



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEAD TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

This paper is based on the study of Principals' Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness in Bangladesh. The main aim of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership and effectiveness of the secondary schools of Bangladesh. As this study involves inquiring numerical data, a quantitative method was followed throughout the study. The major findings of the study showed that principals' instructional leadership had positive impacts on students' achievement, worthy classroom environment, respectable teaching-learning activities and above all maintaining decent academic standards of the school. The most important matter is that in Bangladesh there are some peripheral variables which impact the total education system such as political interruption, lack of awareness of community people, inadequate and less qualified manpower in decision making level, etc. As an instructional leader a principal with his/her strong instructional leadership skills can make the school environment impeccable and maintain a good affiliation with the stakeholders. In this study, the researchers found that the total effectiveness of a school mainly hinges on instruction and the schools which have a tendency to develop their systems must have a strong instructional leader. It is concluded that the Instructional leadership doesn't need an active environment, but it can construct the environment effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Is that famous old saying “as is the headmaster so is the school”, still holds true or resemblance with the modern concepts of instructional leadership and school effectiveness? Instructional leadership seeks to improve the most powerful school based determinants of student achievement – namely, the quality of teaching and the curriculum (Hattie, 2009). Headmaster biz school heads or principals’ role as “instructional leader” is a comparatively new concept that emerged in the early 70s, which called for a shift of emphasis from the head teacher being a manager or administrator to the instructional or academic leader. In conventional terms as head teacher or principal of a school is an administrator who spends most of his/her time strictly dealing with routine administrative work. Whereas a principal who is an instructional leader is charged with redefining his/her role in creating and achieving the vision and mission of making the school excellent in collaboration with teachers, students and communities. It has often been assumed that a school head, i.e. principal wears many hats- a manager, administrator, instructional leader and curriculum leader at a diverse point in a day. It is a balancing act of having to run among these various roles. But in practice, more devotion is given to managerial and administrative roles than to instructional leadership role which is more often delegated to others in the school set-up.

Hence principals’ instructional leadership role has been emerging as a burning issue in good governance and rising standard of education in the schools. So, schools need an operational leader to meet the schools’ mission and vision. Principal constructs a shared sense of purpose and establishes a set of common core values among the staffs. Having a common sense of values and purpose, all members of the instructional team become committed to achieving excellence in schools’ performance. Here comes the central role of the school principals’ instructional leadership.

According to BANBEIS, 2016 there are about 19,786 school heads or principals in the same number of secondary schools in Bangladesh. These schools are graded as “good”, “average”, “poor or weak” mostly on the basis of the results of the public examinations i.e. Secondary School

Certificate (S.S.C.) and Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C). Whether these types of graded schools have “good”, “average”, and “weak” head or principals and what roles these administrators cum leaders play are a matter of investigation. Whether the concept of instructional leadership is operational in making the secondary schools’ effective in Bangladesh also needs to be examined. It is high time to identify the role of principal in the total performance of schools. Is there any connection between instructional leadership and school effectiveness? This research is mainly focusing on finding out the answer of this important question. Moreover, this research will help the school leader to point out the effectiveness of their leadership for the overall development of their institute and it will help to ensure the quality of education as well.

Conceptual Framework of the Instructional Leadership and Effective Schools: A Brief Literature Review

A paradigm shift has emerged during 80s’ on the school heads’ administrative versus instructional leadership tasks. Instructional leadership emphasizes more on those actions that a principal takes or delegate others to promote progress in student learning. Instructional leadership refers to those sets of leadership practices that involve the planning, evaluation, coordination and improvement of teaching and learning. It is also denoted to learning-centered leadership (Goldering, Porter, Murphy, Ellitt & Craves, 2009). Instructional Leadership has been progressively accepted by the educationist throughout the world into the role set of the principal ship since last decade (Bush, 2013; Walker and Hallinger, 2015). In a recent meta-analysis of research on the direct and indirect effects of leadership on student outcomes, it is concluded that the effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times as great as that of transformational leadership (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008).

More recently, the explanation of Instructional leadership has been expanded towards deeper involvement in the core business of schooling which is teaching and learning. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), the leaders with resilient, self-efficacy lean towards connectivity and exemplary sophisticated

performance anticipations to both teachers and students. In learning communities, staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, work together to solve the problem, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. They operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies or in isolation. People in a learning community “own the problem” and become mediators of its solution. Instructional leaders also make adult learning a priority; set up high expectations for performance; create a culture of continuous learning for adults and get the community’s support for school attainment. Grissom and Loeb (2011) mentioned that the school leaders influence the entire success of a school.

Sergiovanni, Starratt and Cho (2013) mentioned that the most important task of a school leader is to supervise the school teachers through subject range. But Marshall (2009) explained that the school leaders will not only observe the classroom instructions but also provide feedback to the teachers. According to Lowenhaupt (2014), instructional leaders need to know and perform the distinctive necessities of the elements and perspectives in which they work. Blasé and Blasé, (2000) articulated instructional leadership in specific behaviors such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching.

Elements of Instructional Leadership

The mostly accepted inclusive model of instructional leadership with three broad dimensions such as a) Defining school's mission, b) Managing curriculum and instruction, c) Promoting a positive school climate were established by Hallinger and Murphy (1987). These three extensive dimensions were further divided into ten instructional leadership roles- (1) framing the school’s goals, (2) communicating the school’s goals, (3) coordinating the curriculum, (4) supervising and evaluating instruction, (5) monitoring student progress, (6) protecting instructional time, (7) providing incentives for teachers, (8) providing incentives for learning, (9) promoting professional development and (10) maintaining high visibility. There are some other

educationist who designed instructional leadership according to their research and style. Smith and Andrews (2004) showed 4 factors which are very much related to effective school. A leader of an effective school should have four qualities: a) Resource provider, b) Instructional resource, c) Communicator, d) Visible presence.

According to Blasé & Blasé, (2004) the instructional leadership style has following common characteristics- a) Encourager, b) Facilitator of the study of teaching and learning, c) Facilitator of collaborative efforts amongst teachers, d) Establishing coaching relationships with teachers, e) Using research to make instructional decisions f) Using adult learning principles.

Conceptual Framework for Instructional Leadership

The below framework has been developed by stimulating the proposal from previous studies.



Figure 1. Framework of instructional leadership

School Effectiveness

What are the landscapes of an effective school? Effective schools are distinguished by professional leadership motivated by the desire to build a lively professional learning community. They are defined by an agreed vision and goals, purposeful teaching and high expectations for student learning. Effective schools have careful systems of accountability, a focus on teaching and learning, and inspiring the secure learning environments.

Evidence shows that, an effective school has agreed expectations and consistency around the quality of teaching required to impact on student performance. A constant focus on teaching and learning is entrenched in the culture of an

effective school. Supported by effective leadership, effective schools provides ongoing learning opportunities for teachers to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary to teach to higher professional standards. In the 1980s, research studies on the effective schools were more concentrated on the principals' instructional leadership. An effective school is a school under a principals' strong leadership with the characteristics of possessing a vision which focuses on student achievement and ensuring that vision as well.

Lezzote (1991) developed seven correlates of an effective school. These seven factors are: a) Safe and orderly Environment, b) Climate of High expectation for success, c) Instructional leadership, d) Clear and focused mission, e) Opportunity to learn and time on task f) Frequent monitoring of student progress and g) Home-school relation

According to the DCPS Effective School Framework (2010) there are 6 elements which can affect school effectiveness. These are a) Teaching and Learning, b) Leadership, c) job Embedded Professional Development, d) Resources, e) Safe and Effective Learning Environment and f) Family and Community Engagement.

Sadker, Zittleman, (2010) proposed a five factor theory of Effective School. These five factors are- a) Strong leadership, b) A clear School Mission, c) A safe and orderly climate, d) Monitoring student progress, e) High expectations.

Relationship between Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness

The jobs of a school principal have both direct and indirect effect on students' achievement, mainly by the sustenance that leaders provide to the teachers (Leithwood and Mascall 2008). As Supovits, Philip and Henry (2010) indicated that the encouraging words to the teacher of the school principal has extensive connection towards the success of the whole system. Spillane & Lee (2014) found that the responsibilities of school principal have become more challenging due to rapid reform, technological developments and diversified needs of the pupils'. Furthermore Calman (2010) indicated that the expectations of modern society about the learning results may not be attained without operative leadership by the head of the

institutions. Although the term instructional leadership was familiarized earlier in 1970s, but still the definition has remained intangible due to the significance on academic accomplishment (Neumerski, 2012).

According to Hallinnger and Heck (1998), principals can influence school effectiveness and improvement by shaping school goals, directions, structure, organization and social networks. Furthermore, principals can provide leadership in guiding the policies, procedures and practices of the school that can have direct influence on student learning and achievement. Little research has been done on "A study of the Principals' Leadership Style and School Effectiveness" in Bangladesh. However a similar type of research study on 'Principals' Roles in School Based Management towards School Improvement: The Case of Bangladesh Schools" carried out by Abdullah, Huq and Alzaidiye, (2008) revealed significant relationship between some of the factors of principals' managerial roles variables under schools based management and school improvement which is similar to school effectiveness to a large extent with the present study. The study also found a positive relationship to teachers' professional development.

On the basis of above theoretical discussion five aspects of instructional leadership such as facilitator of the teaching-learning process, resource provider, encourager, and communicator has direct link to make school effective have been chosen to investigate under the present study.

METHOD

The main purpose of this present study was to examine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school effectiveness at the secondary level. Methodology of the study was mainly quantitative in nature. In order to collect data three questionnaires were developed and distributed to three groups of sample population: (a) Principals/Head Teachers, (b) Teachers, and (c) Students. The total sample size was 80 (Principals /Head Teachers-10, Teachers-30, Students-40) from 10 non-government and government secondary schools in Dhaka and cox's Bazar district. Schools were selected purposively, so that the Principals were also selected following the same way. Students and

teachers were selected through random sampling technique. Data was analyzed manually. But in some cases SPSS and Microsoft excel software was also used for analyzing the data. Ethical Issues were considered sincerely throughout the study.

Instruments

Five major characteristics of instructional leadership has been considered throughout the study for analyzing the results. The relationship between the head teachers' leadership style and demographic information about the school has also been considered to find out the actual impact. A lickert-type checklist having 20 criteria and 5 point scale was used to collect data from the head teachers, teachers and students. Twenty criteria for data generation were developed centered around 5 major elements of instructional leadership and its relationship to school effectiveness. The five elements included – Head teacher as a) facilitator of the teaching-learning, b) communicator, c) resource provider, d) encourager and e) visible presence of the head teacher in the school. A school information sheet was also developed and used to collect data on teacher-student ratio, land area of school, student-land ratio, and schools yearly budget, students' results in SSC for consecutive 5 years and schools income.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Finding of the study are categorized according to five variables and discussed briefly as follows:

Head Teacher/ Principal-

A) As facilitator of the teaching-learning process

All the respondent head teacher/principal selected for the study were graduate degree holders, had B.Ed./M.Ed. degree as professional qualification but none had M.Ed. in Educational Administration or Educational leadership. All of them had long teaching and administrative experiences. All the respondent teacher for this study had graduate degree and professional degree also. On the role of head teacher as being a facilitator almost all (90%) head teacher strongly agreed with the statement that they acted positively in facilitating teaching-learning activities by guiding teachers in knowing

curriculum, helping classroom management, providing resources, organizing co-curricular activities, making decisions in consultation with teachers (80%), setting up goals for teachers and students performance (70%), provide rewards and recognition for teaching and learning improvement (70%).

Teachers' responses varied from head teachers responses significantly. Only 60% teachers strongly agreed that principal provided help in knowing curriculum, facilitating teaching learning activities, classroom management, organizing co-curricular activities. However all most all teachers agreed that head teachers discussed with others in making decisions- 50% teachers strongly agreed and 50% moderately agreed. This indicated that head teachers use participatory approach in decision making process. But 62.5% students strongly agreed and 27.5% mildly agreed that their principal applied strong management techniques and try to establish resourceful classroom by providing different kinds of teaching-learning tools.

B) As communicator

To be a good leader one should be a good communicator. It is evident that as an Instructional leader principals should act as an excellent communicator which is very much essential in an organization, more effectively in the schools. Almost all the head teachers (95%), most teachers and students, teachers (80%) and students (77%) agreed that head teachers were good communicator and kept open line of communication with teachers, students, staff and the local community.

C) As resource provider

Strong classroom management techniques can be a good way to maintain an educational institution properly. According to the modern theory of education, teacher with teaching aids can perform better in the classroom and no classroom will be interesting to student without education materials. 96% teachers mentioned that principal of their institutions tries to establish a safe and orderly school environment with a clear discipline code whereas 5% of total students didn't agreed with this point. But 87.5% students indicated that their principal tries to improve and maintain high standard of education.

D) As encourager

Principals' encouraging behavior has significant effects on students' academic performance. When principal take some steps to encourage the student about the high academic performance that motivate students and also the result of the school. About 40% teachers and 35% students disagreed that head teachers provide rewards and recognition for teaching learning improvement whereas 90% principals agreed with this point. Above discussion shows that there are conflict between the response of head teacher and teacher and the response of students and principals.

E) As visible figure in educational institution

To be a good leader one should spend more time in the organization. School is a big organization not political but social. Principals' presence may have both positive and negative effect on the school effectiveness. In this study it is found that there is a strong relationship between principals' presence in the school and school academic achievement. 77% teachers and 67% students agreed that principal observe classroom activities regularly. According to the most of the students (65%) and teachers (73%) response, the principal spends more time in school than others. Principals' agreed that involvement of community people in school activities plays important role in school effectiveness.

Table 1. Related information of two schools

Name of the School	Teacher/Student	Land Area (acres)	Yearly Income (Tk)	Yearly Budget (Tk)	Average rate of pass in SSC Exam from 2007-2011	Average rate of A+ in SSC Exam from 2007-2011
UMHS	1:62	13.61	13,00,400/=	35,00,000/=	64.77%	5.41%
CGHS	1:24	6.00	7,00,000/=	25,00,000/=	96.92%	38.53%
Name of the School	Teacher/Student	Land Area (acres)	Yearly Income (Tk)	Yearly Budget (Tk)	Average rate of pass in SSC Exam from 2007-2011	Average rate of A+ in SSC Exam from 2007-2011
UMHS	1:62	13.61	13,00,400/=	35,00,000/=	64.77%	5.41%
CGHS	1:24	6.00	7,00,000/=	25,00,000/=	96.92%	38.53%

The findings showed a positive relationships between 5 variables and school effectiveness. But the principals' ability to express his/her leadership role is always under severe pressure in the secondary schools in Bangladesh. During interview most of the head teachers' and principals' stated that "all of us want to make our own school most effective one, but most of the time we cannot do what we want to do"! They mentioned political and local pressure and interference, pressure of the local community influential member of the school management committee etc.

Results of the schools

Schools' results of the SSC examinations were collected from the period of 2007-2011. The results of these schools (10) showed that 4 schools had more than 96% average pass rate, one school had about 92%, 3 schools had pass rates varied

between 76%to 88% and 2 schools had pass rate varied between 62%-65%. It is interesting to note that those schools had more than 90% pass rate, percentage of students achieving A+ grades also differ significantly-from the lowest 3.32% to highest 37.34%, schools with lower pass rate had obviously lower percentage of A+ grades. The result of the schools showed that there was a positive relationship between the schools' results and the head teachers' leadership roles along with other factors like teacher-student ratio, school size, school income, number of teachers' and their concerted efforts. But a comparison of the results of two schools is cited here to show that principals' instructional leadership and school effectiveness are also being affected by some other external factors strongly operative in Bangladesh.

Case study

Two schools were purposively selected as a case study in Cox'sBazar district. The two schools were selected to assess the role of principal associated with other variables and their impact on schools' results. The below table shows the demographic information about the two schools and also the results.

UMHS is situated in a rural area and CGHS is in urban area. The above table shows some important information about these two schools. In school one there has a huge teacher student ratio which indicates 1:62. In other school this ratio is smaller than the first one, which is 1:24. Teacher student ratio can obstruct the school achievement. In school number one the rate of pass in SSC exam is 64.77% but in school number two it is 96.92% (Average for five sequential years). Rate of A+ in SSC exam can also be harmed by the teacher student ratio. Only 5.41% student get A+ in school number one but in school number two the percentage of A+ in SSC exam is 38.53%. Yearly budget, yearly income and Land area of schools shows some different interpretations. As school number one has a larger land area than school number two and a huge yearly budget. Even so it cannot progress their improvement due to having some administrative obstacles. According to the response of teachers and students, the Headmaster of school number one has less time to visit schools regularly and cannot maintain a relationship with other teachers in the school.

But in school number two has a Headmaster who is more responsible for the school and also he can maintain cordial relationship with the stakeholders of the school. Another very big problem here is that the duration of Headmaster of the school. In school number one Headmaster is changing frequently in almost every year due to some political reason but present Headmaster of school number two is serving this school for more than 10 years. In this case, performance of Head teacher mostly depends on duration of their services and other external factors.

CONCLUSION

The results of this quantitative study add to the other research findings on how teachers and students perceive their principals' instructional leadership attributes. Findings also emphasis that

principals Instructional Leadership has a positive impact on student achievement, good classroom environment, good teaching learning activities and above all maintaining good academic standards of the school. The role of a principals' instructional leadership is only a portion of the integral part of this complex educational organization making contributions to school effectiveness. It is a tremendous challenge for today's educators in the public education system to manage and govern their school effectively. It is hoped that the instructional leaders with the characteristics of effective leadership behavioral patterns similar to the Situational Leadership Model proposed by Blanchard and Zigarmy (1985) would succeed in providing a fair and quality education for the future generation in the coming millennium. But the study also shows that principals' instructional leadership can be affected not only by internal factors but by external factors as well.

Due to time and other constraints, this study could not cover a large sample population in a wider area. Bangladesh lacks research on this aspect of a principal role as instructional leader and its impact on school effectiveness. There is a scope for further research in this area using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. There is also need for intensive training in leadership for the head teachers and principals' of the secondary schools in Bangladesh and Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka can provide a significant role in such training.

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