The Roles of School Principals in Enhancing Education Quality atSecondary Schools of Wolaitazone

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to assess the role of school principals in enhancing quality education in general secondary schools of Wolaitazone. Mixed research method was used in this study. Questionnaireswere designed and distributed to teachers andinterview was conducted with principals, supervisors and woreda and zonal quality office experts. The population of the study were 599 teachers, 31 principals, six supervisors, andsix Zonal and woreda education office experts. All the principals, randomly selected teachers and the experts of the zonal and woreda office were included in the study. The findings of the study revealed thatprincipalsare not effectively playing their leadership role in the schools.Themajor challenges school principals faced in doing so include: knowledge and skill gap to lead and manage the school; inability to encourage collaborative works in the schools. Thus,school principals are expected to play vital role in monitoringinstructional methods, making systematic and frequent classroom visits, mentoring and coaching peers,conducting regular meetings with the staff, and providing feedback to teachers on teaching learning problems.

Key words: Quality Education, Roles of Principals, Secondary School, Implementation Challenges

I.   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to MOE (1994), education is a process by which man transmits his experiences, new findings, and values accumulated over the years, in his struggle for survival and development, through generations. This is mainly true because education increases and strengthens the creative and productive capacity of human beings. Education is regarded as the center of every civilization. It is an important sector for economic, social, and cultural development aimed at satisfying the needs, desires and hopes of a society. Regarding this, UNESCO (2010) emphasized that education broadness peoples' freedom of choice and action, empowering them to participate in social and political lives of their society, and equipping them with the skill they need to develop their livelihood. Besides, UNESCO (2002) also indicated that, education is the base for development. It lets the individual learner become a thinking, empowered and responsible citizen. However, education cannot play this role unless it is highest quality and relevant to development needs. In order to be successful in the intended quality, it's appropriate utilization of education inputs and process play a vital role.

Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse (2008), who reviewed literature on teacher management in the developing countries,pointed out that in many developing countries poor education management results in overcrowded classrooms, high pupil teacher ratios, and high student drop-out. The overall effect of this is a low quality of education. Writing about south Asia, Gottelmann-Duret (2000) discussed how poor school management leads to high levels of teaching staff turnover, teacher absenteeism and teacher dissatisfaction.

Policy documents tend to focus mainly on education access and equity (MOE 1998). Between the introduction of the first Education and Training Policy in 1994 and the launching of the third ESDP III, education policy has emphasized the need to increase equitable access to quality education (MOE, 2002). ESDP III focused on improving education management at the woreda (district) and school levels to expand access to education (MOE 2005). ESDP IV (MOE 2010) considered improvement in school management and administration as one of the tools for improving education decision-making at all levels. The Government also launched the GEQIP, in which school management and administration are taken as one of the key education quality intervention areas (Ayalew, 2009).

Ethiopia made significant progress in education access. Access at all levels of the education system increased at a rapid rate. In line with this, there was a sharp increase in the number of teachers, schools and institutions. There were important improvements in the availability of trained human power. Nowadays, Education strategies focus in improving quality of education at all levels because there is problem in quality of education. Therefore, schools, now more than ever, are challenged to improve to the extent that every effort is

made to ensure the success of all quality education in schools, similarly, school principals are expected to play great role to make and ensure the quality education. Researches show that, one of the principal challenges in school is improving the quality of education (Rueblinget.al, 2004).

The World Bank, (2007) stated, the basic factors of quality ispoor quality of teachers and teaching, poor time-on-task, low coverage of the curriculum, low effort, all are due to lack of standards and standard enforcement, or lack of accountability and skills among teachers, and lack of parental involvement and ability to pressure schools on quality issues.

According to Michael (2006), the school principals are the nerve center of school improvement. When principal leadership is strong, even the most challenged schools thrive. When it is weak, schools fail or badly underperform. According to MOE(2012) school principals should: lead and facilitate vision of the learning, lead and manage learning and teaching, lead and develop individuals and team, lead and manage school operations and resources and develop and manage school community relations.So,leadership is a pattern of influence that resides in an individual's or a group's innovative ideas and creative achievements outside the bounds of formal institutions. What matters most are their practices and commitments and the disciplined processes of leadership that they embed in their organizations (Richard, 2010).

Hence, this study focuses on the analysis of the roles of school principal in enhancing quality education at secondary schools. It sets out to examine actual quality education practices in terms of input and process level and to identify the contextual factors that influence the implementation of quality education in secondary schools.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research findings showed that, schools, now more than ever, are challenged to improve to the extent that every effort is made to ensure the success of education quality in schools, in line with this, school principals are expected to play great role to make and improve the quality education. And one of the principal challenges in School is improving the quality of education (Asiabaka, 2008; Loughlin and Visser 2003; Ruebling, et al 2004). Conversely, as clearly indicated in ESDP IV program action plan, many principals and experts do not yet have the required capacity to exercise their responsibilities effectively.

According to Mulu(2012),the issue of quality has become a point of discussion and major concern among all stakeholders including the government. There is a general concern that the rapid expansion accompanied by inadequate resources; incompatibility of existing capacity and lack of organizational arrangements may result in deterioration of academic quality and standards.

Therefore, the researchers feel professional responsibility and were eager to conduct a research to the roles of school principals in enhancing quality education in Wolita Zone Secondary schools. This issue was selected by the researchers because there are complaints by teachers and non-teaching staff at general secondary schools of wolaita zone. Besides, they observed problems in school principals' roles in implementing quality education at secondary schools of the study area. Hence, this study was guided by the following research questions:

➢ What are the roles of school principals in improving the quality education in secondary schools of Wolaita zone?
➢ What are the major challenges that hinder the provision of quality education in secondary schools of Wolaita Zone?

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, mixed research method was employed. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative method helped to get better and deeper understanding of a complex phenomenon by capitalizing on the strengths of the two methods and offsets their weaknesses (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

Data for this study were collected from Woreda and Zonal level quality officers, teachers, principals, and supervisors of secondary schools. The target population of the study were all Wolaita Zone secondary schools found in 12 Woredas and 3 reform cities, and the 43 General Secondary Schools (9-10) in the zone.

The selection of the sample for this study was made as follows: First, by using simple random sampling three woredas and two reform town were selected for this study.There are 15 schools, 31 principals and vice principals, and five quality officer and six supervisors in the selected five woredas; and all of them were included in the study. The number of five woreda teachers is 599. From these, 226 teachers were selected as sample by using simple random sampling technique. In this studyquestionnaire and interviewwere used for collecting data.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of school principals in enhancing quality education at secondary schools of Wolaita Zone. Hence, in this section the views of respondents with regards to role of school principals in enhancing quality education and the major challenges faced in securing quality education in the zone were discussed.

The roles of school principal in supervising teaching-learning process

Table 1. The roles of school principal in supervising teaching-learning

No	Items	Mean	Std.dev
1	Monitor the use of resources aligned to the academic standards.	1.75	1.054
2	Ensure that curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned with academicstandards	1.31	0.596
3	Monitor implementation of academic standards in curriculum and instruction.	1.57	0.809
4	Mentor and coach peers	1.86	1.154
5	Share experiences to implement active learning and continuous assessment	1.85	1.192
6	Support teachers and staff in implementing policies.	1.93	1.258
7	Monitor implementation of academic standards in curriculum and instruction.	1.77	1.080
8	Monitor instructional methods	2.54	1.327
9	Make systematic and frequent classroom visits and provide feedback on classroom instruction.	1.82	1.250

Table1 depicts leaders' role insupervising teaching-learning activities. As shown, most respondents confirmed that leader's role in supervising the teaching learning activities is very minimal and below average (below3.0). This shows that leaders are not playing their leadership role with regards to-monitoring the use of resources visa vise academic standards, mentoring and coaching peers, sharing experiences in implementing active learning and continuous assessment in the schools, supporting teachers and staff in implementing policies, monitoringinstructional methods,and makingclassroom visits and provision of feedback for teachers.

Table 2. The roles of school principals onorganizing school-based Information.

No	Items	Mean	Std.dev
1	Regularly examine school-wide student performance data.	1.78	1.171
2	Conduct action research and serve as a model for effective teaching and learning	1.08	0.954
3	Use multiple sources of data to make decisions	2.23	1.228
4	Communicate student progress data to the community	1.86	1.081

Table 2 shows roles of school leaders on organizing school-based data. The average score obtained from the responses of participants shows below average. This means, principals in the study area are not good enough in organizing data related to student's performance and staff data, they failed to conduct action researches as expected, they didn't use various sources for making school-based decisions, and they failed to communicate community and parents about their student's progress.

Table 3. School principal's rolein establishing school culture

No	Items	Mean	Std.dev
1	Establishesgood school culture	1.72	1.107
2	Encourage collaborative works	1.82	0.932
3	Conduct situational analysis and identify gaps in the school	2.19	1.314
4	Have plans for executing their work	1.54	0.737
5	Work exhaustively with school leaders (school Management boards, PTA, KETB)	2.06	1.315

In table 3, study participants are asked to rate principal's effort in establishing school culture. The responses of respondents show that principals in the study area are not good enough in establishing good school culture. Most respondents believed, principals in the study area are not encouraging collaboration and do not have working plan to guide their efforts. The ratings with regards to working with school management boards is low. In general school principal's role in establishing proper school culture seems below the expected result.
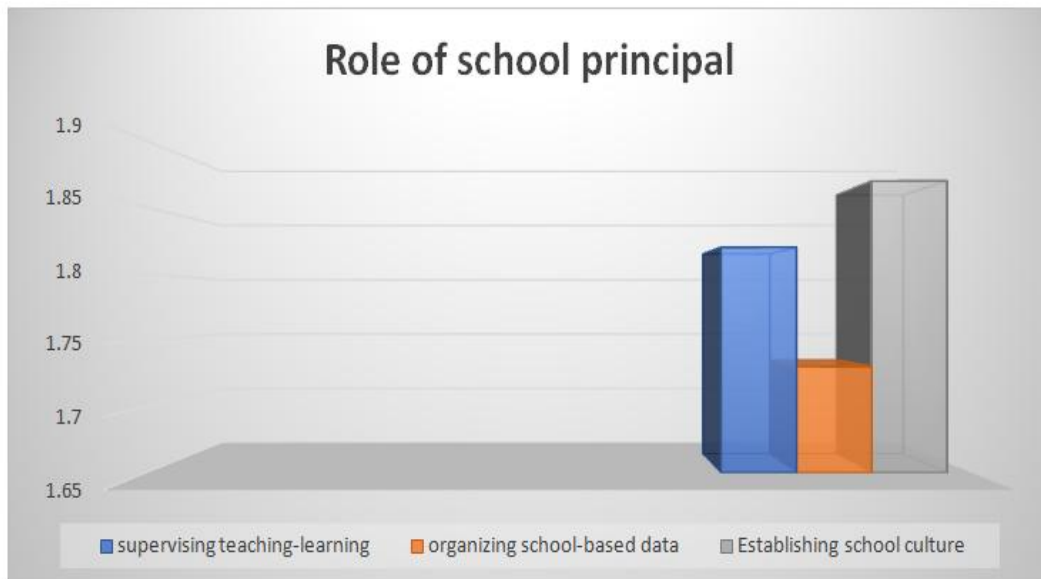
Fig. 1. Summary of School Principals Role

Challenges of school principals in ensuring educationquality
The other issue discussed in this paper is implementation challenges of school principals in ensuring education quality at secondary schools of Wolaita zone.

Table 4. Challenges faced by school principals in ensuring education quality

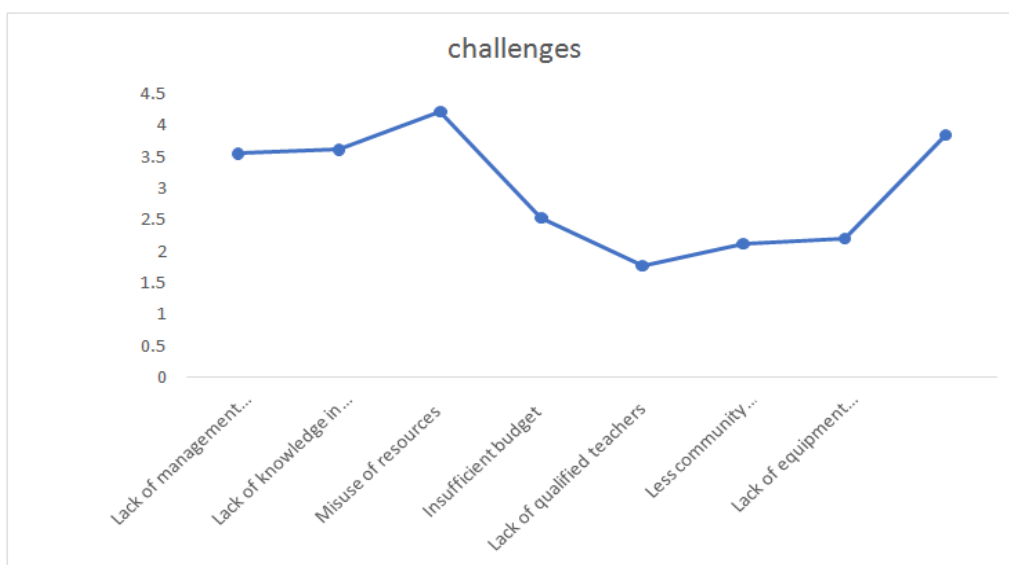| No	Items	Mean	Std.dev
1	Lack of management skill by school principals	3.55	1.514
2	Lack of knowledge in education policy	3.61	1.461
3	Misuse of resources	4.21	1.302
4	Insufficient budget	2.54	1.606
5	Lack of qualified teachers	1.78	1.076
6	Less community involvement	2.12	1.355
7	Lack of equipment (laboratory, books, library…)	2.21	1.444
8	Lack of in-service training for teachers	3.85	1.388

Fig. 2. Challenges of principals in ensuring education quality

Table 4 depicts challenges principals faced inthe study area. Misuse of resources, lack of in-service training for teachers, lack of knowledge in education policy, lack of management skill by school

principals,insufficient budget, lack of equipment, less community involvement, and lack of qualified teachers are the challenges rated by the respondents in that order.

V. CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to assess theroles school principals paly in enhancing quality education at the schools. The roles investigated include principal's role as supervisingteaching-learning activities, organizing school-based data, and establishing school culture. These roles of principals were not accomplished by principals as expected.The major challenges of principals in employing their role towards improving education quality include, among others, misuse of resources, lack of in-service training for teachers, lack of knowledge in education policy and lack of management skill by school principals.Thus, it is possible to conclude that school principals in the study area are not playing their leadership role to the expected level and, hence, their contribution towards improving the education quality in the schools is minimal.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

Quality education is a serious issue at the education sector. It is commonly agreed that school principal shall work to enhance education quality at schools. With regards, the study forwarded the following suggestions.
1. Principals are expected to lead their school with enough knowhow and skill. Hence, secondary school principals expected to update themselves by various trainings to cope up the dynamics and complexity of the education sector from time to time.
2. The government and other donors should understand the roles of school principals in enhancing education quality and shall pay attention to capacitate school leaders.
3. Ensuring education quality is not the responsibility of a single individual or body. Hence, all stakeholders should contribute their share to enhance education quality at secondary schools of WolaitaZone.

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