteachers who are interested in quality of instruction have to leave boreoarctic style and focus on instruction and its effectiveness. The instructional effectiveness is a goal that needs priority because it helps the most in achieving goals of instruction or teaching-learning process. Hoy and Miskel (2008) narrate that Instructional/educational leadership defines an academic institution's manifesto, facilitates its instructional program and endorse institute's climate which shows their focus on teaching and learning practices prevail there.

Literature Review

According to Hallinger, (1985), during the 1970s to 1980s, there was a movement for school effectiveness which focused what students learn rather than how schools were run. School heads were made accountable for school performance. However there still lacked a comprehensive and mutually accepted definition of instructional leadership. Traditionally it is viewed as only concerning the teaching and learning aspects of leadership, whereas in lieu of recent developments and research in this area. it takes the concept of leadership forward delving into areas of curriculum and instructional issues, willingly and openly working incorporation with the teaching practitioners and appearing in classrooms when needed. According to Louis et al. (2010), school leaders mainly affect student learning by motivating and influencing teachers and the environment they work in, however, it is cautioned that the classroom alone should not be considered as the prime focus of a school leader from where he would bring about change. These features may divulge and vary from the conventional definition of instructional leadership and add an extremely pertinent dimension of organizational management. The efficacy of a principal's organizational management skills constantly enhances students' achievement. Strong managers construct a strong structure to organize and improve instruction more than coaching teachers or spending time in the classroom (Grissom and Loeb, 2009). Productive organizational managers intelligently hire, support and retain effective teachers while supporting appropriately and removing the inefficient teachers in due course of time. Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009) considered leaders' organizational especially personal management practices important for school improvement.

In a later study, Balu, Horng, and Loeb (2010) found that these personnel management practices play a more effective role when used strategically. This happens when personnel is recruited and supported, retained, developed and removed strategically and not based on random decisions. Professional development is also used as a way to reward and retain teachers. On the contrary, Horng, Leo, and Mindich (2010) reported that institutional heads' poor organizational management, leads them to have followers who look outside the institute for support. Effective organizational managers don't access teachers individually; on the other hand, they create an environment and structure which offers support and development to each and every teacher according to their needs.

It can be seen that strong instructional leadership has a very crucial role to play in making a school successful. Furthermore, if instructional leadership is understood only in terms of curriculum and classroom instruction, it is impossible to get the desired outcomes. Good school leaders ensure effective learning by not only monitoring the classrooms but at the same time support teachers for developing effective teaching and learning environment.

History of Instructional leadership

The term 'instructional leadership' started during the movement of 'effective schools' when outcomes of learning were given more importance than the administrative and managerial tasks of leaders. In the United States, 1970s, the role of head was considered the most important for influencing school and student performance (Edmonds, 1979). The effectiveness movement demanded role of forth sightedness, open-mindedness and higher managerial qualities from the leaders (Stiggins and Duke, 2008, Hallinger, 2003). The previous researches had focused on school system as Coleman (1966), Weber (1971) and Jencks and team (1972), etc. Weber (1971) contributed the most by presenting the idea that school leaders should maintain a learning atmosphere and provide opportunities for literacy for those poor and middle-class students and make them useful citizens. He was more interested in usability of the education rather how students were taught in the classes.

Weber (1971) considered. Leadership qualities of a school head important for the success of school and enlisted as create the quality and atmosphere of the school; facilitate uplifting of speculations among students; improve learning abilities and reading acuities. Edmonds (1979) emphasized the role of school leaders as great supporter of the learning process in the schools.

The school discipline, rules, and regulations, hierarchies, and actions were considered less important and the involvement of heads in instructional process, for the achievement of learning outcomes was considered more important (Purkey et al, 1983). The goal-oriented style of Murphy (1990) became famous for introducing product-oriented leadership which strived for the achievement of goals irrespective of the path adopted for this achievement.

So instructional leadership paved its way three decades earlier and since then, the learning outcomes are considered more important than the processes. Sheppard (1996) considers instructional leaders as facilitators, mentors and most influential for providing a learning environment. The head is involved in planning instructional methodologies, encouraging teachers, resolving problems and creating non-threatening atmosphere for learners. This helps teachers to be more motivated and students to be more responsive and responsible. Positive feedback helps teachers to work more enthusiastically and dedicatedly for curriculum objectives. They feel more facilitated and protected (Whitaker, 1997) and teach and learn together with students and leaders. There is an atmosphere of professional growth that finally leads to successful and effective learning (Larson–Knight, 2000).

Summarizing the above discussion, instructional leadership encompasses setting vibrant objectives, implementing curriculum, observing and facilitating the teaching process, providing resources and appreciating teachers consistently to promote student learning and growth. The quality instruction of teachers is the top priority for the instructional head. Instructional leadership is devoted to the fundamental job of teaching, learning, and knowledge. It involves discussion with staff members on a regular basis for facilitating their tasks and duties which ultimately results in more effective learning of students. Therefore, it was essential to explore the role of instructional leaders in execution of curriculum in Pakistani setting.

Research Purpose

The research aimed to examine headteachers' perspective about role of instructional leadership in successful execution of curriculum

Research Question

The research answered the following questions:
How do headteachers perceive their role in execution of curriculum in school?
What challenges do they face during successful execution of curriculum?

Methodology

Under qualitative paradigm, the interpretive approach was selected in which data emerged from the ground reality of different participants. They reported their manifold experiences about the phenomenon to be studied in detail. This interpretive approach facilitated the researchers to accommodate different perceptions of participants in a specific setting.

Population

All head-teachers of Government High Schools in District Lahore were the population of the study.

Sampling Technique

Purposively 14 headteachers; having more than 10 years' experience, from schools having results higher than board (Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education) and participants who were willing to share their experiences in detail, were selected to conduct interview. Among them 7 were female headteachers and 7 were male headteachers.

Instrumentation

The interview protocol was developed after reviewing literature and discussing role of instructional leaders in successful execution of curriculum with experts in the area and renowned educationists. After taking consent and their convenient time, headteachers were informed about the purpose of study and required information was gathered through interviews. Each interview Interview was recorded then transcribed and coded.

Analysis & Results

The male headteachers were coded as ML1, ML2, etc. and female headteachers were coded as FL1 and FL2 and so on. All of the interviews were transcribed and open coding was conducted to generate patterns and themes from the data. Representative themes were collected under following three categories.

Headteachers' role in Curriculum Implementation

Headteachers were asked about their role in the successful execution of curriculum. Their responses are given below.

FL1 opined ' To me, headmistress's main role is to make sure that curriculum is well implemented in their schools further to ensure that teachers are really adherent to those changes by changing their ways of teaching.'

FL2 said 'in Pakistan, the paradigm of teaching is changing as there is a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered. Here the role of the headteacher gains more weight in successful execution of the curriculum. They have the role of ensuring that teachers are really using teaching methodologies which will enable students to be part of the whole teaching and learning processes'

ML1 said, "The headteacher is the key person in successful execution of curriculum. Implementation of curriculum is a multi-faceted process that varies depending on curriculum development process. It is best when the headteacher is involved in curriculum development." FL4 thought that the role of a headteacher in implementing curriculum includes but not limited to confirm that all teaching staff are aware and trained in the curriculum, the headteacher also needs to acquire in-depth understanding of the curriculum.

ML 5 said, "headteacher makes sure that teaching, learning, and assessment are carried out according to the curriculum."

ML6 opined that the role of the headteachers at the school for the implementation of curriculum, have to do with information and comprehensive scrutiny of the curriculum and acceptance and criticism of the texts by teachers and students.

FL7 added, "providing information to teachers and parents regarding any change in curriculum and implementing curriculum with a suitable timetable is sole responsibility of headteachers."

Headteachers' Strategies for Execution of Curriculum

Headteachers 'were requested to share their strategies for implementing the curriculum in its letter and spirit. It was probed that how did they execute curriculum? Representative statements are given below.

ML5 shared that he tries to provide Learning, teaching and support materials on time.

ML3 practiced strict supervision of teachers. She said, "I check lesson plan regularly, match it with curriculum and the randomly observe classes to know what is going on."

FL5 was also on the same page as ML1 as she not only strictly supervises teaching-learning activities but she used to mentor her teachers whenever they needed.

FL7 took feedback from the students and teachers during and after implementation of curriculum and assured support and guidance and appreciated teachers for their efforts in curriculum implementation.

FL2 discussed curriculum not only with her own teachers but with her peers and concerned bodies before and during implementing it.

FL1 shared that she tries to assign the right subject to right person (teacher) and often asks concerned bodies for subject specialists.

ML4 requested district education officers to organize training courses for the teachers. He himself gave orientation sessions on the curriculum to his teachers.

To sum up, most common headteachers' strategies were facilitating teachers in terms of their easy access to curriculum, supporting materials, supervision, observing classes, mentoring and arranging training, orientation sessions for teachers and right subject allocation.

Challenges for Curriculum Execution

Headteachers were inquired about challenges they face during the process of execution of curriculum.

ML3 commented, "The worst reason for the headteachers, comes from the top down order where the headteachers have no choice but are told that it must be done. This is especially difficult if the headteachers have not been involved with the decision or determining the need."

ML4 said, "The limitations in the implementation of the curriculum are manifold -------The resistance that we face for change. Long affiliation to the old curriculum-----The department that hinders new processes, information and training for teachers who have to implement.'

FL2 opined, "some senior teachers are very rigid with the older curriculum and prefer to adhere to it. These groups of teachers who are not able to accept the new curriculum can pose an obstacle to implement it."

FL1 indicated, "there has been a rush to implement curriculum for the last two decades. Implementation of curriculum requires time, but---- in past so abrupt changes have been introduced that executors could not understand it fully."

FL3 complained, *"I have been asked to get admissions at the end of the year without considering that the curriculum had been taught to the rest of students and thus they failed in exam and our result became below board. Such policies are implemented without feasibility."*

Summing up the reported challenges headteachers faced during successful execution of curriculum, it was found that abrupt changes in curriculum or textbooks create problems for them because their teachers were not trained for these changes; they had observed rapid changes of medium of instruction in previous years which caused frustration for teachers and students. The professional training was limited and almost ineffective for senior teachers who could not change easily. They further commented that administrative tasks and frequent reporting to higher authorities hindered them to visit classrooms frequently and think upon effective course implementation.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is evident from the findings that collaboration with colleagues and the role of the Principal are crucial factors in attaining high-quality leadership with positive outcomes. As Stiggins and Duke (2008) elaborated, the school heads suggested that they can play a pivotal role in improving students learning and at the same time help the teachers in attaining the goals of the organization which will further strengthen instruction. It was also found that school heads need to be aware of the assessment system to be able to handle the ever-growing responsibility that an organization gives to them (Stiggins and Duke, 2008). Traditionally instructional leadership was only concerned with teaching and learning but due to the ever-changing demands of how an organization can become successful, it has now become imperative to take into account a more personal professional perspective. Headteachers suggested that they should be facilitated at all times and targets should be made clear to them from the very beginning from their higher authorities. The findings supported Edmonds's (1982) notion that failing to do so has negative implications for school or any other organization. It was found as (Whitaker, 2012) explored that heads who create an exciting and reassuring learning environment encourage students and teachers to show keenness in doing what needs to be done. The study found that those heads who emphasized on conducive environment within an organization made sure that they visited the classrooms daily, ensuring that these visits should not appear threatening and hence received a positive reaction from the teacher (Glatthorn, 1984).

The challenges faced by Pakistani School heads were rarely mentioned in the literature that they were asked to implement policies abruptly without proper information, training and considering the ground reality. They complained against rapidly changing textbooks and mediums of instruction which caused a great hindrance to effective implementation of curriculum. They said that sometimes irrational policies were implemented by higher authorities that made their planning ineffective. They also targeted system of examination which targeted memorization rather learning outcomes.

The Way Forward

The headteacher as a leader is the key to both initiating and institutionalizing effective curriculum reform. In the absence of her leadership, there is great "curriculum drift" that occurs where teachers return to the familiar. In order to ongoing innovation to work, the headteachers must create a system of supervision where curriculum innovations are monitored weekly in each teacher's classroom. Further, the head ought to meet on a quarterly premise with each instructor to talk about what advancements are being arranged and how they will be separated for both tall conclusion learners and for battling learners. The head then can see if and how the curriculum is being implemented that may be one-to-one conferences and in best practice. Besides, the utilize of a checklist of behaviors may direct the principals in watching the modern changes in arrange to supply an unmistakable premise for discussion after each perception. Once instructors realize that the head cares profoundly almost their guidelines hone on a customary premise, they will start to be more cognizant of their utilize of materials and methodologies that reflect wanted hones.

After receiving a new curriculum, Headteachers in the school are required to facilitate its interpretation for teachers to successfully implement it. Their specific leadership skills may be reflected by their interpretation of new curriculum to teachers.

Knowing staff attitude towards change and motivation for its adoption determines the approach that the headteacher must take during the successful execution of curriculum. Mostly teachers are non-concerned to change, especially in primary and elementary school. Their approach to curriculum change and methods of teaching are continuation of earlier. Headteacher can bridge this gap. Being the key executor of curriculum, Headteachers must understand the new curriculum, determine the need or reason for change, understand the mood of the teachers and

approach to develop cooperation with process, determined teachers training needs, how the change will be implemented and explained to the parents to enhance their involvement and how this curriculum implementation will be evaluated.

References

Balu, Rekha, Horng, Eileen L., and Loeb, Susanna. (2010). Strategic Personnel Management: How School Principals Recruit, Retain, Develop and Remove Teachers. *School Leadership Research, Working Paper* 10–6. Stanford, Calif.: Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice. Google Scholar

Béteille, Tara, Kalogrides, Demetra, and Loeb, Susanna. (2009). Effective Schools: Managing the Recruitment, Development, and Retention of High-Quality Teachers." *National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER), Working Paper 37.* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2009. Google Scholar

Coleman, J. S. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. ERIC Number: ED012275. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED012275

Daria, Ernestina & Rosalinda (2018). Eliminating the achievement gap, systems and structures from the ground up. *Leadership*. University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership.

DuFour, R. (2002). The Learning-Centered Principal. *Educational Leadership 59 (8)*12-15.

Edmonds, (1982). Programs of school improvement: An overview of Educational Leadership. December403411Google Scholar, ISI

Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational leadership, 37*(1), 15-24.

Glatthorn. A. A. (1984). *Differentiated Supervision*. USA. Assn for Supervision & Curriculum.

Grissom, J. A., Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S. (2012). Using student test scores to measure principal performance (Working Paper No. 18568). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hallinger, P (2011) A review of three decades of doctoral studies using the principal instructional management rating scale: A lens on methodological progress in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly 47(2)*: 271–306. Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, ISI

Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*(3), 329-352.

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*(2), 217-247.

Horng, E., & Loeb, S. (2010). New Thinking About Instructional Leadership. Phi Delta Kappan, 92(3), 66–69. Horng, E., Klasik, D. & Loeb, S. (2010). Principal's time use and school effectiveness. American Journal of Education, 116(4), 491-523.

Horng, Eileen L., Loeb, Susanna, and Mindich, Dan. (2010). Teachers' Support-Seeking Behaviors and How They Are Influenced by School Leadership. *School Leadership Research, Working* Paper 10–5. Stanford, Calif.: Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice. Google Scholar

Hoy, W. & Miskel, C. (2008). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Jencks, C. (1972). Inequality: a reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America.

Larson–Knight, B. (2000). Leadership, culture and organization learning in understanding the schools as Intelligent system.

Louis, K.S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K., Anderson, S., Michlin, M., Mascall, B., et al. (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning. Final report of research. St. Paul, MN: Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota & Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Toronto.

Murphy, J. (1990). Principal instructional leadership. *Advances in educational administration: Changing perspectives on the school, 1*(Part B), 163-200.

NewYork. Harper & Row.

Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *The Elementary School Journal, 83*(4), 427-452.

Sheppard, B. (1996). Exploring the Transformational Nature of Instructional Leadership. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 42*(4), 325-44.

Stiggins, R. Duke. D. (2008). Effective instructional leadership requires assessment leadership, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(4), 285-291, DOI: 10.1177/0031721 70809000410

Weber, G. (1971). *Inner-city children can be taught to read: Four successful schools*. Council for Basic Education.

Whitaker, B. (2012). Instructional Leadership and Principal Visibility, *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 70:3*, 155-156, DOI: 10.1080/00098655.1997.10543916