LEADERSHIP ROLE OF HEAD TEACHER FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

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Abstract

The article aims at acquainting the leadership role of Head teacher for ensuring quality education in schools and show relationship between the school head teacher's leadership roles in delivering the much-needed integrative quality education managing capacities and vitalities of teachers, pupils and parents towards achieving common educational goals. The study examined that strong school leadership is a key contributing factor in successful schools. It also sought to determine the overall effects of the head teacher's leadership role on the school's capacity to impart quality education. Results discovered that there are three significant roles of the head teacher which are: routine administration, management of the school, monitoring teaching learning activities as per the prescribed curriculum, and community engagement. Therefore, head teachers are expected to put strong emphasis on these in order to gain the required quality education, which covers student knowledge, application and acquisition of life career skills and innovation. While the concept of quality and its priority indicators may differ from country to country, it is commonly considered as a determining factor in facilitating the implementation of education for all initiatives. Leadership practices of school leaders to inform planning, policy-making and the development of future enterprises, with an ultimate goal of improving school leadership practices in similar school settings in order to enhance education quality. The poor quality of education in Nepal has seriously unresolved confidence in the public education system, and this, in turn, has encouraged growth in private institutions in school level education. In Nepalese context, head teachers in higher-performing schools were found to be more proactive in establishing policies and practices to motivate stakeholders and more likely to provide effective leadership for continuous improvement in current practices in teaching learning delivery.

Keyword: *Leadership role, head teachers, leadership practices, accountability, quality education*

Introduction

Leadership refers to the process of managing the capacities and vitalities of teachers, pupils and parents toward achieving common educational aims. Hence, educational leadership refers to an individual or group of people who are in charge and lead schools, institutions, programs and students to the best education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). They are, thus, responsible and accountable to make sure that education in their area is at its finest (Spillane, 2006). This is based on the reasonable premise that, an effective educational leader will share much of the same characteristics as a successful business leader. According to Alinda and Atuhurra (2018), most school-going children in many developing countries have majority students whose schooling is not translating into actual learning. As a matter of fact, it has become an enormous issue for the stakeholders that set the baseline demand for educational administrators and policy makers to integrate practical and vocational skills into the school education curricula. Meanwhile, the study by Pinter and Monika (2011) stressed the need for head teachers to always play an enabling role to the teachers by providing appropriate curricula, text books and relevant reference manuals to enable effective teaching in their daily work.

The study by Sushila (2004) also implied that head teachers are expected to act as linking change agents in leading schools. Quality education therefore demands for an articulate transformative and charismatic head teacher on whom many aspects of the school revolve. They are expected to be in charge of running the school academic, financial and administrative facets on a daily basis. To this end, Yukl (2006) looks at such a leader as one who has good interpersonal relationship, ethical, supportive, likable, competent, and trustworthy so as to play an effective influential role in school management or leadership. Therefore, the head teacher acts as a problem solver, obstacle breaker, team-mobilizer and a decision maker. Such qualified and competent professionals are not only expected to employ teamwork with colleagues as a working strategy that enables students to acquire a holistic education but also lobby the line agencies such as Ministry of Education, provincial and local bodies as well as the local communities to ensure that the school has

competent human resources, physical resources, libraries and laboratories that are well stocked and equipped respectively. The outcome is expected to be hands-on education with life skills that demands for an environment in which there is an excellent head teacher-teacher, teachers-students and teacher-parent relationship that will guarantee an enriched curriculum with a relevant subject matter for the effective delivery of academic activities in schools which ensure quality education.

The head teacher is a team leader and a facilitator to the learner who maps out the different ways in which various subjects are linked with one another. It is this that leads to a greater ability to make and remember connections and to solve problems. To support this view, Johnson (2001) observed that head teachers who aspire to excel in managing schools are obsessed with qualities that always monitor and ascertain that the quality of teaching is effective across the different religious, socio-political and ability groups. While most private schools have an income-motive behind their establishment, government schools are expected by nature of their design, mission and government subvention to have the basic facilities and conducive environment in which teachers demonstrate the attitudes of openness and sensitivity associated with child-centered, integrated practice. It is expected that government has well trained, qualified and competent head teachers who can work effectively in a team approach with parents and model behaviors to ensure that learning activities are constructive and contribute to an ethos that promotes equity, mutual understanding and respect for all.

AsLeu & Price-Rom (2006) have suggested: 'Educational quality in developing countries has become a topic of intense interest, primarily because of countries' efforts to maintain quality…in the context of quantitative expansion of educational provision…Whether explicit or implicit, a vision of educational quality is always embedded within countries' policies and programs'. OECD (2005a) states quality issues include individualized teaching and learning, equity areas such as inclusion and efficiency areas such as autonomy, decentralization, accountability, partnerships, and leadership. As part of the response to these three issues, and following on from their recent report on attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers (OECD, 2005d).

It is need to understand the geographical contexts within which quality education initiatives are implemented; the factors which constitute priority indicators of quality education; and the leadership challenges associated with implementing quality education. It should then be possible to identify the extent to which policy initiatives match the ideas emerging from such a debate, and then to examine the implications that these issues have upon the role of school leaders in their day-to-day practice. The study here therefore was intended to explore the leadership role of head teachers for quality education in school.

Literature review

As academic leaders, head teachers play a critical role not only in the overall performance of the school but in creating an environment that models and projects the future of a student or learner. The study by Mpaata and Mpaata (2018) critically observed that the Ministry of Education has got the enormous responsibility of ensuring that they retrain or provide in-service training to head teachers with the aim of not only motivating them but also enabling them to have the necessary competencies to work with flexibility so that they could be able to closely monitor not only classroom teaching but the resources that government avails to the schools.

According to Reynolds and Teddlie (2000), an effective head teacher is expected to foster a development-oriented school culture through his personality, attitude, and behavior. It is this quality in both learning and administrative proceedings that makes a school special and unique. Noddings (2005) noted that a competent head teacher is expected to play a significant supportive role for the entire development of the students. The head teacher is expected to ensure teacher commitment, cooperation and monitor their professional development which enables the school to build an ultimate team with an innovative mindset.

According to the research by Uganda National Commission for UNESCO conducted by Nakazibwe (2011), there is urgent need for the country to ensure innovation and creativity in the teaching process and also refocus the country's education system by discouraging teachers who just overload the memory of students with thoughts of other academics progress.

In his earlier study, Singh (1991) admonished that if governments are to change education for the future, there is need for restructuring and reorientation of the education system and suggested that the system should have the capacity to nurture creative institutions which can most effectively do the educating. Much of the crisis in education at present in developing countries has its origin in schools which were designed to replicate rather than create new knowledge. It is, therefore, integrative and effective education which can improve the current rigid system of education (Chrappan, 2009).

The study here adds that such teachers cannot produce meaningful results without the head teacher as a leader who does not only lobby for resources from government but also ensures that the community is engaged and all facilities are in place as required by the teachers. That is why Day and Sammons (2016) expressed concern that one of the challenges

faced by most of the head teachers is integrating a sound hold of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum, strategically managing resources and the environment and developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning. This study investigates the extent to which these aspects are related to the head teacher's leadership role. This is because it is the head teacher who ensures that the learner has the necessary resources such as qualified teachers and other instructional materials including the environment on which they can capitalize to ensure that the education is enriched, interesting and inspiring.

Similarly, the study by Reeves (2004) emphatically compels the head teacher, teachers and the education officers to examine their professional practices and transform the current education from a destructive to a constructive and transformative force. According to Epstein and Sanders (2006), effective schools have effective communication with parents and implement an open door policy based on a participatory approach that encourages periodical meetings with parents and guardians which means that an effective head teacher has to routinely develop cordial relationship with other schools at local, national and international level so as to establish networks that are productive to the entire community and help the students integrate a positive attitude towards the cultural wealth that is not only local but international as well.

As suggested by Kwek (2011), for head teachers to meet 21st century expectations, they have to design school strategies with a mindset that guarantees gradual departure from the ideas and pedagogies of yesterday so that all teachers become bold advocates that can develop the sorts of learning dispositions needed for learners and their work futures. This means spending less time explaining through instruction and investing more time in experimental and error-tolerant modes of engagement.

This study therefore provides additional empirical evidence that unless effective school management, have well-trained teacher and focused head teachers who can routinely administer and manage the school, engage the community, and monitor teaching and curriculum coverage, having the desire for quality education by government alone cannot drive the country to success in this endeavor.

Methods of the Study

The article is based on qualitative information regarding leadership role of head teacher for quality education in school. This paper is based on literature review as a design of study. The introspective design that investigates a phenomenon, situation, or issue that has happened in the past (Kumar, 2009) was adopted to carry out the study. So, the study is descriptive and qualitative in nature. Secondary sources are included the websites, based on the document study, reviewed related articles, and journals in this study. Self-reflection of the researcher and self-study of the secondary sources of data are used as the tools for data collection. The data collected in the introspective diary journals were analyzed using the explanatory mode.

Result and Discussion

The study vibrantly demonstrates that the leadership role of head teachers in terms of routine school administration and management, community engagement and monitoring teaching and curriculum coverage, among others are key dimensions to the enhancing quality education in schools. This study was consistent with transformation of teacher training in professional development with reviewed literature document, articles, and journals as given below:

Perspective on Quality Education

Attempts to define 'educational quality' are broad term, as the very concept of 'quality' is an elusive one. At the level of international debate and action three defining principles tend to be broadly shared. These are the need to understand quality education in terms of (a) content relevance, (b) access and outcome and (c) observance of individual rights. This is reflected in the thinking of international bodies such as UNICEF and UNESCO. UNICEF recognizes five dimensions of quality: the learners, the environments, content, processes and outcomes, founded on the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation (UNICEF, 2000, as cited in UNESCO, 2005). Similarly, UNESCO expects quality education to encourage the learner's creative and emotional development, support objectives of peace, citizenship and security, promote equality and seek to pass global and local cultural values down to future generations.

This identified quality as a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity in education. While the notion of quality was not fully developed, it was recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society. Emphasis was accordingly placed on assuring an increase in children's cognitive development by improving the quality of their education. It expanded definition of quality set out the desirable characteristics of learners, processes, relevant content, and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation). Thus, the Dakar forum emphasized the need to "improve all aspects of quality of

education to achieve recognized and measurable learn in outcomes for all-especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills" (Dakar Framework for Action, Article 7, World Education Forum, 2000). In this sense, quality in education is both a quantitative and a qualitative issue. Quality indicators of education can be seen as performance indicators that refer to a quality characteristic or objective, thus, alluding to the broad context of performance evaluation in which the learners operate. In matters of indicators therefore, concepts such as efficiency, relevance, importance and adequacy cannot be ignored (Dare, 2005). He identifies a continuum of three factors (inputs, process, and output) that are necessary for determining indicators in educational quality.

Barrow et al. (2006) concluded that: '…teachers do tend to articulate their conceptions of educational (and instructional) quality with terms normally associated with student-centered and actively learning approaches to teaching and learning …[and] that in Ethiopia, India, and Namibia there is clear correspondence between teachers' conceptions of educational quality and the ideas expressed in policy discourses'.

School Leadership Effects

Leithwood and Riehl, (2003): Leithwood, et al, (2004) concluded that the school leadership effects are as follows:

i)   Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, accounting for about a quarter of total school effects;

ii)   Mostly leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organization with their success depending a great deal on their judicious choice of which parts of the organization to spend time and attention on;

iii)   Four sets of practices can be thought of as the 'basics' of successful leadership, developing people, setting directions, managing the instructional program, and redesigning the organization; and,

iv)   All successful leadership is 'contingent' to the unique contexts in which it finds itself but leadership effects are usually largest where they are needed most, such as in schools that are in more difficult circumstances.

In their most recent review of transformational school leadership research conducted between 1996 and 2005, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) confirm three of their four sets of transformational leadership practices of helping people, setting directions and redesigning the organization. In addition, they conclude that evidence about transformational leadership effects on organizational effectiveness, student outcomes and student engagement in school are all positive.

The Leadership for organizational effectiveness and student outcomes research finds that leadership that makes a difference has been found to be both position based (principal) and distributive (administrative team and teachers). But both are only indirectly related to student outcomes. Collective teacher efficacy, involving three sequential development stages (trusting and collaborative climate shared and monitored mission and taking initiatives and risks) supported by appropriate professional development is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes and influences what happens in the core business of the school– the teaching and learning (Mulford, 2003a & b).

School Leadership Practices in Nepal

Governance and management of education in Nepal is primarily undertaken by the Ministry of Education through various agencies under a highly centralized education structure where schools are managed by their head teachers and School Management Committees (SMCs). The Education Regulation, 2010, Rule 93(1) (sixth amendment) states: 'There shall be a headmaster in each school to function as an academic and administrative chief of the school' (Nepal Law Commission 2002 p.93). With reference to the six leadership dimensions for effective school leadership identified, three functions relate to goal setting through preparation of the school's yearly, half-yearly and monthly school plans and programs; two functions relate to building school culture by maintaining cooperation among teachers, students and parents, and ensuring a respectful, ethical and disciplined school environment; and two functions relate to teacher support through selecting and recommending teachers to the District Education Office (DEO) for training programs, and assigning jobs and responsibilities to teachers and staff. A side from the above mentioned, the majority of the functions specified in the Regulation relate to routine management functions such as preparing reports, keeping records and reporting, and many directly complement the responsibilities of the DEO and SMC. In addition to this, the official expectations for principals place greater emphasis on routine management functions than on leadership. The official duties do not highlight the role of the head teacher in creating a vision, building community relations, mobilizing resources, team building, promoting collaboration, instructional planning and supervision, physical development, or setting standards (Hope Nepal, 2005; Niruala, 2002). These findings vibrate with what researchers claim about school leadership across the developing world, where time and again official duties focus narrowly on routine administrative work and resource management with a centralized bureaucratic governance structure (Anderson & Mundy, 2014;

Opltaka, 2004).

Nepal has recently introduced policy reforms and programs in an attempt to improve the educational quality of its public schools by maximizing community involvement in school management, which necessarily requires leadership with vision and commitment. Nevertheless, the Education Regulation considers the school leader to be more 'an administrator than the visionary leader' (CERID, 2004). Researchers have discussed how the centralization of the education system in Nepal contributes to a lack of autonomy and decision-making power among public school head teachers (as cited in CERID, 2004; Mathema & Bista 2006; Sharma, 2013). Although local communities became directly involved in the school management process after the decentralization of education in the 1990s, the Ministry of Education has retained authority over human resource management and development, development of curriculum and textbooks, financing and educational planning, leaving head teachers and SMCs with little authority over strategically important matters (Sharma, 2013). Despite policy constrains and challenges, researchers have identified effective school leadership practices prevalent among outlier public schools in Nepal which have made a significant positive impact in improving education quality and student outcomes. Among others, these practices include: (a) a greater focus on building relations and mobilizing support and action among the larger school community and outside the school context in order to garner necessary support for schools; (b) involving and collaborating with members of the school community in decision-making and school activities; (c) focusing on academic excellence through constant supervision of teaching and learning, and by encouraging and motivating students and teachers through appreciation and rewards; (d) demonstrating highly ethical behavior, commitment and dedication, contributing to greater trust and respect for the leadership; and (e) being proactive and innovative in planning and implementing various school activities without government support, such as initiating and encouraging income-generating programs to overcome government underfunding (CERID 2004; Hope Nepal, 2005; Mathema & Bista, 2006).

Effective School Leadership Framework

School leaders are inevitable to school improvement. In order to promote student learning and to improve quality in education, (Darling-Hammond et. al. (2007) Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004), and they are widely recognized as the key change agent at all levels in a school system (Fullan, 2006). Much of the available literature on school leadership effectiveness indicates that school leaders play a crucial role by exerting their influence directly and indirectly over several factors throughout the school and its community in pursuit of improved student learning (Hallinger & Heck (1998); Leithwood et. al. (2004). Most importantly, school leaders' roles directly affect teacher capacity, motivation, and commitment and working conditions, all of which impact teaching practices linked to student learning and achievement (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008).

A much larger research based documents principals' effects on school operations through identifying and articulating a vision and goals, developing high performance expectations, building collaborative culture, motivating and supporting teachers and students, fostering communication, allocating resources, and developing organizational structures to support instruction and learning (Knapp & Marzolf, 2006). Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) argue that the most important areas on which school principals can focus are: (a) setting direction by developing a consensus around vision, goals and direction; (b) helping individual teachers through support, modeling and supervision, (c) redesigning the organization to foster collaboration and engage families and community; and (d) managing the organization by strategically allocating resources and support.

Leithwood (2012), outlines five practices for effective school leadership: (a) setting directions; (b) building relationships and developing people; (c) developing the organization to support desired practices; (d) improving the instructional programs; and (e) securing accountability. While exploring the leadership dimensions for effective school leadership, it became clear that all the sources reviewed differ in terms of the number of leadership dimensions identified which provided the theoretical framework are as follows:

Visioning and goal setting. Vision is the 'capacity to create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that induces commitment among those working in the organization' (Sergiovanni, 2007). Highly effective school leaders inspire others by providing a clear sense of purpose and direction through creating a shared vision focused on academic excellence involving organizational values (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Building a positive school culture. Successful schools are characterized as having a 'strong and functional culture aligned with vision of academic excellence' (Sergiovanni, 2007), where school leaders build collegial relationships with stakeholders based on care, respect and trust in order to develop a strong learning community (Leithwood, 2012).

Supporting teachers and students to improve learning. Leithwood et al. (2008), note that school leaders support teachers in order to improve their performances through building their capacities, improving working conditions, and by offering motivation to excel. Successful leaders seek to ensure their teachers have appropriate expertise by providing instructional support and the resources necessary for them to excel in their profession, providing a safe and orderly school environment, and being sensitive to the needs of individual students (Leithwood, 2012).

Cultivating leadership qualities in others. Successful school leaders develop leadership qualities in others by promoting collaboration through their actions by involving teachers in decision-making and planning, developing instructional and leadership capacity, offering intellectual stimulation, providing individual support and appropriate models of best practices, and offering leadership opportunities to teachers and staff (Leithwood, 2012).

Managing resources and operations. Successful leaders ensure resources are allocated strategically in order to maximize student learning (Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood & Riehl 2003).

Leading for continuous improvement. Successful school leaders develop their schools as effective organizations that support and sustain the performance of teachers and students through strengthening school cultures, modifying organizational structures, building collaborative processes, building productive relations with parents and the community, and connecting the school to its wider environment. (Leithwood et al., 2006).

The Leadership Role for Quality Education

Heck (1996), has suggested 'the investigation of leadership models…across settings is potentially a rich area for empirical exploration, in that it may both broaden and deepen our understanding of how cultural context may impact the theory and practice of school administration'. Indeed, in their illuminating study of school leadership concepts, Bush & Glover (2003) suggest that 'the most important variable may be that of culture, both societal and organizational'. They also warn of the'simplistic assumptions that leadership styles may be universally applicable for quality education'. Similarly, Oduro & MacBeath (2003), in talking of school leadership research, argue that 'much of this work is premised on competences or individual qualities of leaders which, it is assumed travel not only across institutional boundaries but also traverse national and cultural borders' and urge researchers to beware '…the fragility of generic competences'.

Specific studies within a developing country context are beginning to blossom within the research canon. Oplatka (2004), has suggested that some common themes have emerged. These have coalesced around issues related to 'limited autonomy, autocratic leadership style, and summative evaluation, low degree of change initiation and lack of instructional leadership functions. For many school leaders in these studies '…basic physical and human resource requirements need to be satisfied prior to any attempt on behalf of the principal to promote quality teaching in his school'. As the writer suggests, these are issues far removed from the day-to-day concerns of school leaders, where there is a greater emphasis on 'distributed leadership' (Bush & Glover, 2003) and a more proactive approach to school management.

Oplatka's (2004) general conclusion, that 'no universal theory of educational administration is valid in all contexts', does mirror the views of writers such as Oduro & MacBeath (2003) and should act as a welcome caution when examining the role of school leaders in promoting educational quality within their institutions. Brown & Conrad (2007) indicates principals' and other senior educational leaders' perspectives on school leadership and highlights approaches adopted by principals as they attempted to effectively meet the learning needs of students in a system characterized by an overly centralized bureaucracy in a time of continuous educational reform.

Conclusion

There is a significant relationship between the head teacher's school leadership role and the realization of quality education school level education. The major finding is that the head teachers discharge their roles and responsibilities delivering effective leadership, routinely administration and manage the school, monitor teaching and curriculum coverage, collaborate with stakeholders; such schools are most likely to apply knowledge, become innovative and creative that ultimately enable them to succeed towards attaining their shared goal. Ensuring quality education is excessively challenging and critical because the quality of foundations laid at the basic educational level influences the quality of pupils' learning. In achieving quality, there is the need for the countries to define clearly quality indicators that will meet their developmental needs and at the same time fit into global indicators. Ensuring effective utilization of human and physical resources as well as school time in promoting quality education depends largely on effectiveness of leadership at both school and classroom levels.

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