INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHING PERSONNEL AS BASIS FOR STRENGTHENED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the instructional decision-involvement of the teaching personnel of elementary school in District I. Along the course of the study, this tried to cover how respondents assessed the instructional leadership of the elementary teachers relative to sustaining the school vision, sharing leadership, and monitoring curriculum and instruction. This also looked into the level of the teachers' instructional decision-involvement or regard to school improvement plan such as access, quality, and governance. Likewise, this also considered problems encountered by teachers in their instructional decision-involvement. A researcher-constructed questionnaire served as the main instrument to gather the needed information from the 50 teacher-respondents. Weighted mean was the statistical tool used to determine the instructional decision-involvement of the respondents. Results revealed then that majority of the teachers' instructional leadership on regard to sustaining the school vision exceeded standards while sharing leadership and monitoring curriculum and instruction just met the standards. Also shown in the study that the level of teachers' instructional decision -involvement on regard to access, quality, and governance were somewhat manifested while working together in the decision-making process as a problem was to some extent experienced. The proposed school-based management strategies are then recommended for further validation prior to its implementation.

Keyword: instructional decision-involvement; instructional leadership; school improvement plan

INTRODUCTION

The institution of K to 12 in the Philippines educational landscape paved way for the decentralization, devolution, and greater autonomy for schools with publicly funded systems of education with the goal of improving the quality of education. This has then put the principal to deal with leadership, teacher evaluation, and student discipline, among others. As the primary leader in school, the principal ensures that the needs of the school, especially that of the learners are first addressed. Any gaps in these needs are tried to be filled-up, included here is empowering the teachers to be involved in matters that need their expert opinions and thoughts for the school improvement. Teacher participation in instructional decision making is one of the major features of this trend. On this premise, it can be said that teachers' empowerment helps in improving the curriculum; their involvement in the implementation and possible changes are just but powerful factors that strengthen one's curriculum. Undeniably, among all people it is the teacher who is closest to the students; they are more aware of the needs of their students and in a better position to anticipate the effects of curriculum implementation. In addition, teacher participation in instructional decision-making has been shown to be one of the key characteristics of effective schools.

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Teachers, on their part, are expected to be committed and to give their utmost involvement for their respective schools to work well towards its curriculum development. With their pertinent roles, teachers' knowledge, competencies, and experiences are the things that are needed to ensure their school's improvement and the success of their learners. Hence, their involvement is central to curriculum development as their support to the practice of teaching enables curriculum's implementation, ensuring its success. Teachers' effort towards this success are manifested in their learners, for efficient and effective teachers help schools to nurture and produce better and successful individuals. As Smylie (as cited in Gemechu, 2014) points out, teachers' participation gives way to opportunities for new knowledge and insights. These then are important to the process of developing the curriculum towards students' outcomes.

As decision-making is central to the success of the administration, one must be careful as this may bring negative or positive implication to the organization itself.

On this, teachers' participation in the decision-making speaks of their commitment and involvement that is pertinent to the curriculum implementation process. With this, if teachers have to be involved in instructional decision, the teacher should be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills that help them to effectively contribute in instructional development operation. Anent to this, school leadership is next only to teaching among the school-related factors that have a great impact to student learning.

Similarly, the instructional leaders are able to tell the difference between activity and achievement, and can help teachers improve their practice by providing professional development to benefit student learning (Beck & Murphy, 2012). Also, Whitaker (2013) added that school leadership is a process that comes in priority directly after classroom teaching has a pivotal impact on pupils' learning. However, leadership functions connected to learning, teaching and curriculum define a school principal's instructional leadership. For instance, it is suggested that influential, or high achieving, schools are managed around the main goal of teaching. The significance of instructional leadership carries on in concert with the supremacy of transformational leadership. On the other hand, Sutcliff (2013) disclosed that effective principals know how to collect meaningful data, but more importantly, are able to critically discuss, analyse, and use it in a meaningful way to improve instruction. The most recent programs of school leadership have incorporated the use of data for school improvement planning.

In this manner, the level of responsibility of the teachers is further compounded by the pressures for improved education quality and greater efficiency within education systems that exist in most Asian countries. The urgency for strengthening and supporting school-level management is not only due to the new wave of decentralization, but also as a result of demographic and economic trends seen in many Asian countries.

As argued by Craig (2010), many countries are experiencing near universal access and levelling of enrolment growth at the primary school level which increases attention to improving the quality of education. One consequence of this shift to quality is that teachers at all levels of the education sector, will need a better understanding of the teaching and learning processes and which actions are likely to improve the quality of education. Even when resources are available, the problem teachers' face in improving school quality knows which inputs and actions will lead to positive outcomes in student learning.

In this regard, in the local front, through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) every school organizes a School Governing Council composed of teachers, pupils, Officer-In-Charge, school head, parents, LGU and NGOs for they are the school stakeholders. They prepare the School Improvement Plan wherein the parents, LGU and NGOs are included in school policy-making but not in its implementation. Problems arose among teachers because the policies in SBM were unfamiliar to them. They found difficulty in designing and developing curriculum on their level and found it hard to foster positive school climate because they failed to improve the effectiveness of teachers in teaching as they were not able to give proper guidance to the teachers. Because of so much paper works, teachers were

not able to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs and some had inadequate ability to deal with routine administrative tasks.

Conversely then, although there is general agreement that teacher involvement in instructional decision-making aids school improvement, it is still difficult for those in control to empower those below them, especially if commitment to the craft is lacking. Chances are that each public school though under the same umbrella which is DepEd, may have its own distinctive managerial practice, which may encourage or hinder teacher involvement in instructional decision making. Under the assumption that a school will improve through teacher participation in instructional decision making, the present researcher had thought of determining the instructional decision-involvement of the teaching personnel of Talumpok Proper Elementary School in pursuit of school improvement. Being an active and passionate school head, he seemed it fit to work towards attaining excellence and achievement of the set goals.

As the school head, he deemed that this research would be able to tap the potential of teachers and open doors for them to strengthen their commitment towards school improvement. With this, with the proposed instructional and management program, teachers will be readied to be properly equipped in making instructional decisions that would bring success and improvement to their school.

On this, the Department of Education (DepEd) has embarked on the development and improvement of the managerial skills and expertise of the principals and teachers. Amidst the institutionalization of the K to 12, is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) where the public schools have to hold to a high standard of performance according to the pillars upon which NCLB is built. The first pillar of NCLB, more accountability for results, has meant that schools are required to meet rigorous standards for all students. They are expected to meet annual measurable objectives (AMOs) on the state-selected standardized test in math, English language arts, and reading. On the other hand, the second pillar of NCLB, more choice for parents, means that underperforming schools

must provide for either tutoring or school choice for parents of the students in that school. The third pillar, local control and flexibility, allows states and districts some control over how to meet the NCLB demands and what sorts of sanctions are faced in the event that schools do not meet the established goals. Finally, a focus on research-based best practices, the fourth pillar, means that schools must show that they are providing professional learning opportunities and support to teachers using practices and strategies that have been proven through research to be effective means of meeting teachers' needs (NCLB, 2002).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the instructional decision-involvement of the teaching personnel of Elementary School in District I. Specifically, this covered how respondents assess the instructional leadership of elementary school teachers in relation to: sustaining the school vision; sharing leadership; and monitoring curriculum and instruction. Likewise, this looked into the level of the teachers' instructional decision involvement on regard to the three key result areas in basic education relative to School Improvement Plan such as access; quality; and governance and considered the problems encountered by teachers in their instructional decision involvement. Based from the findings, a proposed instructional and management program was designed to strengthen teachers' commitment to School Improvement Plan.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research was used in this study. The researcher utilized two procedures in working on the problem-first was a questionnaire to assess the qualities of prospective school administrators. This method ascertained the conditions which prevailed in the group and obtained the facts with regard to the existing conditions. It followed therefore the descriptive research which was focused at the present condition, the purpose of which was to find new truth.

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According to Tejero et al. (2012), descriptive research design describes and interprets what concerns with the conditions and relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing. It is primarily concerned with the present, although it often considers past events and influences as they relate to current conditions. On the other hand, focus group discussion was applied to analyze the instructional decision involvement of 30 teaching personnel in elementary school of District I. Specifically, the information used in the study came from the perceptions and insight of the respondents through a researcher-conducted survey with the use of a designed questionnaire.

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the researcher sought the permission of the teachers to be the study's respondents. After being granted with the permission, he personally approached and administered the questionnaire to the people concerned so that questions that might surface will be given immediate answer. After all the data needed were collected, appropriate statistical tools such as frequency and weighted mean were used to assume the precision of statistical computation.

Preliminary data gathered determined the instructional decision involvement of the teaching personnel with the aim of proposing instructional and management program may be proposed to strengthen teachers' commitment to School Improvement Plan. Researcher-constructed questionnaire was used as the main tool in gathering data for this study. It consisted of three parts.

The first part of the questionnaire assesses the instructional leadership of elementary school teachers in relation to sustaining the school vision; sharing leadership; and monitoring curriculum and instruction. Meanwhile, the second part of the questionnaire looked into the level of the teachers' instructional decision involvement on regard to the three key result areas in basic education relative to School Improvement Plan such as access; quality; and governance. On the other hand, the third part covered the problems encountered by teachers in their instructional decision involvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Assessment on the instructional leadership of elementary school teachers

Permeating every aspect of school life, teacher is an educator, administrator, coach and mentor. Results on the assessment of respondents are shown below.

1.1 Sustaining the School Vision. The results show the assessment of the respondents on the instructional decision involvement of teachers in regard to sustaining the school vision.

As can be seen from the results, the composite mean of 3.43, suggests that respondents have assessed that to a moderate extent, teachers were involved in their school when it comes to sustaining the school vision as seen in their being instructional leaders. This was supported by the highest weighted mean of 3.63 on that they help their schools to develop or endorse visions that embody the best thinking about teaching and learning. In addition to this, teachers were also seen to develop a strong vision and mission statements that can help stakeholders in school reach such a common understanding and exercises his/her roles as instructional leaders who ensure the quality of instruction, with weighted means of 3.57 and 3.53, respectively.

Results showed that teachers have fulfilled their role as instructional leaders as they showed competency by being attentive to a variety of descriptors. In essence, teachers have communicated and are guided by an educational philosophy, personal experience and reflection, and have provided leadership in keeping with the school's vision and mission. It can be inferred from these results then that leadership is an essential ingredient for teachers to ensure that learners will get quality education. Teachers served as bridge that brings together the many different educational reform efforts for school improvement. Teachers, being the front lines of learning are uniquely positioned to provide a climate of high expectations, a clear vision for better teaching and learning and the means for everyone in the system to realize the vision of the school and that of DepEd.

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As expressed by Handler (2010), teacher participation in school decision making remains an important factor for the realization of the educational reform movement. The empowerment of teachers through participation leads to effective and successful school improvement.

1.2 Sharing leadership. The results show the assessment of the respondents on instructional leadership with regard to sharing leadership. The results show that the composite mean of 3.17 reflects that the instructional leadership of teachers in terms of sharing leadership was to a moderate extent as evidenced by the highest weighted means of 3.43, 3.37, and 3.33 for indicators showing that teachers help fellow teachers make sense of the realities of their professional lives, provide support for teachers who are not progressing toward meeting both student learning and school-wide goals, communicate the 'chain of contact' between home and school so parents know who to contact when they have questions and concerns, and manages school resources, both human and financial, respectively.

These results suggest that teachers learn more in the shared belief that aside from educating students, they also learn from their peers and superiors. With these conditions, teachers learn to be better teachers and student achievement increases. On this, it can be deduced that without formal leadership, teachers frequently work in teams, which such teaming structures are often interdisciplinary, with various members contributing differing kinds of curricular or instructional expertise.

1.3 Monitoring Curriculum and Instruction. The results show the assessment of respondents on instructional leadership with regard to monitoring curriculum and instruction.

On regard to the monitoring the curriculum and instruction, it can be seen from the composite mean 3.33, that there was a moderate extent participation or involvement of teachers in this aspect of educational program. Admittedly, this is one of the foremost concerns of all teachers in the educational arena in the 21st century as there is a continuing demand for greater accountability to improve student performance. Similarly,

expectations are raised where schools are required to ensure that all students achieve mastery of curriculum objectives, and local schools focus on implementing those requirements to the best of their ability. On this, leading instructional efforts in a school has likewise evolved as one of the primary roles of teachers. In support of this overall rating, results revealed that teachers participate in the school's professional development, with higehst weighted mean of 3.47, develop and set goals for their student learning and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, with similar weighted mean of 3.43.

It can be surmised from these results then that teacher together with their principal contribute uniquely to shared instructional leadership. In this view, teachers contribute to instructional leadership when they interact productively with other adults in the school around school reform efforts, learn with their colleagues, seek to improve their own professional practice, and expect others to do the same. As instructional leaders, teachers invest with their time and resources and instructional support and maintain the congruence and consistency of the educational program. Teachers want teaching and watching their students develop interests and skills in their interest area. On this, the teacher may need to create lesson plans and syllabi within the framework of the given curriculum since the teacher's responsibilities are to implement the curriculum to meet student needs. More so, as Handler (2010) found out, there is a need for teacher involvement in the development of curriculum. Teachers can contribute by collaboratively and effectively working with curriculum development teams and specialists to arrange and compose martial, textbooks, and content. Teacher involvement in the process of curriculum development is important to align content of curriculum with students needs in the classroom.

2. Level of the Teachers' Instructional Decision Involvement

Even before instruction takes place, teachers think about and making decisions concerning content, instructional strategies, the

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use of instructional materials and technology, delivery techniques, classroom management and discipline, assessment of student learning, and a host of other related issues. During instruction, teachers must implement these decisions as they interact with students in a dynamic way. According to Carr et al. (2008), decision making involves giving consideration to a matter, identifying the desired end result, determining the options to get to the end result, and then selecting the most suitable option to achieve the desired purpose. Teacher decisions about the issues just mentioned ultimately will influence student learning. Results on the level of teachers' instructional decision involvement on regard to access, quality, and governance are presented in the following tables.

2.1 Access. The results show the assessment of respondents on the level of the teachers' instructional decision involvement in terms of access.

Schools need teachers who focus on advancing student and staff learning. Teachers are expected to focus on teaching and learning, especially in terms of measurable student progress, that is better than before. As instructional leaders, they are expected to set the foundation to foster growth in schools by practicing strong instructional leadership.

In this respect, teachers who are equipped to handle complex, rapidly changing environment can involve themselves in the implementation of the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement. Effective school teachers are key to large-scale, sustainable education reform. Educators believe that teachers must be instructional leaders if they are to be the effective leaders needed for sustained innovation.

As revealed in the composite mean of 3.35, it was shown that teachers were somewhat involved in the instructional decision making as to access. Evidence of this was the highest weighted mean of 3.37 on that teacher understand how valid assessment data can support instructional activities such as providing appropriate feedback to students, diagnosing group and individual learning needs, planning for individualized educational programs, motivating students, and evaluating instructional procedures and improve

the learning experience and the success of learners.

It can be assumed from the results that being active and involved teachers, respondents were seen to have manifested good example of being an authentic professional in the field of academe. As it is, high involvement of teachers showcases their capacity to influence the factors that may help the school to improve. On this account teachers set personal and professional qualities of a responsible and respectable individuals. Conversely, their mandate is recognized as an important contribution to school improvement, especially that of the students. Instructional leadership of teachers brings to fore the emergence of excellent individuals who have demonstrated their capabilities on this aspect.

On the other hand, the teacher as a facilitator in the process, he or she now supports other teachers in developing skills in information gathering, problem solving, and making decisions. This includes providing assistance to and time for teachers to participate actively in decision-making by providing avenues through which teachers can develop skills, engage in dialogue, and access needed information.

2.2 Quality. The result shows the assessment of the respondents' level of the teachers' instructional decision involvement in terms of quality. Craig (2010) argued that universal access and levelling of enrolment growth at the primary school level increases attention to improving the quality of education. One consequence of this shift to quality is that teachers at all levels of the education sector, will need a better understanding of the teaching and learning processes and which actions are likely to improve the quality of education. Even when resources are available, the problem teachers' face in improving school quality knows which inputs and actions will lead to positive outcomes in student learning.

The composite mean of 3.44 generally shows that somewhat, teachers have been involved to some extent on instructional decision in terms of quality. This result suggests that teachers have the ability to influence school curriculum and instruction, particularly in their own classrooms, which is an important component of effective

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teaching and learning. Findings linking teacher empowerment to increased student academic performance are mixed, but many conclude that teachers' ability to influence school curriculum and instruction is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for school improvement.

This general assessment is further supported by highest weighted means of 3.60 and 3.50 on that teacher encourage dynamic interaction among people involved in the learning process, ensure that students can demonstrate at the end of the lesson the expected knowledge and skills which should be developed and enhanced, assist students through enrichment activities that enhance learning, and manifest commitment to service through spending overtime in school when there is a need to do so. Accordingly, empowerment only increased student achievement when it enabled teachers to change their instruction to become more involving and demanding for students.

2.3 Governance. The result shows the assessment of the respondents' level of the teachers' instructional decision involvement in terms of governance. To note, the composite mean of 3.31 showed that teachers' level of instructional decision involvement when it comes to governance was somewhat manifested. This was substantiated by high weighted means of 3.47 and 3.43 on indicators showing that teachers work together in the decision-making process and support community programs and projects together, respectively. Results then indicate that teachers were assessed to have collaborated with others to better understand on how they were to approach their work, including that concerns the students and their school community.

However, according Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), involvement is dependent upon principal's power within the district. In addition, principals of effective schools are effective within the community. They understand community power structures and maintain appropriate relations with parents. Workplace factors such as teachers' job satisfaction, sense of professionalism and influence, collegial trust, and opportunities to collaborate influence how leadership is exercised in school, but less is known about how principals contribute to them.

3. Problems Encountered by Teachers in their Instructional Decision Involvement

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 indicates that teacher education and training are participated not only by school heads but more so of the teachers. As much as there is a high degree of participation from teachers, a higher degree of involvement is likewise expected from them as leaders.

Conversely, poor performance of students in most public schools are often related to teacher training; none or minimal of it is traced back to the instructional leadership of school heads in developing their teachers. Such notion is premised on the belief that conditions of schooling that contribute to poor student outcomes are attributed to poor teacher performance. While the idea of investing in the training of those who can make the greatest difference to students' learning may be true, more proactive development must also be taken into account on that the instructional leadership and decision involvement of teachers may hold greater promise for both teachers and students. Their capability is of prime importance in order to bring about the expected lifelong learning among their students.

The results show the assessment of the respondents on the problems they experience in managing their classes. One major emphasis in the educational arena in the early 21st century has been the continuing demand for greater accountability to increase student performance. However, there are instances that bring problems that hinder teachers from performing well or getting involved in the instructional decision making. As can be seen from the result, the composite mean of 3.21 reflect that problems were somewhat experienced by teachers in their instructional decision involvement towards school improvement.

As can be seen, the highest weighted mean of 3.47 reveal that working together in the decision-making process was foremost problem experienced by teachers. This was immediately followed by getting support from community

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programs and projects together, with weighted mean of 3.43. To this, it must be understood that as a leader in the 21st century, teachers will be far different from the teachers of previous generations. They cannot avoid but have to face a different set of problems in the type of instruction and strategies, the school climate, the curriculum and approaches to be used. These are some of the challenges that teachers should be aware of insofar as attainment of quality education is concerned. Educators then as can be surmised, must grapple with how to manage these multiple accountabilities, especially when the contextual influences send conflicting messages or establish incompatible priorities.

4. Proposed Instructional and Management Program to strengthen teachers' commitment to School Improvement Plan

This project is in consonance with TEA Governance where programs such as

Project **H-E-A-R-T** that stands for encouraging all pupils an employee to become H-uwaran, Eskwela/ Empleyado at Responsableng Tao at all times.

Project **E-K-O-P**, that stands for Environmental Knowledge for Outstanding Purpose, which is intended for the environment.

Project **B-U-K-A** for Buti Unawa Kusa Asal.

Project **P-A-S-O-K** that stands for P-asok Kristo, A-tras bisyo, S-amba tayo O-ra mismo at K-alat bango

Project **B-U-O** that stands for B-rave (to be honest and true in all deeds) U-nique (being creative and original) and O-utstanding (every movement showcases the culture for outstanding and be the standard of the school).

These projects aimed to encourage teachers to be one in the implementation as these are anchored on TEA Governance particularly that of the Region's goal of being *Makatao,*

Makakalikasan, Makabayan at Makadiyos among all students and staff ang other stakeholders who will be inspired to serve.

With is general objective of upgrading teachers' expertise, management, and instructional leadership skills, providing technical assistance to school leaders in Key Result Areas, and improving the quality of instructional leadership in support for teachers and students, the proposed project aims on building teaching personnel instructional decision-involvement management and leadership expertise. This will involve activities such as 'Nuts and Bolts,' District Leadership Team, and Peer Group Professional Learning Communities.

The output for the Instructional Leadership will know instruction well and support teachers in their professional development; a learning agenda and high expectations are in place; implemented conditions for learning; implemented system of knowing where students are in their learning and responding in a timely manner; instilled belief that each and every teacher/student is capable of high levels of learning.

In addition, another project lined up is on the involvement planning for teacher participation where with some planning, schools can grow teacher involvement programs. With adequate planning, all teachers can have greater involvement in their schools. The new thinking here or byword would "it's about student and school success." This will have school communities will form an Action Team to organize partnership programs and provide guidelines on Teacher Planning for Teacher Involvement and principals will approach teachers' involvement the same way they do curriculum, professional development and other areas critical to school life.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the teachers' instructional leadership on regard to sustaining the school vision exceeds standards; sharing leadership meets the standard; and on monitoring

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curriculum and instruction, they have the met the standard.

2. Results likewise reflected that the level of teachers' instructional decision involvement on regard to access, quality, and governance were somewhat manifested.

3. Meanwhile, when it comes to problems encountered, results showed that working together in the decision-making process was to some extent experienced.

4. The researcher recommends that the proposed instructional and management program be subjected to further evaluation before its implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The proposed school-based management strategies can be subjected for further review for enhancement prior to implementation. Part of this can be dealt with special and upgraded activities, which can be provided for the school heads and teachers to recognize the change as an implication to good practice and training.

2. Teachers and principals' relationship can further be developed through activities that would create harmonious relationship towards building strong collaboration with stakeholders.

3. Consultations within the community must be further enhanced to involve stakeholders in the development of school culture, where the interests of the students and the needs of the community are considered.

4. Similar studies may be conducted in other schools to determine the effectiveness of school culture to students' academic achievement.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Ruel B. De Castro, initiated projects in the holistic improvement of the school; served as transformational leader through the School Learning Action Cell in developing teaching and non-teaching personnel in the organization; accomplished research about Involvement of Teachers To Strengthen Commitment on their works; monitors, supervise, organize and evaluate performance in implementing educational programs and contextualized it down to school; ensure compliance to existing laws, policies and orders of fund raising for the school; promote school discipline & establish linkages with stakeholders.

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