

## **Challenges of Shared Leadership Practice in Public Preparatory Secondary Schools of Hawassa City Administration**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine existing challenges of shared leadership practice in Public Preparatory Secondary Schools of Hawassa City Administration. Thus, a descriptive survey research design that followed a mixed research method was employed. Among 7 preparatory schools of the City Administration, 5 schools were selected by simple random sampling technique. Relevant data were gathered from selected 79 (79.52%) teachers of the total 101 secondary school teacher using Simple random sampling techniques. A closed-ended questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. Then, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation score. Consequently, it is found out the major challenges towards an effective shared schools leadership practices were mainly developed from school principals less autonomy, commitment, communication, experience and skills. Moreover, lack of training, regular support, resistance from stakeholders, unavailability of educational resources and principals' role diversity are also among the major challenges. Therefore, it was recommended that the City Administration Education Offices and the Regional Education Bureau needs to build the leadership capacities of school principals by providing necessary leadership training and has to further provide adequate technical, assistance and professional support. School principals and leaders have also to be more committed to exercise and use shared leadership roles in their school than the dominance use of a single leadership style.

**Key Words:** Shared Leadership, Challenges, Public Preparatory Secondary Schools

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Date of Submission: 22-11-2019

Date of Acceptance: 06-12-2019

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

According to Littlewood and Jantz (2008), shared Leadership practice is a complex process and it is encompassed across leaders, followers, their situation, and their interactions. Shared leadership practiced schools articulate consistent, clear messages that align with the shared mission/vision which others can use to guide their behaviors and seek the big picture in the midst of details and chaos, searching for the larger patterns. They recognize process structures and kinds of connections or relationships and accept and use disequilibrium and change as sources of creativity and energy. The search for organizational equilibrium is a sure path to organizational death.

School principals those practice shared leadership reflects and embrace new forces and new information that continually change the situation and how others respond. They also practice principles of subsidiarity in allocating authority for decision making to those closest to the decision. Moreover, they know that power is relational, not positional and thus cultivate connections among others and spend time to listening and observing relationships and interactions among people, organizations, and their environment in order to see and understand the connecting patterns and respect others' uniqueness (Daneilson, 2006).

Effective schools those practice shared leadership expect that the organizational/ community system and environment will continually influence each other in spiraling feedback loops thus co-creating each other and use planning strategies that have room for "just in time" reflective responses to the unexpected. This means practice strategic thinking and strategic visioning not strategic planning. Just-in-time strategies include being prepared for change/expecting change and engaging for the moment while visioning for the future (Pearce and Sims, 2002).

Schools those characterized by effective shared leadership were allow flexibility in leadership roles, learn to recognize critical conditions for change, recognizing that people and roles are not fixed entities, but are dynamic changing as they gather new information, interconnect with others, and reinterpret their environment and understand that information is dynamic and needs to freely circulate since it is the nourishment by which workers/citizens are able to intelligently self-organize their work.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Primary goals of the Ethiopian education system are provision of relevant, inclusive, quality, and cost-effective primary, secondary and higher education to citizens by ensuring optimum leadership of schools where new ideas and changes are handled quickly and efficiently. To achieve these goals and to give on time and proportional response to the ever changing milieu new way of leadership approach that encompasses all stakeholders' contribution in various degree and size is mandatory. The effort to achieve these goals by improving standard of school and reduce dissatisfaction of stakeholders through shared leadership style is that fit and outdone the harsh and turbulent milieu is not a matter of option; rather it is an issue of survival. Despite different continuous and progressive changes of the global aspects, leadership style of many preparatory schools in general and Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools in particular are traditional and top-down approach where a decision making power significantly in the hands of school principals and few leaders. This nature of schools with respect to leadership styles most probably deters them for timely realization of their vision and goals. In my opinion, schools that encourages leaders to share responsibilities and authority to member of the organization like teachers, students, (PTAs), local communities, and other relevant stakeholders through shared leadership perspective are not only successful schools in their multivariate endeavors, but also they are able to equipped themselves with the necessary apparatuses to fight or flight the dynamic local and global phenomenon. A research on shared forms of leadership is still at its early stages and the available empirical evidence about it is not abundant Spillane et al.,(2004). Besides, the characteristics and application of shared leadership in higher education have not been adequately explored. Nevertheless, Hulpia and Devos (2010) also explored the link between shared leadership and teachers' organizational commitment through semi-structured interviews with teachers. They found that teachers were more committed to the school when school leaders were highly accessible and encouraged their participation in decision making. Thus, implies that to achieve the goal of education in generally and the goal of schools in particularly, schools need to practices shared leadership by participates all stakeholders actively in order to attain common school goals and objectives. In relation to shared leadership practices Lambert (2002) outlined the advantage of using shared leadership approach rather than using one approach as follows.

*"The days of the lone instructional leaders are over, no longer has one believes that one school leaders can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without the substantial participation of other educators" Lambert (2002).*

As this statement using only one leadership styles do not help to realize the goals and objectives as planned. Leithwood, K., &Jantzi, D. (2008) also examined the relationship between shared leadership and teachers' academic optimism. According to their research finding, there was a significant association between planned approaches to the shared leadership and high levels of academic performance. Concerning shared leadership importance Bolden et.al, (2008) stated that "successful school leadership requires the dynamic interplay between a range of factors and priorities at a number of levels: individual, social, structural/organizational, contextual and developmental. Pearce and Sims (2002) also found that "shared leadership patterns lead to higher performance as compared to traditional leader-dominated" leadership patterns. They concludes that academic leaders need to create an environment or context for academics and others to fulfill their potential and interest in their work if leadership and leadership development takes place, as opposed to focusing solely on the traits and capabilities of individual leaders. As their research finding the key challenges of school improvement today is the commitment of school principals to become leaders who develop and raise high-level of achievement by working with, learning from and influencing the behaviors of others within and beyond their schools. Regarding this, Workineh (2012) also described as: until recently, school management and organization were not given due attention in education policy formulation, education practices and academic research in Ethiopia. Instead policy documents tend to focus mainly on access and equity. From the above statements the researcher views that, the attention given for the strengthening of school leadership was not satisfactory. Similarly, Ethiopian MoE (2005) outlined, the weak school leadership and the low capacity of schools to implement programs was one of the great challenges to achieving access, quality, and equity in education. From the above statements the researcher conclude that shared leadership play paramount role for the overall, goals attainment of education in general and schools in particular, if the nature, potency and flaw of shared leadership with respect of educational organizations clearly studied. School leaders' role is not simply to accomplish administrative tasks, rather to lead all the required school resources with shared leadership to bring quality education with improved student's academic achievement. To this end, the traditional assumption of school leaders' roles and responsibilities cannot serve for the generation of 21st century. In addition to national and international research finding the observation of researcher during last twelve years as teacher, and principal in the area and informal discussions with teachers, cluster supervisors, PTAs, students, and parents for a long

time also revealed that school principals shared leadership practices was not participatory and effective in many preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration. Moreover, at present time many preparatory schools were suffered with problems related with shared decision making, collaborative cultures of learning, building team and developing mutual authority. Consequently, the purpose of the study is to examine the challenges of shared leadership in preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration. In light of the objectives of the study, the following research question is stated:

1. What are the major challenges to of implementation of shared leadership in preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration?

### **III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **3.1. Determinant Factors of Shared Leadership Practice**

Leaders build their practice in many ways and continually are influenced by internal and external factors. Oduro (2004) identified factors, that push (promote) and pull (inhibit), that affect the situation and consequently the incorporation of shared leadership practices in schools. Favorable factors can make shared leadership attractive and pull principals, teachers, and students toward implementation. Undesirable factors make shared leadership less appealing, acting to “push” leaders, teachers and students away from shared practices. The most common “pull” or promoter was trust, while the most common “push” or inhibitor was distrust. Danielson (2006), also identify several factors that inhibit principals shared leadership practice. According to him these factors can be grouped as;

##### **3.1.1 Leaders’ Factors**

As Danielson (2006) leaders as instructional leader required to qualified and trained through formal educational and have adequate work experience and skills which has a quality suited for those complex activities. The organization proper functioning of inputs lies on the capability and competence of leaders. As him leaders' factor in habits principals shared leadership practices are;

- a. **Leaders Educational Background:** An effective leaders needs to have knowledge on series of specific technical, human and educational skills. It indicates the ability to diagnose educational problems, carry out the functions of supervision, evaluate educational programs, and help curriculum, implement staff development activities, and develop good individual educational programs for individual children.
- b. **Leaders’ Work Experience:** The ability to learn from experience is one that leader needs to develop and foster. School leaders obviously should work for a few years as a teacher before they assumes a leadership to gain a number of understandings about students, the role of the community, the problems and teaching, and some of the school administrative problems. Through an experience, the prospective leader can gain understanding and skills in working with people, if he recognizes the opportunity for learning from experience. In effect the more the experienced leader will become the more effective instructional leader.

##### **3.1.2 Organizational Factors**

For the organization to be successful in achieving its goals functioning variables are required. Among these variables the common one stated by Danielson (2006) are the following. If the leaders are capable to generate and utilize adequate resources and influence subordinates in using appropriate leadership styles in accordance with their levels of maturity, it is most likely that organizational goals will be achieved. As Danielson (2006) the organizational factors are;

- a. **Availability of Educational Resource:** The first factor is the availability of educational resources, which include human, material and financial resources. The availability of essential resources like teachers, textbooks, machineries, supplies and finance are crucial to the success of effective leadership role. The availability of educational resources may constrain or facilitate the leadership function. Gorton (1993:263) indicated that lacks of resources are serious obstacle to effective leadership.
- b. **Professional Norm:** Educational norms enforce the principals to leave the instructional matter and educational decisions to teachers which limit the frequency and depth of principals classroom observation as well as their initiatives of consulting teacher about instructional matter Harris (2009).
- c. **School and Class Size:** Lashway (2002:1) says “Small schools are more likely to nurture a sense of belonging and community, engaging active student involvement through a positive, humane and caring atmosphere.” This implies that leaders are more likely to operate in a participative mode and claims that interpersonal relations are more positive in small schools.

### 3.1.3. Structural Factors

District or Zonal educational office is one of the factors that influence the leadership activities of the school. It is the basic administrative unit in the education hierarchy, which starts at federal level and works its way to the state and then to local level. In addition to district or zonal education desk, administrative elements like rules, and regulations and policies, numerous reporting requirements, untimely teacher transfer and delay in employment suggested as constraining elements in principals instructional leadership process. The main reasons behind failure of shared leadership according to Harris (2004) are distance and lack of communication.

### 3.1.4 Cultural Factors

Cultural factors are normally related to traditional standards and the solidarity of teachers in a hierarchical structure Danielson (2006). The common cultural factors are administrators threatened by teacher leadership and teacher unwillingness. Some principals may consider significant initiative of teachers as a step in resolving issues. In other hand teachers may be reluctant to be leaders either because they feel that they step above the line of duty or that teachers feel they need their time to improve their teaching practice. Lack of confidence, time, and role conflict could be another factor as they simply think that they do not have professional expertise that could be of importance to others. Shared leadership as an organizational resource where its members work together collaboratively which allows for more interactions between school staff. But, distance is one of the obstacles for the team to meet and solve problems. Modern technology of communication can be one of the solutions.

## IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The major objective of this study was to examine challenges being faced by principals' to execute shared school leadership practices in preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration. To achieve this end, a descriptive survey research design was employed. Of the total 7 preparatory secondary schools found in the five Sub-City Administrations, 5 preparatory secondary schools; one each from the five sub-cities were selected through purposive sampling technique. The subjects of the study were 79 teachers selected from 101 populations through simple random sampling technique were used as sources of data. A closed ended questionnaire was used to collect data. The developed questionnaires were piloted and necessary correction was made before final administrations to the respondents. Quantitative data collected through questionnaires from teachers were tallied, tabulated and analyzed by descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation using SPSS version 20. Finally, based on analyzed data the researcher comes up with the following finding.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

### 5. 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The importance of this part is to provide some basic background information about the target population with the assumption that it might have some kind of relationship with the issue to be assessed. The respondents were asked to indicate their background information. The details of demographic characteristics of respondents were presented, analyzed and interpreted in table 3 below.

**Table 1.Characteristics of Teacher Respondents**

S.N.	Variable	Category	f	%
1.	Sex	Male	71	89.9
		Female	8	10.1
		Total	79	100
2.	Age	Below 20	-	-
		21-25	11	13.9
		26-30	23	29.1
		31-35	15	19.0
		36-40	13	16.5
		41 and above	17	21.5
		Total	79	100
3.	Academic Qualification	Diploma	-	-
		Degree	51	64.6
		Masters	25	31.6
		Others	3	3.8
		Total	79	100

4.	Experience in years	1-5	11	13.9
		6-10	16	20.3
		11-15	23	29.1
		16-20	14	17.7
		21 & above	15	19.0
		Total	79	100

As presented in item 1 of table 1 above, regarding respondents sex, male teachers constituted 71(89.87%) while female teachers hold up 8(10.13%). This shows that their involvement of female in the teaching profession in preparatory schools was also very low.

As depicted in item 2 of table 1 concerning the age of respondents, 51(64.55%) of teachers are between age of 26-40 years. The remaining 11(13.9%) and 17 (21.5%) are below 25 and above 41years respectively. This shows that many teachers were matured enough and experienced to teach and support students as needed.

As seen in item 3 of above table, regarding academic qualifications 63(62.37%), and 34(33.66) of teachers, were first degree and master’s degree graduates respectively. As education and training policy of Ethiopia the minimum requisite qualification to lead and teach at preparatory school is second degree MoE (2010). This implies that the qualification standard sated by MoE was not fully achieved.

With respect to work experience of respondents,' item 4 revealed that 11(13.90%) teachers and 1(4.54%) leaders were below 5 years of experience while 16 (20.30%) teachers and 5(22.72%) leaders had 6-10 years of experience. On the other hand, 23(29.9%) teachers had a work experience of 11 to 15 years while 14(17.7%) teachers had 16-20 years of work experience.

### 5.2 Analysis of Major Challenges of Shared Leadership practices

This part of data analysis deals with major challenges inhabits school principals shared leadership practice in Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools. To assess these challenges eight items are analyzed and interpreted below.

**Table 2. Teachers response on challenges towards effective shared leadership practice**

S.N.	Items	f	x	Sd	Rank
1	Less autonomy of school principals to influence stakeholders.	79	4.30	.82	4th
2	Low commitment of principals to practice shared leadership.	79	4.35	.79	3rd
3	Lack of stakeholders' confidence and training on shared school leadership.	79	2.96	1.45	7th
4	Less capacity of school principals to communicate desired state of affairs among those working in the school.	79	3.63	1.19	5th
5	Lack of principals' experience, and skills to practice shared leadership.	79	4.61	.63	1st
6	External leader influence on principals as they do not practice shared leadership.	79	1.37	.49	8th
7	Less support from educational authorities at different levels.	79	4.38	.67	2nd
8	Resistance from staff members to participate on school leadership activities.	79	3.03	1.11	6th
	Aggregate mean	79	3.57		

Key\* x value 0 – 2.49 = Low, 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderate and 3.50 – 5.0 = High

As indicated in the first item of table 2, respondent teachers were asked to give their responses to what extent school principals autonomy influence stakeholders. Concerning this teachers' response was rated at (  $x = 4.30$  and  $Std = .822$ ). This shows that school principals are forced to accomplish tasks only with the structure and have no autonomy to lead their school according to the situation. Concerning this Ableidinger and Hassel (2010) and Tadesse (2015) stated that the school leader’s autonomy helps to improve schools and put freedom to develop a great team in scheduling and discuss unique school cultures. From this, it easy to conclude that school principals need autonomy to smoothly run school activities freely as the situation of their schools. However, in many preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration principals autonomy was inadequate and the major determinant factors to practice shared leadership.

With respect to the second item in table 2 above, respondent teachers were asked to rate the extents that school principals' commitment inhabit shared leadership practice. In this regard, the rated teachers response was ( $x=4.35$  and  $Sd=0.785$ ) which indicates high level inhabiting standard. This indicated that lack of school principals' commitment was highly affecting shared school leadership practice in majority of Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools.

Under item 3 of table 3, teachers were asked to rate the degree to which lack of stakeholders' confidence and training affect principals shared leadership practice. Accordingly, the teachers response rated at ( $x=2.96$  &  $Std =1.497$ ) which indicates moderate level of stakeholders training and confidence impact on the shared leadership. From the above result the researcher concludes that stakeholders' low confidence and training was moderately inhabits shared leadership practice of stakeholders in preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration.

Item 4 in the table 2 above intended to rate the extent that school principals' capacity to communicate desired state of affairs among school stakeholders determine practice of shared leadership. The mean and standard deviation of teachers' responses rated at ( $3.63$  &  $.629$ ). This means the school principals' capacity to communicate desired state of affairs among stakeholders was affect principals shared leadership practice at moderate level. Concerning this Harris (2004) stated that school principals are expected to communicate effectively with teachers, staff members, students and relevant stakeholder to establish, develop and maintain relationships and prevent conflicts, misunderstandings and behavior problems. Thus, researcher concludes that the principals' capacity to communicate the desired state of affairs was moderately inhabit the practice of shared school leadership in many preparatory schools of Hawassa City Administration.

Regarding item 5 of table 2, teachers were asked to judge the extent to which school principals experience and skills determines principals shared leadership practice. The teachers response score rated at ( $x= 4.61$  and  $Sd = .629$ ) which means inadequate skills and experience of school principals were highly affect practice of shared leadership. Concerning this Bulanle (2013) stated that school leaders who influence others have required knowledge and skills that help them to lead and manage schools effectively and efficiently. However, knowledge and skills in majority of Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools was highly affect shared leadership practices of school principals.

In item 6 of table 2 above, researcher forwarded to respondent teachers as they decided to what extent external leader influence principals shared leadership practice. With regarding to this the mean and standard deviation of teachers response rated at ( $x=1.37$  &  $Sd= .485$ ) which indicates low level of influence. This shows that the major challenges for practicing shared leadership by school principals is not the result of external leaders influence in Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools.

With regarding to item 7 of table 2, the respondent teachers were requested to point out their positions to what extent supports from educational authorities inhabit shared leadership practice. Accordingly, the rated mean and standard deviation result were ( $4.38$  and  $.667$ ) which implies high level. Regarding this Workineh (2012) and Tadesse (2015) stated that a critical decision making at the school level faces a great challenge due to lack of support and coordination from district education offices. Additionally, he argues that the gap between district education offices and school communities (school principals, teachers, parent teacher associations) is also highly responsible for loose communication between the government structures and the institutions. However, in most of Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools practice of shared leadership was encountered as a result of less support from educational authorities of different level.

In item 8 of table 2, teachers were requested to point out their position regarding stakeholders' willingness to participate in school leadership activities. For this item respondent teachers response rated at ( $x=3.03$  &  $Sd =1.109$ ) which implies moderate level of inhabiting. Concerning this Thoonen et al., (2011) states that principals who build a positive climate through communication of a mission, shared decisions, supportive professional development, sense of teacher community and public relations with the broader community promote an environment in which teachers feel empowered and committed willingly for school vision and goals achievement. However, resistance from staff members to participate on school leadership activities was moderately determine school principals shared leadership practice in Hawassa City Administration preparatory schools.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The finding of the study revealed that the major factors affecting the practice of shared school leadership are emanates from less autonomy, less support from educational authorities, lack of experience, training and skills to practice shared leadership and lack of clear communication, plan, inclusiveness and regular supervisory support from the concerned education officials.

The finding of the study also indicated that the major challenges that encountered principals shared leadership practices were mainly generated from principals low commitment, skill and awareness, resistance from stakeholders, lack of stakeholders' confidence and training and less capacity of school principals to communicate desired state of affairs among those working in the school to achieve the intended goals and vision of the schools.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

School principals has to create ample opportunities to participates concerned stakeholders in setting and implementing shared school vision, goals, decision, and empowers teachers and teams towards the achievement of desired goals in order to enhance school effectiveness, teaching-learning process, and students' achievements. They have to also start practicing shared leadership and make meaningful and structural changes in the schools to participate relevant stakeholders in setting and implementing school vision and goals, preparing, organizing, controlling, directing, supporting, implementing and evaluating activities and decision-making process.

Hawassa City Administration Education Office needs to assign professionally competent, matured, well skilled and knowledgeable principals and further are expected to provide an in-service training, workshop, intra- and inter-schools group discussion, and experience sharing programs to enhance principals and stakeholders shared leadership skills and competencies.

It is also imperative that stakeholders from Hawassa City Administration and Regional Education Bureau to ministry of education work together to improve school principals and relevant stakeholders shared leadership perception, practice, communications skills, willingness, and motivation through facilitating in-service training, regular supporting, monitoring, giving feedback and experience sharing programs.

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AntenehWasyhun (PhD). "Challenges of Shared Leadership Practice in Public Preparatory Secondary Schools of Hawassa City Administration" *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 12, 2019, pp43-50.