THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRINCIPALS’ INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLES WITH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SNNPR, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Community engagement in schools lies at the heart of the processes of instructional leadership. The dimensions and facets of community involvement are many and varied, ranging from the sole contribution of finance to taking part in decision-making. Especially, in a country like Ethiopia where the educational system is decentralized, it is vital for instructional leaders/principals to link their day-to-day activities with the local community. This study assesses the association between the instructional leadership roles of principals and community involvement in government secondary schools of two zones of SNNPR,
Ethiopia. In order to attain the objectives of the study, Descriptive survey research method was employed. The subjects of the study are senior teachers, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members and school principals. Information was solicited from the sample respondents through questionnaire, interview, and FGD. The quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson Product moment Correlation Coefficient. The analysis of the quantitative data is backed by information from qualitative sources. Hence, a mixed method procedure of Sequential Explanatory Strategy was used to analyze and interpret both sources of data. The findings of the research revealed that there is strong positive correlation between principals’ instructional leadership roles and community involvement. However, the strength of relationship was found to vary from school to school. Further, the involvement of the community was stressed more in collecting financial and material resource.

**Key Words**: Instructional leadership, SNNPR, Community involvement

**INTRODUCTION**

It has repeatedly been cited by different writers that community involvement in the education of their children is crucial to bring about better school improvement and enhanced results of students. This paper assesses if there is significant relationship between the instructional leadership role played by school principals and community involvement in the two zones of SNNPR. The abbreviation SNNPR stands for Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Regional State. It is one of the Ethiopian nine regions and is found in the southern part of the country.

As mentioned above, this study assesses if principals in the sampled schools are practicing instructional leadership roles that help them to link themselves to the community. Among
the duty of an instructional leader/school principal is mobilizing and jointly working with local community. A Study of Nine High-Performing Elementary Schools (1999) found that high-performing schools hold many similar characteristics, including high levels of parent and community involvement.

In communities where the school is the centre point of the social fabric, the principal or head teacher plays a very significant community leadership role. Often referred to as boundary crossers, principals provide a bridge between school and community (Gelsthorpe and John, 2003). Principals legitimize potential school–community partnerships and play an important role in ensuring the ongoing opportunities for facilitating the development of structures and processes that foster group visioning.

In short, principals play great role to promote community involvement in education. The research finding of Seashore, et.al (2010) indicates that teachers and principals have more influence on parental and community involvement, and its link to student learning. As mentioned earlier, among the components of a good instructional leader is facilitating conditions for community involvement in their schools. The active involvement of community in school can in turn support the school leadership. In connection to this, the research findings by Seashore, et.al (2010) does hint that as principals have more experience with community interaction (for example, through site councils with diverse representation), they become more open to influence in daily practices in their buildings.

Generally, this paper is aimed at examining the linkage between the instructional leadership roles of school principals with community involvement. Accordingly, every dimension of an instructional leader is associated with community involvement in school affairs to see the overall relationship between the two.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are research questions addressed by this study:

1. Is there association between community involvement and the instructional leadership roles of principals?
2. How strong are those relationships when comparing all the sampled schools?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the relationship between community involvement and the instructional Leadership roles of principals.
- To investigate the degree of relationship among the five sampled schools

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, descriptive survey method was employed with the assumption that it could help to gather the opinion of teachers and students on the matters related to community involvement and principals’ role as an instructional leader. Descriptive survey method is also more convenient in gathering opinion of people on a particular issue. The data for this study is mainly quantitative and backed by qualitative sources from focus group discussions with PTA (Parent Teachers Association) members, and interview with school principals.

INSTRUMENTS

Different instruments of data collection were used to maximize the worth of the data used in the study. Questionnaires were designed to solicit the quantitative data from teachers...
and students. They were prepared, commented by experts, pilot-tested, and distributed to the subjects of the study. The questionnaires included Likert-scale items measuring instructional leadership role of principals and community involvement in school activities. Before field-testing them with samples of respondents, the instruments were reviewed by a panel of researchers. These individuals have rich experience and knowledge of the topic being studied. Thorndike (1997) says, “Content validity requires a set of reviewers who have knowledge of the subject matter”.

The same questionnaires were prepared for teachers and students, except that different approaches were employed. The preliminary instrument was then pilot tested by 34 teachers in an adjacent school, which is not included in the main study. Respondents were asked to rate each item based on a five-point Likert scale of 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. Reliability of the instruments was checked using Cronbach’s Alpha. Accordingly, the reliability of the items yielded a coefficient of Cronbach’s Alpha .93.

The other instruments employed for data collection were Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and unstructured interview questions. These were used to triangulate and enrich the information obtained through the quantitative method. The FGD was held with PTA members while the interview was conducted with school principals.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

As far as study population is concerned, there are 12 secondary schools in the two selected zones of SNNPR. Out of these, five were selected for this study. There are population of 275 senior teachers and 365 students. The sample for the quantitative data was elicited from all 231 senior teachers and 317 students in those schools. Further, school principals of the five sampled schools and PTA members constituting six members were also targeted to solicit
relevant and qualitative data. The details of the questionnaires distributed to each respondent of the five schools and their rate of returns are shortly presented in table 1.

| No | School | Teachers | | | Students | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dilla | Questionnaire Dispatched: 60 | Rate of return: 49 | %: 82 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 94 | Rate of return: 86 | %: 92 |
| 2 | Yirgachefe | Questionnaire Dispatched: 35 | Rate of return: 28 | %: 80 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 35 | Rate of return: 32 | %: 91.4 |
| 3 | Aletawondo | Questionnaire Dispatched: 59 | Rate of return: 55 | %: 93 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 76 | Rate of return: 75 | %: 99 |
| 4 | Leku | Questionnaire Dispatched: 61 | Rate of return: 49 | %: 80 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 48 | Rate of return: 39 | %: 81.3 |
| 5 | Yirgalem | Questionnaire Dispatched: 60 | Rate of return: 50 | %: 83 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 112 | Rate of return: 85 | %: 76 |
| Total | | Questionnaire Dispatched: 275 | Rate of return: 231 | %: 84 | Questionnaire Dispatched: 365 | Rate of return: 317 | %: 87 |

**SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

The study comprises of principals of the five sampled schools, senior teachers (having teaching experience of nine or more years), students, and PTA members. The investigators employed purposive sampling technique to select the two study zones, while random sampling technique was used in the selection of five schools out of 12 within the two study zones.

With regard to the selection of respondents, the five school principals were selected using purposive sampling technique, while availability-sampling technique was employed in the selection of senior teachers. The reason for targeting teachers with nine or above years of experience in teaching (senior teachers) is considering that this group relatively provides reliable information compared to those with less years of experiences. The selection of the PTA members was also made using purposive sampling technique.
METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the quantitative data was made using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This helps to see the relationship between community involvement and principals’ instructional leadership roles/practices. Preliminary analyses were conducted to make sure that there were no violations of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. The investigators used the following (Cohen 1988) correlation guidelines for interpreting the results from the correlation tables:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{r} &= \text{.10 to .29 or } \text{r} = \text{-.10 to -.29 small} \\
\text{r} &= \text{.30 to .49 or } \text{r} = \text{-.30 to -.4.9 medium/moderate} \\
\text{r} &= \text{.50 to 1.0 or } \text{r} = \text{-.50 to -1.0 large/strong}
\end{align*}
\]

The qualitative data were gathered through interview and FGD. The findings of the quantitative data were supported by information from the qualitative sources. Therefore, a mixed research of a sequential explanatory strategy was employed in order to support the results of the quantitative data by information from the qualitative sources. Sequential explanatory design is especially useful when unexpected results arise from a quantitative study (Morse, 1991). Based on this, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept and Role of Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership is defined as those actions that a principal takes or delegates to others to promote growth in student learning (Flath, 1989). It is the weight given by the
school principals to instructional activities compared to the administrative/managerial tasks. In other words, instructional leadership is the action taken by a school principal in making instructional quality the top priority of the school. When a principal directs his attention more to the instructional part of his task compared to those managerial or administrative activities, it can be said that he is an instructional leader.

**ROLES PLAYED BY A PRINCIPAL AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER (DIMENSIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP )**

- **Promoting Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

  Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is the process by which a professional person maintains the quality and relevance of their skills throughout their working life. If the aim of school principals is to bring about quality education, they are required to work in collaboration with the school community in order to promote the continuous professional development (CPD) activities in their schools.

  The aim of CPD is to improve teachers’ performance in the classroom in order to raise student achievement and learning (MoE, 2009). Because students’ result is linked directly or indirectly to teachers’ performance. CPD is a career long process of improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes centered on the local context and particularly classroom practice. Hence, to be successful as a leader, the principal must give priority to the Continuous Professional Development and work in collaboration with others towards its development.
• Communicating School Goals and

School principals communicate school goals or visions in many different ways. Among these are communicating goals through faculty meetings and departmental chair meetings. They communicate them through individual meetings such as follow up conference to classroom observations. Frequent communication of school goals by instructional leaders promotes accountability, a sense of personal ownership and instructional improvements. Skillful leaders focus attention on key aspects of the school’s vision and communicate the vision clearly and convincingly.

• Providing Resources

Among the roles played by the school principal is the allocation of adequate resources to the instructional activities. Those who work in schools as teachers and associate staff, school premises, furniture, books and equipment all provide some of the means by which we transform our hopes and aspirations for children’s education into daily learning opportunities and experiences and, beyond that, into the longer-term outcomes of schooling (Thomas and Martin, 2003).

• Supervision (evaluation) of Instruction

The supervision of instruction by the school principal is among his roles as an instructional leader. As an instructional leader he need to follow up the day to day activities of teachers and supervision is the major instrument for this. The instructional leader’s repertoire of instructional practices and classroom supervision offers teachers the needed resources to provide students with opportunities to succeed.
Supervision is a professional, continuous and cooperative exercise that covers all aspects of the life of a school. Duke (1987) also defines supervision as “All efforts to monitor teacher performance.” It includes principals observing teachers in classroom, conducting instructional conference, and using professional development for classroom improvement.

DEVELOPMENT OF A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate is an important ingredient that relates to the productivity and well-being of staff members, parents or guardians, and students. The principal, more than any other individual, is responsible for the climate in the school. As an instructional leader, he is the key figure in promoting an academic learning environment within the school that is conducive to student learning. In support to this concept, Murphy (1990) has the following to say: “Promoting an academic learning climate refers to the behaviors of the principal that influences the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the teachers, students, and parents of a school.” Since good teacher morale and high student achievement go hand in hand, the school principal has to make the school environment conducive and motivate teachers on their job to indirectly promote students’ achievement.

LINKING THE SCHOOL WITH THE COMMUNITY

One of the major tasks of an instructional leader is creating a good linkage with the local community because schools exist in the heart of each community. Adelman and Taylor (2008) concede that schools are more effective and caring places when they are an integral part of the community. This contributes to enhanced academic performance, fewer discipline problems, higher staff morale, and wide use of resources. School-community links are mutually beneficial relationship in which the principal can play a leading role. The nature of the relationship between the school and the community ultimately has an impact
on the learning that takes place in the school and the community. If properly approached, community members can do a lot for school. For instance, they take part in school management functions, in contributing resources, in recruiting volunteers, in contributing their ideas and labor, teaching, etc.

RESULTS

This section presents the relationship between the instructional leadership roles of principals and community involvement. To do so, five dimensions of instructional leadership are correlated with community involvement, based on the responses of student and teacher respondents. The five dimensions are Continuous Professional Development (CPD), supervision, goal communication, resource allotment, and keeping healthy school environment. The comparison is made using Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient, as indicated below:

Table 2 illustrates the association of CPD with community involvement. Here, only teachers’ responses were considered, thinking that students might lack adequate knowledge in the area of CPD. As illustrated in the table, there is strong positive correlation between CPD and community involvement in all the schools. This is indicated by Dilla (r= .651), Yirgachefe (r= .414), Aletawondo (r= .458), Leku (r=.541), and Yirgalem (r= .708). Nevertheless, slight differences are observed among schools ranging from correlation strength of r= .414 for Dilla to r= .708 for Yirgachefe.
TABLE 2: THE LINK BETWEEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Community Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>.651(**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** In all the correlation tables,

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Students (N= 317) 
Teachers (N= 231)

The overall results of the relationship between CPD and community involvement in schools also implies strong significant correlation (r=.615). Hence, it is theoretically sound to infer that, the more CPD programs are implemented in school; the better will be community involvement.

In this regard, the discussion made with PTA members showed that there are attempts to promote CPD in all the five schools. As to the participants, parents are happy with promotion of teachers’ professional competence because that has an input on the achievement of their students. But what was cited as shortcoming is that parents and the community were not allowed to take part in the CPD program.

Table 3 displays the relationship between community involvement and the other dimension of instructional leadership (supervision).
TABLE 3: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Community Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dilla</td>
<td>Yirga Chefe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>.644(**)</td>
<td>.439(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both groups</td>
<td>.207(*)</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alata Wondo</td>
<td>.450(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.539(**)</td>
<td>.474(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.323(**)</td>
<td>.390(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leku</td>
<td>.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.525(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yirga lem</td>
<td>.315(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.280(**)</td>
<td>.390(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated by table 3, Supervision showed strong significant correlation only at Leku and Aletawondo, with respective correlation coefficient $r=.477$ and $r=.474$ respectively, followed by moderate significant correlation at Yirgalem ($r=.323$) and small significant correlation at Dilla ($r=.207$).

In the interview conducted with school principals at Dilla and Yirgachefe, the interviewees confirmed that they strive to promote school supervision but involving community in it is not the usual practice but occasionally done. Compared to teachers, students attached less value to supervision. The reason mentioned for this was that there was no practice of involving students in school supervision. In short, the involvement of students and parents/the community in school supervision is nil.

As a result, students rated the supervisory practice in their schools to be minimal. No significant relationship is observed between supervision and community involvement in Yirgachefe. Even though parents are indirect beneficiaries of school supervision, they need to be involved in it for they have children who are directly benefited from this service. Most writers put that the involvement of community in school supervision complements external supervision.
In general, there are variations from school to school concerning the relationship between supervision and community involvement. However, the overall correlation result ($r=.390$) indicates the presence of moderately strong positive correlation between supervision and community involvement.

Table 4 presents the link between community involvement and goal communication, another dimensions of instructional leadership. The result indicates that there is strong positive correlation between community involvement and goal communication in all the schools.

### TABLE 4: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND GOAL COMMUNICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Dilla Cha</th>
<th>Yirga Wondo</th>
<th>Alata Wondo</th>
<th>Leku Wondo</th>
<th>Yirga lem All Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>.277(**)</td>
<td>.708(**)</td>
<td>.597(**)</td>
<td>.603(**)</td>
<td>.501(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>.862(**)</td>
<td>.521(**)</td>
<td>.621(**)</td>
<td>.574(**)</td>
<td>.724(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>.492(**)</td>
<td>.643(**)</td>
<td>.621(**)</td>
<td>.633(**)</td>
<td>.570(**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall Pearson product moment correlation coefficient result ($r=.62$) also indicates the presence of strong positive correlation between community involvement and goal communication. In a democratic society, without community engagement, there is no vision or purpose to educational leadership (Gelsthorpe and John, 2003)). Hence, it can be inferred that the more principals clarify school goals to the community, the better community members actively involve themselves in school affairs and vice versa.
If communities are kept at distant and are strange to the goals and objectives of schools they are hosting, there is a possibility to refrain themselves from taking part in any action. Hence, parents and the community members should be allowed to participate in the formulation and implementation of school goals.

The issue of resource allotment is also similar to that of goal communication. That is, strong significant correlation is observed between resource allotment and community involvement in four out of the five schools (see table 5 below). In Yirgachefe, however, moderately significant correlation was observed between the two ($r= .387$).

**TABLE 5: THE LINKAGE BETWEEN PRINCIPALS’ RESOURCE ALLOTMENT PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Dimens</th>
<th>Community Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Dilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>.642(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>.746(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>.681(**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall correlation coefficient between community involvement and resource allotment practice of principals is $r= .626$, which is strong positive relationship.

In the focus group discussion (FGD) conducted with PTA members, the participants explained that school principals allot more resources to the instructional activities than to the non-instructional ones. However, they underlined that there is disparity among schools because some schools are richer in resources compared to the rest. This created differences
among schools, as far as resource allocation is concerned. The principals also involve the community in this area and get financial and material support.

Table 6 displays the association between community involvement and school climate, which is the final dimension of instructional leadership. The extent to which the principal devotes more of his time to instruction, his tendency to maintain high visibility for the help of others, the provision of incentives to both students and teachers, etc are all issues of school climate.

**TABLE 6: THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL CLIMATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Community Involvement</th>
<th>Dilla</th>
<th>Yirga Chafe</th>
<th>Alata Wondo</th>
<th>Leku</th>
<th>Yirgalem</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>School climate</td>
<td>.463(**)</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>.538(**)</td>
<td>.650(**)</td>
<td>.470(**)</td>
<td>.507(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>.724(**)</td>
<td>.603(**)</td>
<td>.639(**)</td>
<td>.764(**)</td>
<td>.805(**)</td>
<td>.751(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>.554(**)</td>
<td>.429(**)</td>
<td>.585(**)</td>
<td>.712(**)</td>
<td>.578(**)</td>
<td>.605(**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be observed in table 6, there is strong positive correlation between these two in all the five schools. This is indicated by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ($r = .554$) for Dilla, ($r = .449$) for Yirgachefe, ($r = .585$) for Aletawondo, ($r = .712$) for Leku, and ($r = .578$) for Yirgalem.

In the climate where the principal tries to avail instructional materials for teachers and students, where he/she puts clear goals to all stake holders, and where parents and community involvement is intensified, there is opportunity for community members to actively take part in school affairs. Likewise, the involvement of the community in every aspect of school activities can contribute to good school climate. The overall result ($r = .605$)
also shows the existence of positive, strong significant relationship between school climate and community involvement.

In response to the interview questions raised, the school principals replied that they involve communities in different activities like minimizing students’ dropout, curbing disciplinary problems, improving students’ results, etc. However, they said community involvement in almost all schools stressed more on contribution of money and seeking material supports.

In summary, as explained in the aforementioned discussions, there is strong positive relationship between community involvement and the instructional leadership. The involvement of the community in school activities, in one way or another, can improve the whole school activities.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed the presence of strong positive correlation between principals’ instructional leadership roles and community involvement. Put differently, the more the school principals play instructional leadership role, the better community members take part in school affairs to promote the education of their children. In spite of strong correlation observed between community involvement and instructional leadership, the participation of students and the community in school supervision was found to be minimal.

The strengths of community involvement in schools were found to vary from school to school. As per the discussion with Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, some of the schools avoid calling the community now and then and simply rely on PTA. They occasionally contact the local community when serious conditions arise.
REFERENCES