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Instructional Leadership Challenges in Public Secondary Schools in Sudan

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Abstract. The study aimed to investigate Instructional Leadership Challenges in Public Secondary Schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State; Shekan Locality (Elobeid city). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a descriptive survey method was employed. The population of the study was 451 teachers and 12 Principals. From this population, 222 teachers and 12 principals were used as a sample using simple random and comprehensive sampling techniques. Data collected from respondents were analyzed and interpreted using percentage, one-sample t-test, and weighted mean. The findings revealed that there are significant challenges for instructional leadership such as school dropout due to the living and economic conditions and the delay of some teachers for classes because of transportation. Lack of financial support has been a cause for inadequate educational facilities and laboratories and a poor school environment. On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the gaps encountered in the instructional leadership practices which mainly focusing on empowering principals, teachers and schools.

Keywords. Instructional leadership challenges; Secondary Schools

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Instructional leadership has particular importance in educational administration because of its far-reaching effects on completing school programs, objectives and educational goals. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students (Bush, 2003). Moreover, instructional leadership focuses on the schools' core business – teaching, learning, pupils' progress and achievements (Edamo,2018). Different researchers have identified strong leadership as one of the essential factors of effective and successful schools (Salfi, 2011). That is, the success of schools fundamentally depends on school leaders. School leaders are being taken accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn (Kurland &Lazarowitz, 2010).

To attain the intended objectives of schools, principals are expected to exhibit the instructional competency, knowledge, skill and ability expected of them. Their effectiveness is believed to be critical for the successful performance of the schools they are leading. In today's rapidly changing academic environment, experienced school leaders with skills needed to address fundamental challenges and raise students' achievement have become an essential component of the paradigm shift (Mansoor,2015). Accordingly, the conceptual framework for

this study is based on Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model (1985). The study attempts to hold instructional leadership practices and challenges related to three dimensions of instructional leadership described in the Hallinger and Murphy model. They stated that instructional leadership comprises three broad categories, defining the school mission, managing the instructional program and promoting school climate.

Three dimensions with ten functions are proposed by Hallinger (2003) as being inherent in instructional leadership. The first dimension defines a school's mission, comprised of the two functions of framing and communicating the school's goals. The second dimension is managing the instructional program, comprised of the three functions of supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The third dimension is promoting a positive school learning climate, comprised of the five functions protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, developing high expectations and standards, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2003). Also, Hallinger has developed these ideas by reviewing previous researches describing the relationship between principal leadership and students' achievement.

Schools consist of people; community, students, teachers, administrators and support staff. Although all these people have their objectives to attain by being in school, the core task of schools is teaching and learning. Thus, the effectiveness and success of schools are measured in terms of their performance. The critical business of schools is teaching, learning and its effects on students' academic and overall achievement (Phillips, 2011). Secondary schools in Sudan consist of pupils from ages 14 to 16 who can attend secondary education, which lasts three years and comprises nine core subjects (including Islamic studies, English, history and mathematics and optional subjects in computers, agriculture, commercial science, etc.). The first two years are familiar to all students. In the last year, students have to choose between two different paths: arts or science. At the end of the secondary level, students sit for the Sudan School Certificate examination (Singh, 2011).

Instructional leadership plays an essential role in improving students' learning outcomes, teachers' profession and produce well-educated citizens at all levels. So it is crucial to create an environment that will help school leaders practice effective instructional leadership in their respective schools. Challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership might be associated with followers, leaders, communication, and other situational factors. There are other problems, such as the problems of low academic achievement of students in the examinations, which is one of the most challenging problems that face students and teachers. Furthermore, Hallinger and Murphy (1987) state that four obstacles restrict principals from practicing instructional leadership, namely lack of understanding of curriculum and instruction, professional norms, expectations of a school district, and role of diversity.

Population displacement, conflict and a lack of technical and financial resources have made data collection a severe challenge in Sudan. The key issues affecting the implementation are mainly related to limited educational resources. Lack of investment in education is translated into schools, lacking basic supplies and a decent and safe environment with sufficient sanitation facilities. The shortages of learning spaces and qualified teachers are another issue (UNICEF, 2009). Besides, the teacher training assessment, poverty and child labor turn out to be severe challenges in terms of accessing education. Also, societal attitudes towards education still prevent children from accessing school. Finally, the limitations of available data, including disaggregated and data on national assessment, is a significant obstacle to measuring learning outcomes (World Health Organization, 2017).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are some findings of previous studies, such as the study of Beyene (2018) on the assessment of instructional leadership practices in the school, which shows that most school leaders had less experience and qualification. Findings of a study conducted by Mansoor(2015) showed that the main challenges confronting the instructional leadership in the state sector schools include infrastructure and resources, teacher recruitment, school organization, and student enrollment, parental involvement, and political pressure.

The study of McEwan (2002) described five challenges affecting the effectiveness of instructional leadership. These are: lack of skill and training for principals, lack of teachers' cooperation, lack of time to perform instructional activities, lack of support from principals, and lack of vision, will, or courage from principals toward instructional activities. A similar study by Elamin (2014) showed that the principals of secondary schools in the Northern state in Sudan face difficulties in their administrative work related to the curriculum of those schools in the state. A weak relationship between the principals characterizes the obstacle facing the local society.

In light of this, secondary school principals are expected to perform well with instructional leadership activities. School principals may face many challenges. The instructional leadership suffers from problems that it encounters during the functioning of the schools. Schools differ from one to another and from one educational stage to another.

In Sudan, limited research has been conducted on principals' instructional leadership practices and challenges in secondary schools. Rather than focusing on instructional leadership, they focused on administration and management. The researcher visited the secondary schools in Kordufan state, Shekan locality (Elobeid city) through the practical training sessions. As it is noticed from personal observation of the researcher, there are serious challenges facing school leaders. Hence, the researcher is initiated to study instructional leadership challenges in public secondary schools of Kordufan state, Shekan locality (Elobeid city).

The study deals with identifying instructional leadership challenges of the public secondary schools based on the facts mentioned above that can commonly appear as essential challenges of the learning environment. It aspires the researcher to investigate when and how frequently instructional leadership supports teachers at different experience levels and how adequately it has been conducted to enhance students learning achievement. This prompted the researcher to investigate the problem guided by the following fundamental questions: Do challenges related to lack of school resources and lack of school climate (all of them are aspects of leadership challenges) in secondary schools? What Status of challenges related to instructional support for school leaders?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the challenges affecting principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools. Precisely, the objective of the current study is to identify the main challenges related to lack of school resources, lack of school climate and challenges related to instructional support for school leader's practices in secondary schools of Shekan Locality.

2. The research methodology

The research approach employed for this study is a descriptive survey design. Mixed methods design is employed which uses procedures for collecting, analyzing, and linking quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Creswell, 2005). The qualitative method enriches the quantitative one as it includes direct interaction between the participants and the

researcher. Besides, qualitative methods help the researcher obtain a more holistic impression and a complete picture of a particular subject to fully understand participants' experiences and points of view (Creswell, 2013). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously in the same visit to the field, then taking the results and looking to see how they connect or what they tell about the whole picture of instructional leadership in the school. This is also helpful in identifying an accurate description of the challenges encountered in the schools' current instructional leadership practices.

Data Sources

Data for this research were collected from primary and secondary sources – the primary sources of data were used by administering questionnaires for teachers and interviews for principals. The secondary data sources used journal, articles, books, action research, feedback, reports, and websites. School document analysis was also used which helped to understand teachers' perceptions about instructional leadership practices in their schools.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

North Kordufan state is one of the largest states in Sudan; it has a unique position within other states. Elobeid city is the capital of North Kordufan state, in Shekan, which is located in a distinct geographical position. There are 23 secondary schools in Elobeid city. The total population of schools is 547. The researcher selected 12 secondary school principals as sample size and 222 teachers from the total population of 451 teachers in the 12 schools through stratified random sampling technique.

Data Gathering Instruments

In this study, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews as research data gathering instruments. A questionnaire with a five-point scale was designed for teachers due to their important role in contributing for a better instructional leadership. The questionnaire contained three parts designed to address the variables in the study and provide information on principals' instructional leadership challenges.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview to collect data from 12 principals of the schools. It is designed for principals responsible for setting school improvement agendas and teachers' workplace conditions and ensuring that the school performs according to state national policies and community expectations. Interview notes were summarized and translated into English.

Reliability statistics of tool:

Table (1): reliability of the study tool

Dimension	No. of statements	Cronbach's Alpha
principals' instruction leadership challenges,	17	0.709

Reliability is the extent to which an instrument would give the same results if the measurement were to be taken again under the same conditions: its consistency. For this questionnaire tool the Alfa value is (0.709) indicates good level of reliability.

Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the collected data. Percentage, one-sample t-test and weighted mean are used to indicate the extent principals are

performing the functions of instructional leadership activities and to show the dimensions of instructional leadership principles. The interview responses were analyzed thematically.

4. Results of the Study

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristic of teachers:

Table (2): Distribution of respondents Socio-demographic characteristics

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	121	54.5
	Female	101	45.5
	Total	222	100.0
Qualification	Diploma	8	3.6
	Bachelor	170	76.6
	Master	31	14.0
	Doctorate	13	5.9
	Total	222	100.0
Years of experience	(1-5) years.	23	10.4
	(6-10) years.	81	36.5
	11 and above	118	53.2
	Total	222	100.0

From table (3) the distribution of participants according to sex shows there were (121) out of total (222) represented (54.5%) were males, while females counted (101 (45.5%). According to qualification, the majority of the study sample (170) represented (76.6%) have bachelor degree, there were (31) teachers, represented (14%) have master degree, and (13) teachers, represented (5.9%) were PhD holders. The study sample has good level of academic qualification. More than a half of teachers (53.2%) their years of experience were 11 and above, (36.5%) their experience range (6-10) years. And (10.4%) their experience ranges between 1 to 5 years. The study samples characterized by good level of work experience.

Mean score and one sample t-test analysis were conducted to determine the significant challenges that principal's instructional leadership.

Table (3). One sample t-test results for principal's instructional leadership challenges.

Test value = 3							
No	Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	T	Sig
1	Challenges related to lack of school resources	220	3.87	1.0875	219	10.741	.000
2	Challenges related to school climate	222	3.13	0.8698	221	2.353	.019

A one sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there is a principals' instructional leadership challenges in terms of two variables as compared to the defined t-value ($t=3$). That is, challenges related to school resources, school climate, As indicated in table (3) above, the mean value for school resources ($M=3.87$, $SD=1.0875$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(219)=10.741$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for school climate ($M=3.13$, $SD=0.8698$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found that it is statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)= 2.353$, $p=0.019$.

Participant (1) said that: Therefore, the analysis of two explanatory dimensions was found that they are statistical significant and effects the principal's instructional leadership challenges. The result was supported by the interviews conducted with principals. Some of the participants' voices are presented below.

situational factors for teachers are the most significant challenges, the difficulty of communicating with teachers due to lack of understanding and lack of belief in the profession, and challenges in communicating with the families of students and teachers' poor performance due to lack of training are some of the challenges. Also, school dropouts due to the living and economic conditions and the delay of some teachers for classes during the day because of transportation are other challenges affecting the instructional leadership.

Also, the participant (2) said that:

the challenges facing principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools are financial support, inadequate educational facilities and laboratories, poor school environment and the lack of a textbook.

Participant (3) said that:

About working with these challenges in their leadership usually, school principals discussing the challenges that faced them with teachers and parents by clarifying the problems and seeking to find the solution.

Participants (4) said that:

it is necessary to appeal to the families of the children to communicate with the school to know the performance and think about their children's future.

To support the teachers in overcoming problems with students during teaching-learning activities: Participant (5) said:

Most managers can be provided with continuous advice, follow-up, mentoring and mentorship.

Participants (6) said that:

Taking into account individual differences, encouraging competition, and creating an answer from teachers for all problems.

Participant (7) said:

It is necessary to deal with kindness, taking into account the psychological aspects.

One of the participants said: *"students should be educated by the reminding and urging them to deal with teachers and give teacher's new training."*

Table (4)

A one sample t test results of the status of challenges related to instructional support for school leaders.

No	Variables	N	Mean	S d	Df	T	Sig.
1	Institutional leader does not have the training to develop the instructional program.	221	3.40	1.281	220	5.634	.000
2	Lack of instruction leadership competences of school leaders.	220	3.37	1.326	219	5.381	.000
3	The school does not help students when they face problems.	221	3.06	1.520	220	4.274	.000
4	The school is facing problem in defining the schools' mission.	221	3.09	1.374	220	4.769	.000
5	The school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon.	222	3.33	1.327	221	5.345	.000

6	Instructional leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers instructionally.	222	3.42	1.436	221	5.066	.000
7	The school does not recognize the best performance in improving students' achievements.	221	2.69	1.387	220	4.123	.000

Table 4 shows the challenges related to instructional support for school leaders the mean value for, instructional leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers instructionally ($M=3.42$ $SD=1.436$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found that it was statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=5.066$, $p=0.000$.

The mean value for Institutional leader does not have the training to develop the instructional program ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.281$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found that it was statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(220)=5.634$, $p=0.000$. the mean value for Lack of instruction leadership competences of school leaders ($M=3.37$, $SD=1.326$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found that it was statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(219)=5.381$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for the school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon. ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.327$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found that it was statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=5.345$, $p=0.000$.

Finally total of four explanatory dimensions was found that they are statistical significant and challenges related to instructional support for school leaders. There are instructional leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers, does not have the training to develop the instructional program. Lack of instruction leadership competences of school leaders and the school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon.

5. Discussion

From the findings obtained in this study, it was found that principals' instructional leadership challenges in secondary schools, related to the items listed, are highly positive. Concerning principals' instruction leadership challenges, the results in table (3) show; A one sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there is a principals' instructional leadership challenges in terms of two variables as compared to the defined t-value ($t=3$). That is, challenges related to school resources, school climate, indicated that the mean value for school resources ($M=3.87$, $SD=1.0875$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(219)=10.741$, $p=0.000$. The mean value for school climate ($M=3.13$, $SD=0.8698$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it was found that it is statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=2.353$, $p=0.019$.

The majority of respondents agreed that Inadequate allocated budget, and also facing problems in managing the resources in school, as well as School communities experienced resource constraints that impacted on principals' abilities to recruit teachers and maintain instructional programs were the most common challenges related to lack of school resources.

The interview result indicates that they were the most significant challenges, the difficulty of communicating with teachers due to lack of understanding and lack of belief in the profession.

The challenges are communicating with students and teachers' families and poor performance due to lack of training. There are some findings of the other studies that supported

this study; for example, Mansoor (2015) showed that the main challenges confronting the instructional leadership in the public sector schools include issues related resources, teacher recruitment, school organization and student enrollment, parental involvement, and political pressure.

A local study by Ahmed (2017) found out that transportation in that area is a significant factor affecting the basic school administration to a very high degree. The other obstacles include poor communication between management and teachers, inadequate teacher training to communicate with the community methods, administrative obstacles, lack of professional incentives to the principal, inadequate training programs for school principals with educational reality, and many pupils per class.

The most common challenges related to school climate reported by teachers were; working condition is not suitable for practicing instructional leadership, and the school strived to fit professional balance and fit into the community culture, the interview result indicates that they were significant challenges, that facing them are financial support and causes inadequate educational facilities and laboratories, and a poor school environment. The teacher himself is unable to give and lacks a textbook. A similar study by Elamin (2014) showed that the principals of secondary schools in the Northern state face difficulties in their administrative work related to the schools' curriculum in the state. A weak relationship between them characterizes the problem facing the local community.

In general, the final analysis of the result reflected that teachers' responses about principals' instructional leadership challenges in secondary schools found to be high in sample school. Moreover, this affected the overall activities positively of school in general and the teaching-learning process in particular. Some findings of the other studies that supported this study; for example, McEwan (2002) described five challenges affecting the effectiveness of instructional leadership. These are: lack of skill and training for principals, lack of teachers' cooperation, and lack of time to perform instructional activities, lack of support from principals, and lack of vision, will, or courage from principals toward instructional activities.

The results in table (4) show; the challenges related to instructional support for school leaders the mean value for, instructional leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers Lack of instruction leadership competences of school leaders ($M=3.42$ $SD=1.436$) was greater than the expected value of 3, and it is found that it was statistically significant with a mean difference of, at 95% confidence interval, $t(221)=5.066$, $p=0.000$.

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Finally they are statistical significant and challenges related to instructional support for school leaders. There are instructional leaders do not have enough time to support all teachers, does not have the training to develop the instructional program. Lack of instruction leadership competences of school leaders and the school does not provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon.

In addition, the researcher found that they were major challenges that faced secondary schools in the locality parents usually have to financially contribute to textbooks, school uniforms, and examinations fees. Population displacement, conflict, and a lack of technical and financial resources have made data collection a severe challenge in Sudan. Boys may have better opportunities in the labor market and, therefore, fewer incentives to stay in school.

Furthermore, Sudan is rich in natural resources, including gold, silver and aluminum. Boys went to these places to get more money than to stay in schools.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Instructional Leadership Challenges in Public Secondary Schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State, Shekan Locality (Elobeid city) faced numerous challenges related to resources and insufficient training. The results of the study revealed that secondary school principals of locality encountered different challenges. Also, there are more difficulties in terms of communicating with teachers because of a lack of understanding and lack of belief in the profession—moreover, the challenges of communicating with students and teachers themselves. Poor performance due to lack of training, the school dropout due to the living and economic conditions, the delay of some teachers for classes during the day because of transportation, financial support and causes inadequate educational facilities and laboratories and a poor school environment, and the teacher himself is unable to give, the lack of a textbook, lack of support from stakeholders.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were drawn by the researcher to minimize and solve the challenges that impede instructional leadership practices in public secondary schools in Sudan, North Kordufan State, Shekan Locality (Elobeid city).

1. The findings of the study revealed that the schools suffer from a lack of resources. Therefore, it is recommended that the locality educational bureau should directives, develop materials, and facilitate implementation; moreover, the Bureau should coordinate and monitor the increasing competence of the school leader concerning school improvement.
2. It is recommended that teachers expect much professional support from them; as they had a great experience and better skill, they must be committed to help and support teachers instead of reasoning out many challenges as they mention.
3. The School climate and culture are the fundamental and the most critical aspects of school life that direct the activities of the school personnel and students. School leaders need to enhance and promote a positive learning climate and culture by available and visible in the school compound during instructional time, rewarding teachers and students for their best performances publically and timely, giving due emphasis to instructional issues and students' achievements.

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