Enhancing Pedagogical Leadership: Refocusing On School Practices

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Abstract: *The effectiveness of schools in educating students is highly dependent upon the presence and nature of multi-leveled pedagogic leadership within each individual school. While principals are formally required to lead the school, leadership is not the sole province of the principalship (Macneil, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2008). Using a case study of school Z in Kakamega, Kenya, this paper argues that there is evidence of instructional leadership as opposed to contemporary leadership (Pedagogical Leadership). Specifically, the paper assesses Pedagogical Leadership (PL) practices in the school in examined during a field visit. Based on literature and the researcher's teaching experiences, the paper identifies PL practices in the school through the lens of an observed lesson and principal practices, clearly arguing for how they can be enhanced and/or developed. Further, the paper discusses possible constraints for developing PL in the school and offers recommendations. Data was collected through field notes and formal and informal conversations with participants. Participant observation and semi structured interviews were also used.*
Key words: *Pedagogical Leadership, Instructional Leadership*

I. Introduction

The effectiveness of schools in educating students is highly dependent upon the presence and nature of multi-leveled pedagogical leadership within each individual school. While principals are formally required to lead the school, leadership is not the sole province of the principalship (Macneil, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2008). This paper, argues that schools are still entrenched in instructional leadership as opposed to contemporary leadership (Pedagogical Leadership). This begs the question: What is the difference between instructional and pedagogical leadership? To understand this, I will begin by defining instruction and pedagogy respectively. Instruction is a limiting, clinical term that relates to only one part of the teaching and learning cycle. It does not encompass the formative or summative assessment that effective teachers use as a matter of course. Instruction does not consider the effect that a teacher's humanness and discourse has in facilitating risk-taking in the learning environment. Instruction is unlikely to influence the class culture and students' understanding of democratic decision-making (MacNeill & Silcox, 2012). As Van Manen (1993: 9) in MacNeill & Silcox, (2012) noted, "It is possible to learn all of the techniques of instruction but remain pedagogically unfit as a teacher". Pedagogy, on the other hand is "reasoned, moral, human interaction, within a reflective, socio-political, educative context that facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge, beliefs or skills" (Ibid). From these definitions, PL as Sergiovanni (1998) aptly describes is leadership that invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital[1] for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers in order to provide conditions necessary to improve levels of student learning and development. He succinctly summarizes it thus:

Pedagogical leadership $\longrightarrow$ capital development $\longrightarrow$ value added to students

To realize this kind of leadership, the principal needs to practice distributed leadership which involves shared cognitions and understandings (Jappinen, 2012). This would involve him/her as the head putting initiatives that encourage reciprocal interdependency and collaborative attitudes. Raelin (2003) introduces the term 'leaderful practices' in which leadership is seen as a process of setting the mission, actualizing the goals, sustaining commitment and responding to changes. These practices are augmented with 4 C's: collective, concurrent, collaborative and compassionate skills. This means that such leadership should involve everyone in an organization, (the entire organization is involved in leadership practices); such leadership can be practiced by any member of the working community at the same time; everyone is in control and can speak on behalf of

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[1] Value of something that when properly invested produces more of that thing which then increases the overall value (Sergiovanni, 1998).

everyone and that dignity of every member is considered when decisions are made (Ibid, 2003). When these 'leaderful' practices are evident in an organization, then there is likely to be meaningful learning experiences for learners resulting from the collaboration. A classroom teacher who practices these 4C's becomes a PL. PL also goes beyond the knowledge of subjects and requires that teachers invest in knowledge that would enable them help others learn it (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Such a teacher needs to shift from the traditional role of curriculum user to a new role of curriculum leader (Ho, 2010). Being a curriculum leader will enable the teacher to select developmentally appropriate learning experiences to learners and any decisions made that affects learners should be based on the learner's needs and interests. Furthermore, Kyriacou (1991) in Nathan (1995) identifies seven essentials of a teacher leader: planning and preparation, lesson presentation, lesson management, classroom climate, discipline, assessing student's progress and reflection and evaluation. There should therefore be a deliberate effort to create a meaningful link between these elements for the purpose of achieving better results. This is rightfully so, as the quality of preparation affects presentation and all the other factors mentioned.

Instructional leadership is distinguished by how administrators and teachers improve teaching and learning. Instructional leaders focus on goals, curriculum, instruction and the school environment (Stewart, 2006). The principal in this kind of leadership focuses on teachers as teachers focus on student learning. This is obviously prescriptive and relies on the top down leadership style. In using this kind of leadership, in case the principal has less educational expertise than the teachers he/she is supposed to supervise, he/she may fail to effectively guide the teachers. This can further be complicated by principals who view their role as purely administrative.

II. Method

This study was conducted in school Z located in Kakamega municipality. Data was collected through field notes and formal and informal conversations with participants. Participant observation was also used and it accorded opportunities to obtain a deeper insight on the activities of the participants. Semi structured interview allowed flexibility in structuring the questions. A narrative description of classroom observation enabled themes to be identified. Detailed field notes and transcriptions of interviews were coded. The codes were generated from emergent themes from literature as well as from the recurrent themes from the field during data collection. These were then categorized and patterns identified.

III. Results

This section discusses to what extent the essentials of pedagogical leadership were manifested in the teaching/learning process enabling value added to students in the form three Kiswahili lesson observed in school Z. Firstly, Friedman (2004) insists that a pedagogical leader should have a well spelt out objective for the lesson either communicated verbally or in print and a clear expectation of students by the end of the lesson.

The class observed demonstrated "I teach they listen" approach to instruction punctuated by a question/answer session of 2-4 minutes. The students were seemingly expected to memorize and reproduce. The following represents an excerpt of one such exchange:

The teacher is rooted at the same spot from the beginning of the lesson to the end. The only movement she makes is when she turns to write something on the board and/or turn to face the students. She continues to lecture for about 20 minutes frequently occasioned by:
Teacher: Tuko pamoja? (Are we together?)
Students: Ndiyo (Yes)
Teacher (continues to lecture) (pauses): Tuko pamoja? (Are we together?)
Students: Ndiyo (Yes).
She pauses for about 3-5 minutes to ask a question on what she has lectured on.
Teacher: Wasifu wa ndani tutaujuaje? (How do we know character traits?)
Student X: Kwa matendo (by actions)
Teacher: Kwa mfano? (for example?)
Student X: Mkatili (cruel)

This style of lecture-question-answer is repeated throughout the lesson. 15 students enter the class 30 minutes into the lesson. The teacher comments "waliochelewa ingieni" (late comers come in). This stops the lesson for about 3 minutes as they settle in. The lesson then proceeds. Suddenly, time is up and the lesson comes to an abrupt end. The teacher mentions that 'we will stop there today.' A male student draws her attention to an item on the black board: muundo (stylistic devices) that she has not talked about in the lesson. She responds that it will be pushed to the next class. She welcomes any questions from the students. There being no question, the lesson ends.

(Excerpt from observation notes)

The teacher referred to a text book, the only resource used throughout the lecture which can lead to the teacher feeling less empowered. However, the teacher seemed to have good classroom management the only disruption occurring when a group of 15 students came in late and she had to wait for them to settle down. The teacher also made an attempt at questioning to assess the learning progress. However, whenever she asked a question which no student responded to, she would personally respond to it. For example:

Teacher: Kuna tofauti gani kati ya muundo na mtindo? (What is the difference between   organization   of content and style?)

Students: (silence)

Teacher: (explains)

IV.   Discussion

Kyriacou (1997) defines effective teaching as "teaching which successfully achieves the learning by the pupils intended by the teacher" (p.5). Further, teacher as a leader, Hoyle (1969) advances, has a main role to lead his/her pupils towards the learning and behavioral goals prescribed. However, in the class observed the teacher seemingly had no spelt out expectations. When asked, she responded: "I don't know." This put into question her intent for teaching the lesson and the efficacy of such a lesson. What would be the basis of her reflection? This kind of attitude is reflected among a large group of teachers, who still go to class without much thought about why they are teaching, obviously lacking in PL and not adding value to student learning.

From experience and class discussions, lecture method is typical of most schools in East Africa but what Audet and Jordan (2005) refer to as "traditional, authoritarian, ritual and routine" (p.21) of questions which creates in students "conformity, compliance and passivity" (p.21). To make it worse, the teacher remained rooted in front of the class, either writing on the board or lecturing, experiences which go against the expectations of a pedagogical leader to use strategies that encourage students to create knowledge for themselves (Sergiovanni, 1998). This is against the principle of PL being based on dialogue, not monologue, and of learners as essential participants in the discussion (MacNeill, Cavanagh and Silcox, n.d).

The Principal

As a pedagogical leader, Erätuul and Leino (1996) contend, the Principal should be a resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator and a visible presence. This Principal communicated with teachers, students and parents and initiated remedial teaching initiative, providing "resources needed" as explained by a teacher. Through her leadership, a forum for discussion of pertinent issues affecting the school has been created in the school as evident from the school baraza[2] held the previous term. In the forum, the stakeholders discussed and reflected on wide variety of issues affecting them.

There was evidence of distributed leadership. There were positions such as Head of school Deputy Head of school, senior mistress in charge of discipline and cultural activities, senior master, Career mistress, senior master in charge of environment and maintenance among others. This, LEADSPACE (2009) agrees, secures commitment and responsibility for continued improvement through all levels of school. Through informal conversations, I noted that these positions were respected and functional. For example, on requesting a teacher to observe a class, I was informed that I had to pass through the academic master.

In recognition of the importance of Professional Development (PD) for PL, the Principal attends short seminars on management and showed a commitment to PD by hiring on contract a retired teacher to induct teachers on preparation of professional records. This information was corroborated by teachers. To a large extent, the principal tried to be a pedagogical leadership.

Constraints

The large class sizes and intolerable workload was a challenge to teachers' use of effective instructional strategies. In fact quoting Dr A. K. Tibaijuka on large classes (4th graduation ceremony of Aga Khan University Dar-es-Salaam): in such circumstances, the teacher can "only maintain law and order" in the class. The remedial initiative collapsed when parents failed to 'pay' the incentive to the teachers. Generally, the teachers, through informal talk felt overworked and underpaid. Calling it the narrative of social contracts, Sergiovanni (1998) argues "you can't expect a manager to manage well, a worker to be diligent…, unless there is something for them…how can we expect teachers to teach well, students to learn well…without incentives?" (p. 43). The principal feels challenged too due to heavy workload and trying to 'source' teachers for the school.

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[2] Council /assembly of stakeholders to discuss pertinent issues affecting them.

Possibilities And Recommendations For Pl In The School

Sharing and implementing promising practices could be enhanced to act as a vehicle of not only changing teaching and learning but also for enhancing interdependence and expanding relationship capacity (Friedman, 2004). This could be through all the stakeholders coming together to share the school vision which was unknown to all the teachers I had informal conversations with, then structuring their instructions around it.

Reflective practice could be introduced and developed around how teachers teach and what the consequences of their teaching practices are. This would provide them with "opportunities to look back on and review events and practices" (Ashraf & Rarieya, 2008: 270).

The sessions by the hired teacher could be enhanced so as to develop effective in-house PD plans (Friedman, 2004) which should be embedded in the daily routine following AFT (2002) principles of an effective PD program.

In a study involving six case studies reported by Webb (2005), it was noted that in cases where principals were not teaching, they were increasingly losing touch with the curriculum and approaches to teaching. The principal should therefore model classroom practice by being an exemplary teacher.

V. Conclusion

This paper has discussed PL practices in school Z in light of the classroom process observed and Principal leadership. Improvement of student learning is a crucial outcome of PL. Teachers should therefore be empowered to make classroom learning appropriate, meaningful and exciting for all learners. Conversely, the Principal should demonstrate a commitment to administer to the needs of the school as an institution by serving its purposes, serving those who struggle to embody these purposes and acting as a guardian to protect the institutional integrity of the school (Sergiovanni, 1998). Pedagogically oriented approach is the way to go.

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