Analyzing the School Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Development

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Short Research Article

ABSTRACT

This article determined and analyzed the school principal's roles in teacher professional development. This short research study was conducted to investigate the way in which principal's coach and mentor teachers' professional learning at the school level of primary schools in Bhutan. Using the narrative-survey method, the finding reveals that, in general, a teacher should provide constant and timely coaching and monitoring, grant autonomy to make decisions, need to meet local needs and promote teamwork. Moreover, the principal should play a major role in involving teachers in leading, planning, encouraging, implementing, and evaluating.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among educational policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, there is an emerging consensus that teacher professional development is vitally important to educational reform as we approach the next millennium. Bredeson, [1] states that the whole purpose of the Principal's leadership role is to enhance the quality of education by creating a supportive learning environment for teachers and students within the schools. The principal's leadership role

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is vital in leading school reforms by implementing innovation, creativity, and changes in the school learning environment. To enhance innovation and creativity principal should be an instructional leader, facilitate teachers' professional development, build relationships with teachers, and recognize teachers' successes.

Darling-Hammond, Linda [2] states, that "rewards and sanctions accompanying performance-based pay and promotion programs will not be valued or given credibility as long as teacher evaluations are not approached professionally. The effect of treating teachers as bureaucrats or professionals, the limits of bureaucratic evaluation, and the demands of professional evaluation are detailed".

1.1 Objectives

1. Principal instructional leadership role in teachers' professional learning and development.
2. Creating a friendly learning environment
3. Constraint principals face in implementing teachers' professional learning and development.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study would create awareness among school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers (BPST), Teacher Professional Support Division (TPSD), etc., about the significance of principal's leadership role involvement in supporting teacher's professional learning.

I have been in this education service for the last 25 years and worked as a Principal for two decades. During my tenure as a school leader served in many schools and came across different types of teachers. The biggest challenges I faced in being a principal is dealing with teachers of different mindsets with behavior, attitude, unpunctual, burden of administrative issues, worries, and frustration.

In the eyes of others, principals are held to standards, and expectations to meet of teachers, students, the Ministry of Education, and parents. The principal is bestowed with high expectations to do it pleasantly without gaffes and handle the emotional, and social challenges pleasurably.

As a leader, we have to create an effective learning environment for teachers and students

in being instructional leaders in a world of digitalization. In many schools in Bhutan, students and teachers are assessed and evaluated based on their performance (BPST, examination) to achievement for higher level promotion.

"The most important responsibility of every educator is to provide the conditions under which people's learning curves go off the chart. Whether one is called a principal, a teacher, a professor, a foundation official, or a parent, our most vital work is promoting human learning and above all our own learning". (Barth, 1996, p. 56)

The is no silver bullet to solve this issue, the only thing that helps a leader is to be a champion for all the teachers for professional growth and truly an instructional leader through demonstrating an understanding of teaching and learning challenges faced by the teachers so that they are willing to take the opportunities to learn.

Liethwood [3] described teacher development as "arguably the most central function of educational leadership" (p. 86). He went on to explain the difficulty principals face in fulfilling this function, saying:

"Even principals who acknowledge their responsibility to foster teacher development often claim that is not a function they feel capable of performing well" (p. 86).

The study significantly in bringing the principal leadership role closer to the learning and professional development requirements of the teachers and it would be benefited the nation at large. It would help the Ministry of Education (MoE) and District Education Office in understanding the current trends of principals' leadership role involvement in schools towards Teacher Professional Development in 21st Century Educational reforms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning is what schools are all about and the school principal must understand how teacher learning and growth are connected to student learning and development. Principals work to embed life-long learning into the everyday life of students and teachers knowing that 'it enriches the ambiance of the school and makes it a place of excitement, energy, and direction' [4]. "High levels of engagement in the professional development process can positively influence the

climate and culture of teaching and learning" [5]. As such, principals who are active, knowledgeable, and engaged may be more likely to accurately determine the annual and ongoing professional learning needs of teachers.

A primary function of leadership is to improve both individual and organizational capacity through effective and continuous teacher professional learning and growth. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins [3] note that "the central task for leadership is to help improve employee performance" (p. 29) and that "the primary aim is building not only the knowledge and skills that teachers and other staff need" but also "the dispositions (commitment, capacity, and resilience) to persist in applying the knowledge and skills" (p. 30).

Bredeson, [1] mention that "within schools, the principal is in a unique position to influence the implementation of these guiding principles and to affect the overall quality of teacher professional development. One of the primary tasks of school principals is to create and maintain positive and healthy teaching and learning environments for everyone in the school, including the professional staff". Hord (1988) outlined "a role for principals as teacher edducato Interestingly, since that time there has not been scholarship or research that defines the principal's role in this way. Instead, scholars in the field of teacher education quickly turned to describe the principal's role as one of directing, overseeing, and participating in teachers' professional development". Morine-Dershimer (2002), for example, in her editorial introduction to an issue of *Teaching and Teacher Education* that included articles on teachers' development, focused on teachers' need for principals who support professional development. Lieberman and Miller (1990) described the importance of principals' active involvement in teachers' development in professional practice schools. These examples illustrate a subtle but important shifting of focus from what the principal does to what the teacher needs. It is a distinction that can be argued as having deflected teacher educators' attention away from specifically delineating the principal's role in supporting teachers' development.

"Even principals who acknowledge their responsibility to foster teacher development often claim that is not a function they feel capable of performing well" (p. 86). "Nonetheless, many educational administration scholars recognize the principal's role in teacher development and link it to the popular notion that principals are instructional leaders" (eg. Glanz, 2005).

2.1 Research Question

The School Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology is a set of methods and principles used in a particular study. Research methodology entails discussion of philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry, worldviews, the tools that would be employed in the research; and how the research would be carried out in the field (Creswell, 2007). This chapter presents the techniques that would be used to gather data for analysis and interpretation regarding the research purpose and questions of the study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the Principal's Leadership roles towards Teacher Professional Development in 21st Century Educational reforms of the principals and teachers of Mongar District. It was also intended to study how the school principals, leadership role helps in teachers' professional learning and development, the constraint faced by the school leaders.

The Ministry of Education and District Education officer involvement would enhance the Principals enhancing and implementation of the Teacher Professional Development in 21st Century Educational reforms of the principals and teachers of Mongar District. Based on the purpose of the study, the following research paradigm, design, strategy of inquiry, site, data collection tools, and sampling technique were employed.

The researcher used the qualitative approach and phenomenology as a research design. To make the study more reliable and authentic generality rational, a total of 30 participant consistinged of 10 principals, and 20 teachers samples were collected from schools of Mongar district. Research was undertaken under Mongar District, in the Department of school education, Bhutan. The actual research was embarked on 15th June to 15th September 2021. This study was conducted to investigate ways in which the school leader guides and mentors teachers' professional learning in Bhutan. It is important to select an equal number of male and female participants.

3.1 Research Tools

Research tools are very important instruments to gather information. It is determined as 'an attempt to see the universe from the subjects' point to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations (Kvale, 1996, p.112). The interview was used to gather data through an interactive process of communication between the interviewee and the interviewer.

The data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and compared to previous research gleaned from the extensive literature review.

3.2 Intervention Strategies

3.2.1 Teachers' appraisal and feedback

The principal leadership often influences and administrated the teacher's work. The condition of teachers' working environment is influenced by the feedback provided by the principal. To enhance the PD of teachers creating a healthy working environment is needed, cultivating leadership among the teachers, improving instruction and managing skills, and rethinking the vision and mission of academic success for students.

3.2.2 Aligning professional development with school goals and teacher needs

For Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), "PD is structured professional learning that seeks to improve teacher practices and student learning". "It is also defined as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive process of enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and principals to raise student achievement" [6].

"Professional development is instrumental to student learning and educational achievement which are key indicators of educational quality" [7]. "In South Africa, the goal of continuing professional development is to improve teachers' instructional practices, the standard of teaching and student learning, and the quality of education" [8] (Tsotetsi & Mahlomaholo, 2013).

"Within the school, principals understand that successful school change and school improvement requires a focus on teacher professional development" [9] (Krajewski, 1996). To mentor and appraise teachers' PD, the principal have to communicate effectively with all teachers in assessing their work, making sure the achievement of students is up to the expectation of the school goal, and implement the National policy of the Ministry of Education. As effective school leaders are called to "develop workplace conditions for teachers and other professional staff that promote effective professional development" [10].

3.2.3 Supporting the learning opportunity for the teachers

"Teachers who are provided leadership opportunities are more likely to have a positive impact on not only their classrooms but also the profession" [11] (Tubin, 2017).

"The teachers all expressed gratitude about having the opportunity, time, and space to be a part of the District Teacher Forum. This opportunity led them to assume that the organization supports their growth and development as teacher leaders. This perceived organizational support makes it more likely that they will assume identities as teacher leaders and assume extra-role responsibilities" (see Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). The members of the Teacher Forum gained a new professional identity as teacher leaders, Piggot-Irvine [12] asserts that "although the complexity of the principal's role provides challenges for such principal development, there is an increasing awareness of approaches worthy of consideration. For example, the principal's self-evaluation on instructional leadership determines whether the principal satisfactorily develops and implements a school improvement plan that results in increased learner achievement; works with teams to develop realistic and attainable goals regarding learner achievement; implements a system for monitoring learner progress and staff performance on an ongoing basis; providing feedback to staff for continuous improvement and growth; and selecting instructional programs that meet specific school needs".

Darling-Hammond, Linda [13] states, that rewards and sanctions accompanying performance-based pay and promotion programs will not be valued or given credibility as long as teacher evaluations are not approached professionally. The effect of treating teachers as bureaucrats or professionals, the limits of

bureaucratic evaluation, and the demands of professional evaluation are detailed. (DCS)

3.2.4 Creating a positive environment for teachers and students

The positive impact of a leader who creates a caring learning community focused on student success is evident to all. Research reveals that inadequate support from school administration is one of the three most often reported causes of a teacher's decision to leave the profession [14]. Susan M. Johnson's and Sarah Birkeland's study "Project on the Next Generation of Teachers" reports: "If given the choice between a school where they could earn a significantly higher salary and one with better working conditions, teachers would choose the school with better working conditions by a margin of 3 to 1." Principals who are knowledgeable about the issues affecting new teachers, proactive in supporting them, and committed to professional growth do make a significant difference.

Following are the transcripts of interviews made with the selected principals in different schools.

Principal 1 refers to (P.1), principal 2(P.2), principal 3(p.3).

1. What do you consider your leadership style to be like?

P 1 responded: Participative Leadership.
P 2 responded: Instructional leadership.
P 3 responded: Collaborative decision-making leaders.
P 4 responded: I want to be a transformational leader who inspires subordinates with a clear vision and mission and then empowers and encourages through team approach and cooperation.
P 5 responded: Shared responsibilities.

2. What do you think is crucial in creating a positive environment for teachers and students?

P 1 responded: Lack of collaboration between teachers and students
P 2 responded: The leadership matters the most.
P 3 responded: positive harmonies in school, active participation from both teachers and students, creating a conducive learning environment, teamwork from outside stakeholders, and support to the school.
P 4 responded: Positive attitude and collaboration are crucial to creating a sound environment for students and teachers.

P 5 responded: Understanding the need of individual

3. How are you held accountable for your work? Who do you report to?

P 1 responded: I am answerable for any work that is assigned to me. I report with facts and data.
P 2 responded: We are rated yearly using the prescribed tools. Our reports directly go to the District Education Office which ultimately is submitted to relevant agencies under the Ministry of Education.
P 3 responded: honesty, time management, work integrity, dedication, perseverance, and professionalism, accepting a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset
P 4 responded: Principal delegates the leadership roles with the systematic monitoring system. Success and failure of the roles are being monitored timely. Should there be any complexity in carrying out the roles, I usually report to my direct supervisor.
P 5 responded: As a civil servant I always make sure the designated job is done on time, my immediate boss.

4. Did you receive training for your job and if so what was it like? Do you feel it has prepared you for facing the challenges in the field?

P 1 responded: Yes, I received training on SLDP. It will benefit a lot in the school.
P 2 responded: Yes, completed two weeks of training specifically designed for school leaders. The training has given me the strength to lead the school.
P 3 responded: Yes, with the time change, the leader has to accept changes with rapid development. Adapt the current leadership traits; explore the challenges with the model 70:20:10 resources
P 4 responded: I am currently undergoing M.Ed in leadership and management. It is a very enriching program where I learn about leadership traits, the Bhutanese perspective of leadership, and developing leadership skills. It enhances my leadership capacity and definitely helps me to face the challenges in the management field.
P 5 responded: Although there is no recourse I often seek support and ideas from other principals.

5. How do you manage to work with different personality types?

P 1 responded: I deal with the interest of the individual.

P 2 responded: actively listen and then tune them with my leadership style to create a win-win situation.

P 3 responded: -with the diverse and regional background personality, study nature, wants, expectations, feeling and understanding. Studying morality and motivating are some factors in managing change in school. Environment and school ambiance support the working situation.

P 4 responded: I am applying situational leadership theory in which I delegate responsibilities, support, coach, and direct in accordance with individual differences.

P 5 responded: Although there is no recourse I often seek support and ideas from other principals.

6. How available or open are you to helping teachers and students?

P 1 responded: I am open and invite all their suggestion for improvement

P 2 responded: I frequently interact with them. Listen to their opinions and look for possible alternatives and this has really worked well so far.

P 3 responded: be open, accept feedback, friendly.

P 4 responded: I am always available and approachable to all the staff and students.

P 5 responded: Although there is no recourse I often seek support and ideas from other principals.

7. What are the factors that influence the stay of principals at a school? Studies show that principals do not last a long time at a school what do you think is the reason for that?

P 1 responded: Work responsibilities, teamwork, transparency, and community relationship

P 2 responded:
I. The relationship and coordination with staff
II. The relationship with the community
III. The support and coordination with the parent Dzongkhag Infrastructures

P 3 responded: example, shared decision, sense of togetherness, attending professional work, teamwork, non-judgemental.

P 4 responded: The factors that influence the stay of principals at a school could be as follows:
'a. Leadership capability of principals: Management of resources, staff, and students
b. Relationship with staff and students
c. Relationship with the community

d. Relationship with local government and Dzongkhag

P 5 responded: Work responsibilities, teamwork, transparency, and community relationship.

8. In a magical world where you could change anything you wanted about professional development and with no barriers (real or perceived), what would professional what does development look like in your district?

Teacher 1 responded: We are engaged more in managerial works as a manager.

Teacher 2 responded: It would be the driving force to take education to a greater height. And must be the agent of change in the education system.

Teacher 4 responded: PD programs are planned and conducted at Dzongkhag and school level and it is also one of the indicators in the SIP. However, the efficiency of PD program implementation may differ from school to school.

Teacher 5 responded: Change the mindset of higher authority provide to guidance school needs.

9. Tell me about other things that serve as blocks or barriers that keep principals from being more involved in professional development.

Teacher 1 responded: We do implement and share our challenges to define the problems.

Teacher 2 responded: Administrative roles & responsibilities.

Teacher 3 responded: Tell me about other things that serve as blocks or barriers that keep principals from being more involved in professional development.

Teacher 4 responded: Multi-manage mentaltasksk and limited opportunities to attend workshops or training to enhance the professional capacity.

Teacher 5 responded: No support from Dzongkhag authority and colleague cooperation.

10. Tell me about how and in what ways you and your administrative team process the effectiveness of the professional development that is offered to teachers.

Teacher 1 responded: Require adm. assistant to support official tasks, so that the Principal can help teachers in PD and coaching.

Teacher 2 responded: Nothing as such as of now. But teachers cooperate in their daily duties.

Teacher 3 responded: Tell me about how and in what ways you and your administrative team

process the effectiveness of the professional development that is offered to teachers.

Teacher 4 responded: Managers in collaboration with the staff plan what, when, and how PD programs are to be conducted at the beginning of the academic session. The subject experts are appointed to facilitate the PD program. Accordingly, management ensures to conduct and monitor the PD program and its implementation.

Teacher 5 responded: Team cooperation, staff punctuality, and productive feedback.

11. Tell me about the resources and supports that you have asked for in order to become more involved in the professional development process?

Teacher 1 responded: No, everyone can lead the PD program.

Teacher 2 responded: Nothing concrete received so far.

Teacher 4 responded: Financial and expertise support from the Dzongkhag Education office.

Teacher 5 responded: Only financial support from Dzongkhag and PD support received as of now.

12. With the desired state in mind, should principals be the ones leading professional development efforts in their buildings?

Teacher 1 responded: Delegate the job and empower them.

Teacher 2 responded: I feel principals should lead the professional development culture in the school so that teachers are abreast of the changes happening around them.

Teacher 3 responded: Yes, need to lid the lamp and awaken from the darkness to a blissful environment.

Teacher 4 responded: If the leaders lead the PD programs, such programs will be conducted systematically and the intellectual capacity of teachers will be enhanced to a greater degree befitting students.

Teacher 5 responded: Yes, principals play a crucial role in creating a friendly learning environment, and as a leader need to lead and plan for the betterment of all.

13. How do you create a working environment positive for teachers and students?

Teacher 1 responded: Yes, I provide constructive feedback to teachers.

Teacher 2 responded:
  ➢ Being consistent
  ➢ Listening to them

  ➢ Jointly looking for the relevant options and alternatives

Teacher 3 responded: -listening to the necessity of all school problems, conquering and collaboratively solving the issues, be the agent of change.

Teacher 4 responded: Encourage collaboration and communication involving all the stakeholders in planning and decision-making. Everyone will be delegated responsibilities along with empowerment.

Teacher 5 responded: -listen to all the staff and solve the problems in the team.

14. Do you provide timely feedback and what type of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

Teacher 2 responded: Yes… Feedback is provided based on facts and observable behavior, not on assumptions.

Teacher 3 responded: Yes, both professional work ethics and teaching learning, competency behaviors, and another aspect of development.

Teacher 4 responded: We use a leadership coaching style to provide feedback for professional and core competency development as and when required.

Teacher 5 responded: Yes, for the professional growth of teachers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principals shared that the desired state of professional development should promote the consistent and timely application of the knowledge and skills gained. They wanted to provide teachers with more collaboration time and supported the idea of implementing professional learning communities. Principals supported the ideas of hands-on professional development and agreed that scheduled modifications could allow teachers to experience more professional development [15].

Principals concurred that high-quality professional development experiences for teachers should be individualized and coaching should be provided. School leaders can make a difference in school and students' performance if they are granted the autonomy to make important decisions. To do this effectively, they need to be able to adapt teaching programs to local needs, promote teamwork among teachers, and engage the teacher monitoring, evaluation, and professional development.

One of the main responsibilities is the improvement of professional learning for teachers. Many studies confirm that the leadership of the principal is vital in determining the quality and support of professional learning programs [16].

Professional learning is a critical factor in the change in schools and improves students learning. From the review of literature on the principals' role in teacher professional learning, several general observations may be made: first, professional learning is not an event, nor is it a set of activities in school; is a professional responsibility and an integral part of teachers and principals professional work. Second, though principals play a significant in teacher professional learning, teachers themselves are also responsible for their own professional growth.

Major roles of school principals in the area of teacher professional learning involve leading, planning, encouraging, implementing, and evaluating [17].

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed the potential of the school leaders' active co-participation in teacher professional development to influence leaders' and teachers' professional growth. This study shows: firstly the teachers felt supported and perceived that the leaders' co-participation led them to encourage teachers' experimentations and to value the professional learning of the teachers.

The result of the study further contributes to knowledge about teacher professional learning programs, showing that leaders themselves undergo professional growth and are themselves changed through this co-participation.

Throughout the professional development process, leaders gain new knowledge and understanding by participating in workshops alongside teachers but perhaps more importantly through their varied interactions with teachers in their schools, which results from this participation. Their enhanced knowledge leads to a deeper understanding of the ways in which they can support teachers.

The personal characteristic of the principals welcomed by the teachers' interviewees includes being capable, hardworking, and open,

democratic transparency in administration, trusting staff, participative, supportive, effective management, and accessibility to teachers and students. With positive attributes, the principal can establish a happier working relationship with staff.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX A

Principal Interview Questions

1. What do you consider your leadership style to be like?
2. What do you think is crucial in creating a positive environment for teachers and students?
3. How are you held accountable for your work? Who do you report to?
4. Did you receive training for your job and if so what was it like? Do you feel it has prepared you for facing the challenges in the field?
5. How do you manage to work with different personality types?
6. How available or open are you to helping teachers and students?
7. What are the factors that influence the stay of principals at a school? Studies show that principals do not last a long time at a school what do you think is the reason for that?
8. In a magical world where you could change anything you wanted about professional development, and with no barriers (real or perceived), what would professional Does development look like in your district?
9. Tell me about other things that serve as blocks or barriers that keep principals from being more involved in professional development.
10. Tell me about how and in what ways you and your administrative team process the effectiveness of the professional development that is offered to teachers.
11. Tell me about the resources and supports that you have asked for in order to become more involved in the professional development process?
12. With the desired state in mind, should principals be the ones leading professional development efforts in their buildings?
13. How do you create a working environment positive for teachers and students?
14. Do you provide timely feedback and what type of feedback do you provide to your teachers?