Review Article

Evaluating Principals' Role in Curriculum Supervision through Effective Transformative Leadership

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This paper makes a critical examination of the role of school principals and managers in enhancing curriculum supervision and reinforcing prudent teaching practices. This is through a plethora of activities such as analyzing teacher's performance, providing meaningful feedback, enhancing collegial approaches in the school and developing instructional strategies that will help to achieve the curriculum goals. The administrators and school management also need to provide the instructional resources required to achieve the learning outcomes. It therefore calls for collaborative efforts between the school and the community within. A focus therefore is made on the nature of leadership that can drive to broadly achieve the overall school's goals. Effective leadership has been examined by scholars and the concurrence is that there are appendages to it ranging from instructional leadership, transformative leadership, moral leadership, participative, contingency and managerial. A school principal need to blend the six approaches so that they are geared to learner's achievement, work ethics and values, democratic ideals and social justice. Finally, the paper looks at the emerging concepts and trends in school supervision and how they have shaped the delivery of curriculum goals and directions of schools. It proposes on the direction that educational policy makers should adopt in view of making bringing success to school leadership for effective curriculum delivery.

Keywords: Curriculum; Supervision; Leadership; School; Policy

I. Introduction

The theoretical framework for this paper draws from research establishing the complex nature of teaching and, consequently, the challenges of assessing teaching practices and supervision. In contrast to process–product research in which effective teaching could be attributed to discrete, observable teaching performances operating independent of time and place (Shulman, 1986), conceptions of effective teaching now recognize the complex, changing situations and often competing demands that teachers face (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999) in the school. The core activities of teaching occur in real time and involve social and intellectual interactions, often shaped by the students in the environment and intra school factors, thus increasing the complexity of the task (Leinhardt, 2001). Regardless of the assessment instrument, teacher effectiveness is demonstrated when student learning improves, and on this point educators and policymakers agree (Darling-Hammond 2007; Gordon, Kane and Staiger, 2006).

Teachers draw on specialized expertise in making decisions about their work. Expertise, considered to be applied formal knowledge (Brint, 1994), is a defining characteristic of professions and a foundation for professional judgment. The knowledge base for teachers extends beyond subject matter knowledge to include, for example, knowledge of educational aims, learners, curriculum, general pedagogy, and subject-specific pedagogy (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001; Shulman, 1987). This is what school supervisors need to cultivate among the teachers. Teachers apply their professional knowledge to decide what and how to teach to promote student learning.

1.1. Effective School Leadership

In principle, there is application of democratic ideals by the school since the teacher and the learner are allowed latitude of choice in creating and establishing the nature of instruction. Learner involvement is crucial since they are able to own up the learning goals. When teaching is viewed as more than the simple transmission of facts

and ideas, the need for professional judgment and autonomy becomes clear. Across professions, autonomy and freedom of action are necessary conditions for professionals to adapt their service to particular client needs and circumstances (Friedson, 2001).

Effective teachers are interested in participating on most committees in the school and in the community around the school, able to know the students' needs and supporting the individual differences, possessing high expectation and encourages the students to be optimistic about their ability. They are equally able to increase students' motivation, use different teaching strategies, have good communication skills, loves their students and knowledgeable knowledge about their subject and subject matter (Shanoski & Hranitz, 1992).

What a teacher does in the classroom is a far greater predictor of student success than anything else, and students who consistently get effective teachers benefit exponentially (Gordon, Kane and Staiger,2006). This implies that students given the most effective teachers can make over twice the gains of comparable students assigned to the least effective teachers. Researchers have even found that effective teachers have such a significant impact on a student's ability to learn that teaching can offset learning challenges such as low income levels and achievement gaps (Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain,2005)

Expert teachers under close and democratic supervision can therefore prepare the optimal classroom climate by following the error and giving feedback, scan the classroom behaviour effectively and monitoring learning. Expert teachers should be able to monitor students' problems and assess their understanding whilst providing feedback at the same time; they can see the difficulties facing the students and build strategies and hypotheses and examine or test these strategies (Hattie, 2002).

1.2. The Diversified Role of School Principals

The demands for more effective schools have continually placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders. Evidence suggests that, school leadership strongly affects student learning (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Principals' abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students. It is imperatives to understand the nature of effective schools which principals in execution of their roles and mandates can strive to achieve.

More than ever, in today's climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, education officers at national and county governments, unions, and other agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs (Elmore, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006).

Lezzotte (1991) identifies that effective schools have a clear school mission that is clearly articulated through shared understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. Teachers accept responsibility for students' learning of the school's essential curricular goals. Also, there is a high expectation for success to create a climate of expectation in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and school skills. The school is driven by instructional leadership where the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students.

The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program. The school exhibit frequent monitoring of student. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program. The school gives opportunity to learn and student time on task. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential content and skills. Equally, the school is safe and lives in an orderly environment to cultivate an orderly, purposeful, businesslike atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning. Finally, the school strives for home - school relations parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve that mission. This is what school principals can strive to achieve (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2011).

The role of the principals has focused on them as instructional leader (Glickman, 2010). But management is important in addition to instructional leadership (Jones, 2010; Kruse & Louis, 2009). We know that when school improvements occur, principals play a central role in (a) ensuring that resources – money, time, and professional development – align with instructional goals, (b) supporting the professional growth of teachers in a variety of interconnected ways, (c) including teachers in the information loop, (d) cultivating the relationship between the school and community, and (e) managing the day-to-day tasks of running a school. Each of these is viewed as a management task in the sense that it involves daily or weekly attention to problem solving within the school and between the school and its immediate environment.

Some scholars believe that management is a prerequisite to leadership (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The management function of organizational structure is the process of deploying human and physical resources to carry out tasks and achieve school goals. How do principals manage the day-to-day activities of the school and, at the same time, work toward the school's improvement? This happen through the various management processes such as delegation, planning, commanding, organizing and controlling.

Delegation is critical to effective management. A principal can increase his effectiveness as a delegator by adhering to the following principles (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006). Delegating authority does not reduce the authority of the principals. To delegate means to grant or to confer. To delegate does not mean to surrender authority. A principal who delegates authority in no way abdicates the legitimate right to act on behalf of the school.   There are three steps in the delegation process. First, the principal assigns responsibility. For example, when a principal asks an assistant principal to prepare an enrollment projection, order supplies and materials, or hire a new teacher, he is assigning responsibility. Second, along with the assignment, the assistant principal is given the authority to do the job. The principal may give the deputy principal the power to access enrollment data, to negotiate on the price of supplies and materials, and to submit a hiring notice to the human resource department. Finally, the principal requires accountability from the assistant principal. That is, the assistant principal incurs an obligation to carry out the task assigned by the principal (Zajda, 2010).

2. The Paradigm of Transformation

Principals have a great role in initiating transformational leadership in the schools. In this regard, transformational leadership has been frequently studied in the leadership fields (Bass, 1998; Heck & Hallinger, 1999). Initiated by Leithwood and his colleagues in the late 1980s and early 1990s, numerous studies have demonstrated positive relationships between transformational leadership and various school and teacher organizational conditions (Anderson, 2008). According to Northouse (2001), in the simplest terms, transformational leadership is the ability to get people to want to change, improve, and be led. It involves assessing associates' motives, satisfying their needs, and valuing them. Besides, some researches claim that transformational leadership is the leader's ability to increase organizational members' commitment, capacity, and engagement in meeting goals (Bass & Avolio, 1997; Chew & Chan, 2008; Geijsel, Sleegers, Stoel & Krüger, 2009; Jung & Avolio, 2000).

Hallinger (2003) puts that transformational leadership models conceptualize leadership as an organizational entity rather than the task of a single individual. In this context, Evers and Lakomski (1996) suggest that these models rely too heavily on the transformational skills of the leader. It is claimed by many researches that transformational leadership behaviors have direct and indirect effects on followers' behavior, their psychological states and organizational performance. According to Moolenaar et al., (2010) transformational leadership is positively associated with schools' innovative climate and it motivates followers to do more than they are expected in terms of extra effort and greater productivity. Transformational leadership has three basic functions. First, transformational leaders sincerely serve the needs of others, empower them and inspire followers to achieve great success. Secondly, they charismatically lead, set a vision, instill trust, confidence and pride in working with them. Finally, with the intellectual stimulation they offer followers of the same caliber as the leader in order to make any organization a better performing place, administrators' transformational leadership behaviors become more important especially at schools as they are the dynamics of change for the society in which they operate (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Yammarino, Spangler & Bass, 1993).

The management and leadership roles of principals as viewed in relation to different aspects show a strong focus on managerial and leadership skills as their special abilities further support the idea that principals are quite concerned about their transactional leadership roles.   The principals who have experienced success in performing their transitional leadership roles are more experienced than others and have a genuine desire and commitment for developing their schools.

Supervisory leadership for the 21st century requires enhanced collaborative relationships, participatory decision making, reflective listening and practice, and teacher self-direction—all emanating from the constructivist paradigm (Karen, 1999). What has emerged from the arguments in this paper is that effective curriculum supervision by school principals in the 21st century will have, for the most part, two crucial facets. First, it will emphasize a democratic conception of supervision that is based on collaboration, participative decision making, and reflective practice—all with the goal of developing self-directed, autonomous professionals. Second, it will require visionary leaders who promote these beliefs and values and enjoin their faculties to construct together a supervisory program that will improve teaching and learning. Only through the application of these alternative approaches can the crises facing curriculum supervision be resolved.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has highlighted issues that hold implications for practice, policy, and research on assessing the diversified roles of school principals. The role of the school principal has been transformed as a result of the greater devolution of responsibilities to schools through different policies. School principals will increasingly be held accountable for the quality of learning outcomes of schools, resource mobilization and resource management, school quality monitoring and associated staff development programs. In order to fulfill those responsibilities, they may need to develop new management skills to work collaboratively and effectively with students, school management committees, teachers and school communities.

Teachers' supervision is therefore a critical issue in educational leadership today. It involved lots of leadership aspects, identifying, supervision, teacher's skills, students' performance, the effectiveness of the school types and technical skills. Therefore, the role of a school administrator or a principal is to supervise, planning, developed competitive strategies for the school. Thus, a principal duty is very challenging and should be able to differentiate between administrative duty and management task for the overall achievement of the school's goals. This research therefore affirms that school principals have cardinal role in the supervision of the curriculum and all efforts to achieve this should be geared towards this end. Educational policy makers have a responsibility of providing the requisite infrastructures to the principals to enable drive this agenda that will ultimately transform education in the society.

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