INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES: THE CHANGING SCENARIO

Dr. H. Subhramanyam[1*], R. Sridhar[2], Seepana. Trinadhulu[3]

[*1-2]Assistant Professor, DR BR Ambedkar University

[3]Teacher, MPUP School, Podugupadu, Srikakulam

Corresponding Author : Dr. H. Subhramanyam

Assistant Professor, DR BR Ambedkar University

Abstract: The purpose of education is character building, fostering a culture of curiosity, empathy and leadership among its students. School Leadership Programmes play a significant role in improving teaching learning process in school education. In the school system, leadership is generally accepted as having a critical role in supporting school improvement. Research studies reveal that the effect of leadership is more pronounced in schools that are in difficult circumstanceswith limited resources coupled with increased expectations from parents and community. This calls for equipping school leaders with surfeit of skills and knowledge that enable them to critically analyze the challenges faced by and opportunities available to school in the prevailing conditions (NUEPA, 2014).The studies also emphasize the intervention of a powerful leader who can navigate and negotiate the challenging contexts to lead schools and improve student learning. These evidences support the belief that leadership is the key to school improvement and in bringing about improvement in student achievement. With the current changing expectations from schools wherein there is a renewed thrust on improving the quality of education, the role of an instructional leader demands attention. The present article discusses the education policy thrust areas on the role of leadership for improving student learning in the Indian school context; and explores innovative practices to improve school leadership progrmmes with a view to bring about quality in school education.

Keywords: *School Leadership, student learning, instructional leader, quality of education.*

Introduction

In the entire education structure, school education plays a very significant role in the growth and development of the child. The learning environment in the schools should be congenial for student learning. School is a social institution. It is an integral part of the societal fabric. Collaborative efforts between the school, parents, local leadersand residents would facilitate an environment conducive to effective learning. The successful running of an educational institution depends on the kind of leadership that propels it to be an embodiment ofeducational excellence and community engagement, offering insights into its strategies, challenges and the synergistic relationship it maintains with its surrounding community.

School leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations andcapacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective schoolleadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. In most of the schools in Indian context, the school head or the principal of the school acts as a school leader and takes the responsibility of strengthening school community relationships. The head of the school can also make use of the services of other teachers or a few students who possess leadership qualities and are interested to contribute their mite for the well-being of the school in general and the community in particular.

School leadership is the key intermediary element between the classroom, the individual school and the education system as a whole; and hence is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. Within each individual school, leadership can contribute to improve student learning by shaping the conditions and climate in which teaching-learning occurs. Beyond the school borders, school leaders can connect and adapt schools to changing external environments.

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas across the globe. Increasedschool autonomy and a greater focus on schooling and school results have made itessential to reconsider the role of school leaders. There is much room for improvement toprofessionalise school leadership, to support current school leaders and to make schoolleadership an attractive career for future generations.

It is the need of the hour that Policy makers need to adapt school leadership policy to new environments by addressing the

major challenges which have arisen over the past decades. There is agrowing concern that the role of school head or principal designed for the traditional classroom does not suit to the changing needs of the present-day society. It needs to be changed enough to deal with the complex challenges schools are facing in the 21ˢᵗcentury. Countries are seeking to develop new conditions for school leadership bettersuited to respond to current and future educational environments. The expectations of school leaders have also been changed in India with regard to the distribution oftasks as well as the levels of training, support and incentives as a policy perspective with the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP)-2020.

THE CONCEPT OF 'SCHOOL LEADERSHIP'

The term,'school leadership' is often used interchangeably with school management and school administration. Although the three terms are synonymous in nature, we use them with a difference in emphasis. An often-quoted phrase is "managers do things right, while leaders do the right things" (Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, 1997). While leadership involves steering organizations by shaping other people's attitudes, motivations and behavior, management is more closely associated with maintenance of current operations (Bush and Glover, 2003). Dimmock (1999) provides a distinction between school leadership, management and administration while also recognizing that the responsibilities of school leaders often encompass all three:

"Irrespective of how these terms are defined, school leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration)".

POLICY MAKING IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES

Research has shown that school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions. However, autonomy alone does not automatically lead to improvements unless it is well supported. In addition, it is important that the core responsibilities of school leaders should clearly be defined and delimited. School leadership responsibilities should be defined through an understanding of the practices most likely to improve teaching and learning.

The following are some of the issues concerning policy making in school leadership programmes:

> **Policy makers need to provide higher degrees of autonomy with appropriate support**

School leaders need time, capacity and support to focus on the practices most likely to improve student learning. Greater degrees of autonomy should be coupled with new models of distributed leadership, new vistas of accountabilityand training; and development for school leadership.

> **Redefining school leadership responsibilities for improved student learning**

Policy makers and practitioners need to redefine the roles and responsibilities associated with school leadership programmes to improve student learning and improve quality in school education. The following are the important domains of school

leadership responsibilities

> **Supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality:**

School leaders have tobe able to adapt the teaching programme to local needs, promote teamworkamong teachers and engage in teacher monitoring, evaluation and professionaldevelopment.

> **Goal-setting, assessment and accountability:**

Policy makers need to ensurethat school leaders have discretion in setting strategic direction and optimisetheir capacity to develop school plans and goals and monitor progress, usingdata to improve practice.

> **Strategic financial and human resource management:**

Policy makers canenhance the financial managementskills of school leadership teams byproviding training to school leaders, establishing the role of a financial manager within the leadership team, or providing financial support services to schools.

> **Collaborating with other schools**:

This new leadership dimension needs to berecognised as a specific role for school leaders. It can bring benefits to schoolsystems as a whole rather than just the students of a single school. But schoolleaders need to develop their skills to become involved in matters beyondtheir school boundaries.

Leadership for Improving Student Learning: Literature Review

The meta-analysis of **Robinson et al., (2008)** provides information on where the school leaders should apply their focus in order to develop their schools capacity to produce a positive impact on student learning.The study revealed that that the principal's support for and participation in the professional learning of staff produced the largest effect size on learning outcomes of students. This was followed by setting goals, expectations and planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum. Research by **Hill et al. (1995)** observed that educational leadership leading to improved student learning is mediated by social climate of the school which includes teacher student interactions, and teacher attitudes. The studies by **Bosker et al. (2000)** found that educational leadership indirectly affected student outcomes through teachers job satisfaction, teachers achievement orientation and evaluation and feedback practices.**Grissom, Egalite and Lindsay (2021)** in a systematic study of how principals influence students learning outcomes concluded that leaders engage in instructionally focused interactions with teachers; facilitate a productive climate; facilitate collaboration and professional learning communities; manage personnel and resources strategically, apply management skills for data usage; strategic thinking; resource allocation etc. These studies overall confirm that school leadership is related to school organization and culture, as well as to teacher behavior and classroom practices and these factors are in turn related to student achievement.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES

> **Organizing clean and green activities in the village**

The school leaders can organize clean and green activities in the school initially and then extend them to the village. The students, particularly in rural villages, can participate in awareness programmes on the need for maintenance of cleanliness of surroundings by the villagers.

> **Participation in Blood donation camps**

The school leaders can involve students in blood donation camps being organized by the medical teams with a view to make the students understand their social responsibility in helping the sick.

> **Maintenance of Food Bank in the village**

Every student of the school may be asked to donate a handful of rice to the Food Bank installed by the school on a particular day of the week. The rice thus collected can be used to feed the poor families in the village. This programme fosters a sense of accomplishment among students on the one hand and instils in them social responsibility on the other.

> **Abolition of the use of plastic materials in the school**

The school leaders should take initiative to make the school premises plastic free. The leaders should organize awareness campaigns on the adverse effects of plastics on the environment. They can also make the students conduct a rally in the village to provide awareness among the villagers on environmental pollution with the use of plastics.These programmes empower the students to become ambassadors for sustainability.

> **Awareness programmes on Health Education**

The school leaders should arrange awareness programmes on Health Education in the school at regular intervals of time inviting expert doctors from local community. The students in the school should be exposed to these lectures. If once the students are motivated towards the necessary precautions to be taken by people during the times of spread of pandemics, they will play the role of family doctors at home.

> **Involvement of students in Adult Literacy programmes**

The school leaders can train the students who volunteer to participate in adult literacy programmes. Each student can make one illiterate adult a literate under the programme, 'Each one – Teach one'.

> **Providing wall drawings for the benefit of the students**

The school heads or principals of the school can provide wall drawings relating to mathematical formulae, science experiments, portraits of scientists with their discoveries or inventions, thought provoking quotes etc. with a view to motivate students for concrete learning.

> **Celebration of National Festivals in the school**

The school leaders can celebrate national festivals such as Independence Day, Republic Day etc. involving students. The students develop certain qualities like truthfulness, patriotism, respect for the fellow human beings, social responsibility etc. They feel proud of being Indian nationals.

> **Resource mobilization**

The school leaders should take the responsibility of

resource mobilization and management. The head of the school should keep an eye in the mobilization of human as well as material resources. The school leader should see that all the teaching posts are filled with qualified teachers. Extension lectures can be arranged by guest faculty on various topics concerning education. Interactive sessions are to be organized with a view to make the students express their views freely and frankly.The school leaders should also take the responsibility of material resources from the community surrounding the school. The school leaders should be skilled in the management of the resources available.

> **Feedback mechanism**

The school leaders should take feedback from the students at regular intervals of time. This would help the school head/principal/senior teacher to modify the pedagogical practices in different subjects according to the needs of the students.

AGENCIES OFFERINGSCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES IN INDIA:

School leadership programs in India are designed to enhance the leadership skills of educators and administrators. These programs aim to empower school leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a positive and effective learning environment.

The following are some of the agencies offering school leadership programmes in India:

> **National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA):**

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA, located in New Delhi, offers various programs, including leadership and management courses for educational administrators and leaders.

> **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) School of Education:**

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) provides diploma and certificate courses in educational leadership and management.

> **National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA):**

National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), another institution based in New Delhi, focuses on research and training in educational policy, planning, and administration. It offers programs that cover various aspects of school leadership.

> **State-level Educational Departments:**

Many states in India conduct leadership development programs for school principals and administrators. These programs often cover topics such as educational leadership, school management, and pedagogical practices.

> **Private Organizations and NGOs:**

Several private organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also conduct leadership development programs for school leaders. These programs may include workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

> **Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs):**

Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs), which are constituent units of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), offer various courses related to education, including leadership and management programs.

> **Online Platforms and Courses:**

With the rise of online education, there are also platforms offering courses in educational leadership that individuals can access from anywhere in the country.

Conclusion

School leadership programmes will be effective only when the head of the school, teachers, parents, students, the community leaders and all other stakeholders work hand-in- hand to achieve the goal of providing quality education to the students.

References

1. Beatriz Pont, Deborah Nusche& Hunter Moorman(2008).*Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice.*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). ISBN: 978-92-64-04467-8.

2. Bosker, R. J., de Vos, H. & Witziers, B. (2000). *Theories and models of educational effectiveness.*Enschede:Twente University Press

3. Bush, T. and Glover, D. (2003). School Leadership: *Concepts and Evidence: A Review of Literature Carried out for National College for School Leadership.* National College for School Leadership, Nottingham.

4. Dimmock, C. (1999). *The Management of Dilemmas in School Restructuring: A case analysis.* School Leadership and Management, Volume 19, Issue 1, 1999.

5. Elizabeth Gangmei, Gowramma I. P. &Gautam Kumar (2019). *Trends of Recent Researchon EffectiveLeadership in Relation to School Education.*

6. InternationalJournal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities, Volume 4, Issue 5, May, 2019.

7. Grissom, Jason A., Anna J. Egalite and Constance A. Lindsay (2021). How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research. New York: The Wallace Foundation. Available at http://www.wallacefoundation.org/principalsynthesis

8. Hill, P. W., Rowe, K. J. &Holmes-Smith, P. (1995). *Factors affecting students' educational progress: multilevel modelling of educational effectiveness.*

9. Paper presented at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement. Leeuwarden, January.

10. NUEPA (2014). *School Leadership Development - National Programme Design and Curriculum Framework*, New Delhi, India, 2014.

11. Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A.&Rowe, K. J. (2008). *The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types*.

12. Educational Administration Quarterly, 44(5), pp.635–674

13. Subitha, G.V. (2022). *Leading for learning: Transforming schools in the Indian context.* New Delhi: Leadership Brief No.2, National Centre for School Leadership, July, 2022.

14. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1997). *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge.* Harper Collins.