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The Practice of Educational Leaders to Empower Secondary School Principals in the Amhara Region, Ethiopia

Misganaw Alene Tsegaye
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Planning and Management,
University of Gondar, Ethiopia

Abstract:
This study draws on qualitative methods survey research conducted to examine how public secondary school principals can be empowered to perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara region, Ethiopia. The study relies on related literature review along with primary data collected through semi-structured interviews. The units of analysis were 12 owners of core process for teachers, principals and supervisors' development (OCPTPSD) and 6 head principals. These subjects were selected on the basis of inclusion criteria to make them eligible subjects using purposive sampling technique. Detailed reviewing of related literature to give profound insights about the research problems and objectives, semi-structured interview was included as tools of data collection. Interviews were recorded digitally so data could be transcribed for analysis. The data were analysed thematically. The literature study has contributed towards a better understanding about the concepts of instructional leadership and empowerment. Hence, a concise review of literature on instructional leadership and empowerment, their types and dimensions, obstacles and ways of improving empowerment have been given emphasis in this study. With regard to opportunities needed by principals, negative results were identified. The results of the study revealed that inadequate top management support, lack of awareness, absence of clear regulations on ways and tools of empowerment and insufficient funds, undue interference of top leaders, intimidation of principals and implementing unnecessary reshuffle of school principals were major challenges of empowering principals. Head principals reported that they have experienced more empowered when they have more socio-political support from top management, subordinates, peers, superiors and even customers. The researcher also recommended that principals should be provided with professional freedom to effectively perform instructional leadership roles. Therefore, policy makers are required to formulate and implement empowerment process model for principals of public secondary schools. Finally, this study challenges all leaders to rethink on how they can empower school principals to effectively perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia.

Keywords: Challenges, educational leaders, empowerment, principals, secondary schools and roles

1. Introduction

This research was undertaken in public secondary schools, in particular with principals in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. Principals play a major role in ensuring that the school is well managed for effective teaching-learning. The principal is an instructional leader in the school. Instructional leadership involves the strategic application of knowledge to solve context specific problems and to achieve the purposes of schooling through school community. Instructional leaders face challenges that are numerous and the contexts in which they operate is diverse in nature (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leith wood, Gu, and Brown, 2010). These authors have made the argument that effective instructional leadership can be essentially described in terms of eight broad dimensions. An abundance of research suggests that effective school leaders are vital to promoting student outcomes of schools in many countries (Onderi & Makori, 2013). Furthermore, Abdulrasheed and Bello (2015, p. 2) claim that "leadership is a position of influencing and reputation accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and encourage others in attaining an intended objective". It is usually practiced that due to rapid changes in the world which is characterised by unending technological progression, the increase in the information society and globalisation. These influenced the inherent goal of schools and their roles are changing correspondingly (Kim, Kim, Kim & Kim, 2006). The extent of the worth of school education as the basis for the existence and advancement of individuals as well as the public is increasingly stressed. This results in raising the concern that the quality of secondary school education has become more cumbersome to school principals than ever. Moreover, the role of instructional leadership is a high priority issue for many countries concerned with education these days. Bottoms and Fry (2009, p. 12) pinpoint that effective instructional leaders enable to bring about the quality of learning through effective instructional practice, aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment to the vision against the regional and national standards. Besides, they are able to create the context for meaningful learning experiences. This is because secondary school principals play a key role in augmenting school achievements by persuading teachers through motivations and developing their capacities, as well as improving the school situation and setting. Researchers (e.g. Bottoms & Fry, 2009) confirm that, professionally developed and empowered school leaders are able to have practical skills, depth of knowledge and critical thinking in order to perform the instructional leadership role effectively within this complex global world.

It is proved that principals play the vital role in ensuring schools' effectiveness and performance as a centre of learning (Onderi & Makori, 2013). Recent researches have shown that the principal is the central important figure for the success of a secondary school (Cunningham &Cordeiro, 2009). It is reported that many countries, those concerned about the responsibility of principals are changing their perception about principals. Principals now days are overloaded with different activities. Therefore, talented applicants found to be reluctant to join principal's position for the reasons of overloaded responsibilities, inadequate training and preparation, restricted career prospects, and insufficient support and incentives (OECD, 2011).

In the current world, many countries, including Ethiopia are believed by professionals to have quality education. However, the weekly newsletter known as Capital reported that even though work is being done to expand access to education in Ethiopia, 58 percent of the population remains illiterate. The problem doesn't end there. Therefore, the quality of education is provided to students which remain very low though there is a rapid expansion of primary and secondary schools. This makes the growth of enrolment worthless (Eskedar, 2012). It was also stated that some of the key problems facing primary and secondary education in Ethiopia include lack of motivated teachers, lack of availability of teaching aids and learning facilities, and not enough training for teachers. However, circumventing the aforementioned problems alone is not enough to ensure quality education. Unfortunately, in the current situations of the country many schools face a serious shortage of empowered professional leaders; especially in public secondary school settings and this creates problems for delivering quality instruction.

Hence, in order to fill such gaps, school principals should be knowledgeable, professionally and administratively competent, and resourceful so that they will be more autonomous and empowered to perform their instructional leadership roles more effectively. This is necessary to ensure that secondary school principals have the required capacity and motivation to make use of their professional responsibilities in the region. This study therefore, interests school principals and vice-principals, educational office administrators, school board trustees, and other researchers in order to have effective instructional leadership. The researcher explored how PSSPs can be empowered at all levels of the education system to perform instructional leadership roles more effectively against the eight key dimensions of successful instructional leadership identified by Day et al. (2010).

No matter how efforts are exerted to minimise or remove the observed problems of principals to ensure quality education, such actions alone are not enough to solve the problems faced by principals. Nevertheless, the challenges have significant links with the competence and empowerment of principals to perform instructional leadership roles. It is obvious that in the current situations of Ethiopia, many schools face a serious shortage of empowered principals; especially in public secondary school settings which creates problems for delivering quality instruction. Based on the results of the literature studied so far and the researcher's working experiences, the following major gaps were identified that this research should focus on. Hence, insufficient preparation, experience and training; low competence; inability to integrate instructional activities; weak collaboration with stakeholders and the high expectation of parents; their restricted power to make decisions autonomously; and absence of opportunities for career prospects and support are among the gaps manifested by most principals of the region.

These are some of the key challenges in terms of empowering public secondary school principals to perform instructional leadership roles more effectively in the ARSE. These malfunctions undoubtedly have significant associations with the absence of empowerment opportunitie**s** for principals that deprive them of the power to perform instructional leadership roles. In view of that, leadership theory suggests a stronger, positive relationship between empowerment and instructional leadership role performance. However, previous researchers (Awamleh, 2013) have called for more research to support such a link. Hence, in order to fill such gaps, school principals should be knowledgeable, professionally and administratively competent, and resourceful so that they will be more autonomous and empowered to perform their instructional leadership roles more effectively. The study was therefore, conducted to assess the practices of empowering public secondary school principals to perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara region of Ethiopia.

This study responds to this call and thus fills an important void in the leadership literature. Based on the identified gaps, the following main research question was formulated for this research**:** How can public secondary school principals be empowered to perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara region, Ethiopia? For systematic and logical handling of the major research question the following two specific questions were formulated:

- SRQ1: How can the concepts of `empowerment' and `instructional leadership' be conceptualised?
- SRQ 2: What empowering opportunities are needed by public secondary school principals at the regional, zonal and woreda education offices of the Amhara region, Ethiopia to perform instructional leadership roles?

2. Literature Review

Literature review is a selection of available documents **o**n the empowerment of secondary school principals. The effective evaluation of these documents in relation to empowering public secondary school principals provides basic background about the problem of the study. It is a synthesis of literature from different sources on this research topic. It is therefore, an objective, thorough summary and critical analysis of relevant available research and non-research literature on the aforementioned problem of the study (Hart 1998).

The first purpose of this literature review is to provide a state-of-the-evidence description of what is already known about successful instructional leadership. The researcher anticipates that such a description would serve as immediate use and gives guidance to those already in leadership positions and those with responsibilities for the empowerment of leaders. The second purpose of this literature review is to address the question of empowering public secondary school principals (PSSPs) to perform their instructional leadership role more effectively. The relationship

between empowerment and the effective performance of the instructional leadership roles by principals will further be explained in this chapter. By addressing these two issues, a theoretical framework will be presented to form the basis for the study.

The term 'empowerment' will be used to refer to the sense of being able to make a difference in the attainment of individual, group, and organisational goals. So, empowering is fundamentally about power, the power to redefine our possibilities and options and to act on them, the power within that enables people to have the courage to do things they never thought themselves to be capable of, and the power that comes from working alongside others to claim what is rightfully theirs. Three major theories are emphasised here with regard to empowerment and instructional leadership.

2.1. Structural Empowerment Theory

Empowerment is a distribution of power among organisational members in order to authorise the making of certain kinds of decisions. In developing her theory of structural empowerment Kanter (1993) in Laschinger, Michael, Leiter, Day, Gilin-Oore and Mackinnon (2012, p. 317) makes clear that, "it refers to employee access to social structures in the workplace that enables employees to accomplish their work in a meaningful way". Structurally empowered work environments of principals are characterised by access to support (i.e., guidance from superiors and peers), resources (i.e., money, supplies, and time required for the job), information (i.e., technical knowledge and information about goals and values of the organisation), and opportunity (i.e., possibility for learning, growth, and advancement in the job).

According to Kanter, these variables contain the roots of an integrated structural model of human behaviour in an organisation. Kanter (1993) in Laschinger et al. (2012, p. 317) proposes that "the organisational environment controls employees' work, attitudes, and behaviours". This means that power and opportunities create principals' autonomy and freedom, resulting in increased effectiveness in role performance so that leadership activities are widely shared within and between organisations (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

At this juncture, the researcher focused on the relationship between empowering principals and demographic variables such as age, education, and experience. Kanter believed that access to empowerment structures is associated with the degrees of power an individual has in the organisation. In Kanter's view individuals display different behaviours depending on whether certain structural supports (power and opportunity) are in place. Based on the structural empowerment theory, managers can take specific actions to create conducive work environments that foster trusting and successful working relationships and enhance role effectiveness (Kanter, 1977). Moreover, structural empowerment refers to principal access to social structures in the workplace that enable principals to perform their roles more effectively.

2.2. Psychological Empowerment Theory

Psychological empowerment is defined by Spreitzer (1992) as "the feeling of having control over one's destiny" (Shah, Riaz, Kelly, & Morote, 2014, p. 2000). Four dimensions of psychological empowerment suggested by Spreitzer (1995) include meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Shah et al. 2014). For principals, feelings of psychological empowerment may emerge from the selfless motivations of educating youths, sufficient background and training in education and educational leadership, and a feeling of confidence in one's ability to make a difference, as well as many other areas (Houghton & Yoho, 2005 and Shah, et al. 2014).

'"Meaning"'_ refers to the perceived congruence between the job requirements and the individual's beliefs, values, and behaviours. Optimally, employees will realise the significance of their job to the organisation and themselves, and pay attention to their work. As a result, they will be likely to do a good job and be proud of their success. Spreitzer notes that '"competence" 'refers to an individual's confidence in his or her job performance abilities. In other words, an employee believes in his or her abilities and skills to enhance job performance. Employees also believe that they can use the resources provided by their organisation to get the work done.

According to Spreitzer, '"self-determination"' relates to employees' perceived control over their work when employees perceive they have the freedom to decide how or how not to work in different situations. Thus, they can implement innovations to complete their work.

Psychological empowerment is conceptualised as a knowledge-based psychological state of thoughts. Conger and Kanungo (1988, p. 474), defined psychological empowerment as a process of heightening feelings of employee's self-efficacy through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) extended this approach by specifying a more complete set of task assessments (meaningfulness, competence, choice, and impact) that determine intrinsic task motivation in principals. Spreitzer (1995, p.1444), likewise defined psychological empowerment as a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Psychological empowerment results in an active, not passive, approach to work that causes individuals to strive toward and feel capable of shaping work roles and work contexts (Spreitzer, 1995).

2.3. The Model of Empowered Leadership Behaviour

Conger and Kanungo (1988) characterised empowerment as a process that involves a manager sharing power with subordinates. To empower implies the granting of power or delegation of authority (Burke, 1986) that, in turn, should increase intrinsic motivation by influencing task assessments related to meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) conceptualization. Consequently, delegation of authority, accountability,

self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance were identified as dimensions of empowering behaviours.

These dimensions indicate that a six-factor model provides a good description of the relationships among the leader empowering behaviour questionnaire (LEBQ) items thereby mediating the independent and dependent variables. With respect to leadership development, the LEBQ would appear to be a psychometrically sound instrument for providing managers with feedback on behaviour relevant to principals' empowerment. As an applied tool, the six-factor model provides behaviourally specific feedback for coaching and development purposes to the extent that empowerment is related to heighten the perceptions of LEBQ dimensions, and the degree to which managers encourage independent decision making should be important elements in the empowerment process.

Researchers conducted one of the most comprehensive studies to date of the impact of leaders on student achievement and found that instructional leadership consists of two complementary sets of actions. Principals shape the instructional climate, defined as the "context in which education takes place" (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010 p. 84). Secondly, the same authors state that principals take "instructional actions" guided by "the goal of enhancing every teacher's practices" (p.85). Instructional actions fall into three categories of ongoing behaviours: knowledge of teaching and learning in their buildings; formatively assessing teaching and learning through "direct and frequent involvement with teachers"; and empowering teacher growth and learning (Seashore Louis et al., 2010 pp. 85-86).

2.4. Conceptualisation of Instructional Leadership

Leadership, for the purpose of this study, may come from many sources—the school and woreda administrators, teachers, parents, school-board members, and government officials, to mention some. Although instructional leadership from these sources has aligned with improved student learning, the instructional leadership of public secondary school principals and education officials at all levels, along with teachers, has obviously more effect than leadership from other sources; it is thus the instructional leadership of secondary school principals, with which this review is most concerned.

In exploring why instructional leadership is a world-wide concern, Hallinger (2010, p. 1), also expounded that "instructional leadership is the main determiner of school success." A working definition of instructional leadership might be the ability of the principal to guide teachers to improve instruction through the creation of favourable learning environments, building of teacher content and pedagogical knowledge, and explicit monitoring of the learning of both the teacher and the student (Flach, 2015).

However, misperception or ambiguity still accompanies the term as it is perhaps one of the most continually used and poorly defined terms in education today (Flach, 2015). Though the principal is the single most important individual for the success of schools, no clear definition has yet given for '"instructional leadership."' Dunkle (2012) also states that the Roots and Wings of School Leadership has developed some sort of shared values and common understanding of the successful school leader from different circumstances of education with various academics of international organisations. Some of the key descriptions from this work include statements that principals should describe a vision of academic success, create a culture and climate that supports student and adult learning, use data to measure progress of students and adults, and discover and support talent that benefits the organisation (Dunkle, 2012 pp.8-20).

While Jenkins (2009) emphasises that many school principals are currently seeking an equilibrium in their role "as manager-administrator and instructional leader" to be successful, Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009) underline that the current focus of instructional leadership should be on curriculum and instructional development; staff development; instructional supervision; programme, teacher, and student evaluation; research and experimentation; provision of resources; and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. To this end, enabling principals to perform their instructional leadership role effectively means empowering their "emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development" (Gordon, 2004, p. 15).

2.5. Conceptualisation of Empowerment

In recent years the topic of empowerment has been given a great deal of attention due to its influence on effective performance of leadership. Despite the fact that many scholars have agreed on the vital role played by secondary school principals in both developed and developing countries, limited attention has been given to providing principals `with the opportunity, training, and support which are needed to become more autonomous and empowered in assuming their professional responsibilities.

The reviewed literature of the paper focused on conceptualizing the concepts of instructional leadership and empowerment in the context of the study. So, the concepts associated with this research problem were treated in the detailed reviewing of related literature to give profound insights about the research problems and objectives. No matter that this has nothing to do with commonly agreed definitions of empowerment: it includes so many ways, forms, sources, tools and levels of granting power and enabling principals to effectively perform their roles at their schools. According to The Free Dictionary (2000), empowerment includes authorization (delegation of power), enabling or permission and providing opportunities. Thus, in this section of the literature review, it explains how the researcher and other practitioners of the field conceptualize the concepts of instructional leadership and empowerment. Further it explains how empowerment and the effective performance of instructional leadership roles by principals are related to the aim of examining the practice of empowering public secondary school principals to increase the effectiveness of their instructional leadership roles in the ARSE, whereas Chapter Three dealt with a literature study to review the place and

role of instructional leadership of public secondary school principals and establishing how this role fits into the holistic leadership behaviour of the principal.

3. Research Design and Methodology

A paradigm is termed by different researchers based on their perspectives to describe different views and assumptions that guide enquiries, and their worldview (Creswell, 2009). However, the term 'paradigm' is preferred by the researcher to 'worldview' throughout the discussion in contrast to Creswell (2009) and Galt (2009) who declare their preference for 'worldview' in their discussions. This section of the study explores the practical relevance of social constructivism as a research paradigm through the example of a piece of qualitative procedure that usually used qualitative research method. It is therefore, argued that social constructivism can serve as a rationale for formal research design as well as a more grounded approach to research. Constructivism is such a perspective, and it is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research. More recent writers who have summarised this position are Lincoln and Guba (2000), Schwandt (2007), Neuman (2000), and Crotty (1998) among others. Researchers of this paradigm believe that reality is socially constructed. This is one of the basic tenets of this theoretic paradigm. The fact that reality is socially constructed implies that there are many ways of seeing the world and through the course of study, perceptions may never stay the same but will change. There is no objective reality that can be known, but there are multiple realities (Mertens, 1998). Creswell (2014) contends that because of multiple realities, it is therefore not possible to fully establish research questions beforehand. Mertens (1998) provides an example of different meanings that can be attributed by different people on the same instances: the concepts of minority, feminism and disability are socially constructed and will therefore have different meanings to different people. Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The basic assumption of this paradigm is that knowledge (epistemology) is socially constructed by those in the research process and that it is the duty of the researcher to understand the complex experience from the point of view of the participants (Mertens, 1998). As opposed to positivists who believe that the researcher and the researched person are independent of each other (Schwandt, 2007; Neuman, 2000; & Crotty,1998), constructivists hold that the inquirer and the inquired person influence each other. It is for this reason that the constructivist will opt for a more personal, interactive mode of data collection (Mertens, 1998). In this paradigm the values that influence the researcher are made explicit to the researched person. Interpretations are iterative or circular in that understanding of the parts will lead to the interpretation of the whole and the interpretation of the whole leads to the interpretation of the parts. This is a spiral arrangement rather than a linear. Researchers within this paradigm go on to suggest that old understandings are transformed in the light of the new understandings and this occur against a background of the assumptions, beliefs and practices of which the researcher and the participants are never fully aware, (Mertens, 1998).

This article employed a social constructivism approach, using exploratory qualitative method for this descriptive survey design research. Since qualitative approach is used for this research, the population of this study consisted of head principals and the owner of the core process for teachers, principals and supervisors' development (OCPTPSD) for qualitative data. The subjects of the study were selected from the four administrative zones (Awi, North Gondar, South Gondar and West Gojjam), and from two city administrations (Bahir-Dar and Gondar). These sample zones and city administrations were included using purposive or convenient sampling method. Ten (10) head principals and 20 OCPTPSDs were included for this qualitative data. The related literature was reviewed in detail to give profound insights about the concepts associated with this research problem and objectives. The semi-structured interview was used to supplement and extend our knowledge about participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviours, meanings, and interpretations obtained from quantitative data of the Thesis. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of participants is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. The interview was intended to allow participants to reflect on superintendents' practices of empowerment as school principals carried out their responsibilities. Semi-structured interview questions were aligned to the perceptions of OCPTPSD (managers) and head principals regarding the instructional leadership role practices of principals.

Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews. Open ended narratives without predetermined or standardised categories provided participants with opportunities to reflect on their practices as they carried out their duties. Interviews were recorded digitally so data could be transcribed for analysis. The transcribed text of each interview was returned to each individual respondent for review, possible amendments, and approval. In this research, the principle of "informed consent" incorporated in UNISA guidelines and policies was applied. Hence, the researcher submitted a letter to the Amhara Regional Education Bureau where it was proposed that the data collection would take place in its sample zones, woredas and secondary schools. Using the letter of consent the researcher discussed the proposed research with the respective zone and woreda officials as well as school principals who were liable to accept and facilitate all the process regarding the data collection tasks. Accordingly, the OCPTPSDs and head principals were provided with invitation letters. This gave an opportunity for any individual participant to withdraw from the research at any time.

4. Results

- SRQ1: How can the concepts of `empowerment' and `instructional leadership' be conceptualised?
- SRQ 2: What empowering opportunities are needed by public secondary school principals at the regional, zonal and woreda education offices of the Amhara region, Ethiopia to perform instructional leadership roles? To answer these survey design research questions qualitative method approach was employed. The results of this study will be presented qualitatively in the form of texts.

4.1. Biographical Data of Interview Participants

The biographical data of interview participants **is** presented herein. The OCPTPSD and head principals were interviewed. While the first group consisted of 12 OCPTPSDs, the second group was comprised of six head principals. The data revealed that 100% of the responding OCPTPSDs and head principals were male. Two (11.1%) of the respondents were 52 years of age or older and 16 of them ranged in age from 25 to 50 which accounted for 88.9% of the interview participants. This can be interpreted as indicative of several years of professional experience. The average number of years of management experience was six years.

The data further suggested that the majority of OCPTPSD and head principals were not well qualified for the position they possessed. Only two (11.1%) held master's degrees with different subject areas and the other 16 (88.9 %) held bachelor degrees. One of the 18 participants (5.6 %) had a bachelor degree with educational planning and management. All of the participants with bachelor level qualifications came from different subject areas nevertheless educational management and leadership is required. This data does not correspond with that of the literature review regarding the training and preparation of instructional leadership. Data on training requirements indicated that a master's degree in any subject and a subsequent short training in educational leadership is a minimum requirement to enter the field of instructional leadership (MoE, 2013).

4.2. First Sub-Research Question: How Can the Concepts of 'Empowerment' and `Instructional Leadership' Be Conceptualised?

To properly conceptualise the concepts of instructional leadership and empowerment, the study employed the descriptive-analytic approach in achieving its goals. It utilised ready and primary sources of information and data. This research sub-question had largely been dealt within the literature study in Chapter Two. The literature study has contributed towards a better understanding about the concepts of instructional leadership and empowerment. Hence, a concise review of literature on instructional leadership and empowerment, their types and dimensions, obstacles and ways of improving empowerment have been given emphasis in this study. In reviewing the literature of Chapter Two, the nature of leadership practices and what intellectual resources are available to assist in such conceptualisation were scrutinised. The researcher reviewed a wide range of alternative leadership models and theories to assist in thinking about and understanding of instructional leadership practices and their effects.

The results of the reviewed literature showed that effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement. The findings of the current study are consistent with Flach's definition of instructional leadership. As stated in Chapter Two of the literature, therefore, a working definition of instructional leadership might be the ability of the principal to guide teachers to improve instruction through the creation of favourable learning environments, building of teacher content and pedagogical knowledge, and explicit monitoring of the learning of both the teacher and the student (Flach, 2015).

Principal's effectiveness in instructional leadership role performance is the measure for the school's success or failure. Performance is a function of multiple factors among one of which is empowerment. It was identified in the reviewed literature that empowerment is a crucial factor in the enhancement of the principal's performance. It can be described as enabling of principals to make their performance easier and more effective. It is emphasized in Chapter Two of the literature study that the importance of empowerment in improving principals' performance is enhancing personal self-efficacy by sharing power and authority within the hierarchy of instructional leadership through the use of a set of managerial practices and techniques. It was identified that empowerment practices include delegating decision making; sharing resources such as information, knowledge and skills; and providing contingent rewards. It is believed that, when facing rapid changes in school environments and students' needs, "it is the empowered principals who can respond and adapt more quickly to changing situations and requirements, and perform their tasks in more creative and innovative ways" (Conger and Kanungo, 1988, p. 474). The perceptions and perspectives of the participants in an event are important to understand the concept of empowerment and instructional leadership. It is clearly indicated in the review literature of Chapter Two that principals' credit much of their empowerment to access for resources and support from supervisors. They also attributed much of their perceptions to themselves. For example, some head principals talked about how they had always felt assertive, but that it took a certain kind of support from others to bring out their assertiveness. Despite the general agreement on the importance of the empowerment principle, there are a wide range of differences among the two surveyed groups (principals & OCPTPSD) about the meaning, nature, tools and applications of empowerment to enhance instructional leadership role performance. This seems to be caused by the perception differences between OCPTPSD and the instructional leaders (principals). While OCPTPSD thought that instructional leadership is linked with policy implementation and monitoring to budgeting and public relations, the perceptions of principals shifted towards instructional issues that will impact classroom instruction and student achievement (Appendices I & J of the Thesis).

The results of this thesis indicated that all participants have positive attitude towards the concepts of empowerment and instructional leadership. A possible explanation for this might be that, despite general agreement that empowerment plays a significant role in principals' effectiveness thus promoting their performance in schools; some variations were observed between the perceptions of principals and the central office's OCPTPSD about the practice of empowering principals in the region. Among the surveyed groups many OCPTPSD participants assured that principals are not encouraged to perform their roles effectively. The given reason by OCPTPSD was that principals were not motivated to develop their capacity by themselves, rather waiting for superintendents.

Besides, some head principals acknowledged principals' less motivation; though they raised the reverse reasons for their de-motivating factors. Head principals articulated that principals were reluctant to develop the staff's and their own skills and knowledge due to the lack of adequate support and encouragement from top leaders. Regardless of general

agreement on the importance of the empowerment principle, there are wide differences among school leaders and OCPTPSD regarding the meaning, nature, tools and applications of empowerment. To be more specific, in the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia, principals' empowerment faces serious practical obstacles such as insufficient top management support, lack of awareness, absence of clear regulations on ways and tools of empowerment and insufficient funds as reported by the majority of principal participants. The results of this empirical study are almost congruent with most of the early studies which focused on the individual level, clearly delineating the relationship between empowerment and role performance of individual leadership at the unit level.

4.3. Second Sub-Research Question: What Empowering Opportunities Are Needed by Public Secondary School Principals?
        Empowering opportunities needed by principals are important components in the discussion of principals' empowerment. Participants had positive perceptions on the strategy related to professional growth in the formal education domain. The marked evidence of professional growth included further education to have an MA degree and alternative methods for short term trainings about government policies. Some participants expressed the belief that there were objective recruitment and selection criteria to assign competent principals so that well prepared principals are assigned for the instructional leadership position. Besides, while the majority of OCPTPSD and head principals reported that there have been opportunities for adequate support from superiors, a small number of principals commented to the contrary that there is no promising strategy to empower principals.
        On the same question of possible strategies available to empower principals, some participants reported that there is confusion about what is meant by the term 'empowerment'. For example, "it is not uncommon for managers to tell us that we are empowered but unable to explain what they mean by empowerment" (P.3). The manager responds negatively because he or she was just looking for principals to share more ideas with them, and not actually make decisions of their own. Consequently, the principal feels unhappy and returns to his or her old ways of working. As such, a key issue is for managers to be clear and explicit about what they mean by empowerment.

5. Discussion on Major Finding
        The purpose of the current study was to determine how public secondary school principals can be empowered to perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia. The results of this study were presented on the basis of the following research questions.
   - SRQ1: How can the concepts of `empowerment' and `instructional leadership' be conceptualised?
   - SRQ 2: What empowering opportunities are needed by public secondary school principals at the regional, zonal and woreda education offices of the Amhara region, Ethiopia to perform instructional leadership roles? The results of this study will be discussed qualitatively in the form of texts. The data obtained from this qualitative method will be discussed based on these sub-research questions.

5.1. Perceptions and Views of Principals and Cptpsds on the Concepts of 'Instructional Leadership' and 'Empowerment'
        The first discussion of the findings focusses on how the concepts of `instructional leadership' and `empowerment' can be conceptualised by principals and OCPTPSDs. The study has therefore, identified that principals credited much of their empowerment to access for resources and support from supervisors are also attributed much of their perceptions to themselves. For example, it is said above that some head principals talked about how they had always felt assertive, but that it took a certain kind of support from others to bring out their assertiveness as indicated in Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.1 of this thesis.
        As many school leaders in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa are faced with many challenges including lack of autonomy to make decisions independently; there is a need for school principals to be empowered and developed in self-leadership that provides them with the ability to control their personal actions and harness their personal strength, which is central to the effectiveness of the schools. The results of this research arising from the empirical data about the concept of empowerment revealed that the principals' belief in their own capabilities and unique personal characteristics helped fostering confidence in their ability to take the initiative in performing their roles effectively. These results need to be interpreted with caution, however, because they had no opportunity to do so unless they obtained access for resources and the required support from their superintendents. In this sense, independence can be seen as an important part of the empowerment process (see Chapter Two, section 2.3).
        It is believed that the literature review guides the reader to understand the contribution of the work by pointing out the shortcomings of this particular research problem. However, as it was confirmed in the statement of the problem in Chapter One, though there is plenty of literature to be reviewed to provide a critical overview on the concept of instructional leadership in developed countries, there is a paucity of relevant materials regarding the study area (Amhara regional state of Ethiopia) meaning that in this context there is relatively sparse literature on empowering public secondary school principals (see Chapter One, section 1.3). Though several important learning about the concept of empowerment and instructional leadership have emerged from this study, further work on the concept clarification needs to be continued. Without careful attention being paid to the concept and its meanings, there is a danger of a "technique trap," whereby a new idea is practiced without understanding (Mustafa & Bon, 2012). Conceptual work will thus be central to an understanding of empowerment and instructional leadership, and will work in relationship with empirical and phenomenological research (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.1).
        There are encouraging findings from a concise review of literature on instructional leadership and empowerment, their types and dimensions, obstacles and ways of improving empowerment. Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised

that leadership theory suggests a stronger and positive relationship between empowerment and the instructional leadership role performance. These results provide additional support for the contention of a strong link between empowerment and instructional leadership role performance. This study, therefore, responds to this call and thus fills an important void in the leadership literature (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.1).

The results of the reviewed literature showed that effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement if they are empowered. It was thus suggested in the reviewed literature of Chapter Two that instructional leadership might be the ability of the principal to guide teachers to improve instruction through the creation of favourable learning environments, building of teacher content and pedagogical knowledge, and explicit monitoring of the learning of both teacher and student (Flach, 2015). It is interesting therefore, to infer from this reviewed literature and in the empirical data of this research that the goal achievement is dependent on the nature and quality of instructional leadership in schools. It is possible to deduce, therefore, that the principal's effectiveness in instructional leadership role performance is the measure for the school's success or failure (see section 5.2.2.1 of Chapter Five).

There is another remarkable finding that empowerment is a crucial factor in the enhancement of the principal's performance. Empowerment can be described as the enabling of principals to make their performance easier and more effective. Overall, this study strengthens the belief that empowerment for principals is a vital tool for uplifting personal self-efficacy by sharing power and authority within the organisational hierarchy through the use of a set of managerial practices and techniques. The principal theoretical implication of this study is that the empowerment practices include delegating decision making; sharing resources such as information, knowledge and skills; and providing contingent rewards. An implication of this is the possibility that, while facing rapid changes in school environments and students' needs, empowered principals can respond and adapt more quickly to changing situations and requirements, and perform their tasks in more creative and innovative ways (see section 5.2.2.1 of Chapter Five).

Despite the general agreement on the importance of the empowerment principle, there are wide range of differences among the two surveyed groups (principals & OCPTPSD) about the meaning, nature, tools and applications of empowerment to enhance instructional leadership role performance. This seems to be caused by the perception differences between OCPTPSD and the instructional leaders (teachers and principals). While OCPTPSD thought that instructional leadership is linked with policy implementation and monitoring to budgeting and public relations, the perceptions of principals and teachers are shifted towards instructional issues that will impact classroom instruction and student achievement (Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.1).

5.2. Perceptions of Principals and OCPTPSD on Empowering Opportunities Needed by the Principals

Strong evidence of the need for empowerment opportunity was indicated in the analysis of qualitative data. Many researchers in the structural empowerment perspective had shown that high involvement practices which involve sharing power, information, knowledge, and rewards with employees at all levels have positive outcomes for schools, particularly in terms of improvements of principals' quality of work life and the quality of educational services.

However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research since most of the respondents reported having low to average opportunity levels on the subject of structural empowerment. A possible explanation for this might be that the practices of education officials to empower principals and implement school-based decision making has gradually resulted in a move away from the professionalisation of teaching toward bureaucratic control as reported by one participant (P5). Although the findings reveal negative result, all the participants underscored the importance of merit-based assignments, professional freedom, and opportunity for skill and knowledge development to empower principals. Another possible explanation for this is that empowerment is ensured when principals feel that they can influence the decisions that impact on their lives and are provided with meaningful opportunities to make this an actuality and not a mere possibility (see consecutive paragraphs of section 5.3.3.1, Theme 1 in Chapter Five of the Thesis).

Some authors have speculated in the reviewed literature that principals are empowered when they have access to information, support, resources, and opportunities to learn and grow in their work setting. Jobs that provide discretion and that are central to the school purpose increase access to these empowering structures. The present findings seem to be consistent with other research which found strong networks with school board members, and community stakeholders, peers, superiors, and other school members increase "access to support". A possible explanation for some of the results of this research is that the lack of adequate support and resources lead to disempowerment of principals in the region as indicated in Appendix-E.

Although most of the recent researchers have found that the roles of the principals had changed considerably in recent years, principals are still responsible for overseeing personnel, academics, finances, and community involvement duties (Berman, 2005). Increased accountability in education has also shifted the role of the principals. Though principals are asked to be empowered and exceedingly skilful instructional leaders, the accountability requirements drastically impact the time available and other opportunities for them to fulfil these tasks. This shows that policy-makers should examine accountability requirements and strive to achieve a better balance between the reporting of progress as it relates to education in all schools (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

Besides, results related to the practices of empowering principals presented in the findings of the qualitative data, the research participants reported a broad range of personal opinions and beliefs as a result of the empowerment process. The findings clearly indicate that some outcomes were in terms of principals' own feelings towards themselves such as increased self-esteem, a sense that their opinion counted, that they were valued, and being proud of themselves and their accomplishments as identified in Theme 5 of the qualitative analysis (Chapter Five, section 5.3.3.5 of the Thesis).

The research has also shown that more variations were revealed in terms of their skills such as knowing how to access adequate resources for their successful accomplishments, acquiring more professional skills and knowledge, and exhibiting leadership skills in their day-to-day role performance. Yet, there are other variations related to the overall autonomy of principals comprising more control over their self-directed decision making, more influence in decisions regarding themselves and others, more participation in managerial decisions, and more feelings of empowerment. OCPTPSD participants reported that, though there had been adequate professional development opportunities, the unwillingness of principals themselves was found to be the cause of their disempowerment. These varied outcomes were mentioned by participants throughout the discussion related to the practices of empowering principals to perform instructional leadership roles effectively. This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that the two groups of participants tried to externalise the sources of the existing problems. It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses. An implication of this is the possibility that each group used to blame each another as the source of the problem (Chapter Five of the Thesis). The manager responds negatively because he or she was just looking for principals to share more ideas with them, and not actually make decisions of their own. Consequently, the principal feels unhappy and returns to his or her old ways of working. As such, a key issue is for managers to be clear and explicit about what they mean by empowerment.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1. Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive survey was assessing the practice of empowering public secondary school principals to perform instructional leadership roles in the ARSE? There were two sub questions of interest:
SRQ1: How can the concepts of `empowerment' and `instructional leadership' be conceptualised?
SRQ 2: What empowering opportunities are needed by public secondary school principals at the regional, zonal and woreda education offices of the Amhara region, Ethiopia to perform instructional leadership roles? The results of this study will be concluded based on the discussions of the results of the qualitative data in the form of texts. A great deal of literature on instructional leadership and empowerment was analysed and a field survey was conducted.

6.1.1. Conceptualising 'Instructional Leadership' and 'Empowerment'

The relevance of instructional leadership and empowerment is clearly supported by the current findings. Results of the study show that empowering principals to perform the instructional leadership role is influenced by many variables, most of which are often outside the control of the principal. There are several possible explanations for this result. Instructional leadership is conceptualised as the ability of the principal to guide teachers to improve instruction through the creation of favourable learning environments, enhancing teachers' quality and building relationships both inside and outside the school community (see Chapter Five section 5.2.2.1 par. 6). This thesis has further investigated that empowerment is a very significant tool in promoting principals' performance and thereby improving the overall success of the school. The current findings add substantial understanding of empowerment to teachers, principals and OCPTPSDs.
These findings also suggest that empowerment is a concept or an application that can be described as enabling of principals to make their performance easier and more effective. An implication of this is the possibility that empowerment is enhancing personal self-efficacy by sharing power and authority within organisational hierarchy through the use of a set of managerial practices and techniques. By and large, the empirical study strengthens the idea that empowerment practices comprise delegating decision making; sharing resources including information, knowledge and skills; and providing contingent rewards (see section 6.2.2, par 3 & 4).
Despite the general agreement on the importance of the empowerment principle, there are a wide range of differences among teachers and principals, and central education officials about the meaning, nature, tools and applications of empowerment to enhance the instructional leadership role performance. These seem to be caused by the perception differences between OCPTPSDs and the instructional leaders (teachers and principals). While those OCPTPSDs thought that instructional leadership was linked with policy implementation, monitoring the budget and public relations, the perceptions of principals and teachers are focused on instructional issues that will impact classroom instruction and student achievement. A possible conclusion for this might be that the practices of education officials to empower principals and implement school-based decision making have gradually resulted in a move away from professionalisation of teaching rather toward bureaucratic control (see section 6.2.2, par 10).

6.1.2. Empowering Opportunities Needed by Principals

It is obvious that to have strong relationships between the school boards and school principals a district/woreda education office should exert efforts to create awareness on their common goals. As the local government's representatives, the school boards are asked to put the vision of the school into action which at times can detrimentally impact their role as an instructional leader (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). School boards are extremely active in the political arena and the principal is very often asked or directed to accompany school boards to these events and meetings to offer background information and advice on educational matters. As a result, the relationship with school boards demands a large amount of the principal's time during each working schedule (Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.3).
Many researchers from the structural empowerment perspective have also shown that high involvement practices which involve sharing power, information, knowledge, and rewards with employees at all levels have positive outcomes for schools, particularly in terms of improvements of principals' quality of work life and the quality of educational services.

However, the current study does not support the previous research since most of the respondents reported perceiving that they have low average opportunity levels on the subject of structural empowerment. A possible explanation for this might be that the practices of education officials to empower principals and implement school-based decision making have gradually resulted in a move away from professionalization of teaching toward bureaucratic control. The majority of participants underscored the importance of merit-based assignment, professional freedom, and opportunity for skill and knowledge development to empower principals despite principals' lack empowerment opportunities (section 6.3.2.3. par. 1of the Thesis).

Principals are empowered when they have access to information, support, resources, and opportunities to learn and grow in their work setting. Jobs that provide discretion and that are central to the school purpose increase access to these empowering structures. This result may be explained by the fact that strong networks with peers, superiors, and other school members increase "access to support". These data must be interpreted with caution because there may be lack of adequate support and resources that lead to disempowerment of principals in the region (Chapter Two sections 2.3.2.1, Chapter Five, Table 5.5 & section 5.3.3.4 of the Thesis).

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, field survey empirical data combined with the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, four major recommendations followed by important suggestions are pointed out. Such recommendation includes those that related to the understanding and knowledge of the field, implications for practice and improving the existing policy documents that enhance principals' empowerment to perform instructional leadership roles in the secondary schools of the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia.

Policy-makers have a role to play in strengthening the ability of principals to be more effective instructional leaders. Related to hiring, institutions such as Regional Education Bureau and the
Woreda Education Offices as they concern principals should develop joint statements of "best practices" that would be endorsed by these institutions. It is recommended that further revision of the existing policy documents be undertaken in the areas of providing principals with adequate time and balancing the responsibility of principals with accountability.

School Boards and Community Stakeholders should organise capacity building programmes for school board members and community stakeholders to empower principals. Education managers and principals should allocate sufficient time for school board members in order to enhance their capacity. Besides, education leaders should update local laws and procedures because effective applications and practices of principals' empowerment require top management support, mandatory legal measures, positive organisational culture regarding empowerment and rewarding activities and practices. Another recommendation is to re-allocate organisational resources and power (access and utilisation) to make fair and balanced empowerment throughout the educational institutions' hierarchy. Organising need-based continuous professional development programme for principals and developing strategic initiatives to empower and enhance principals' professional competence should be given priorities in order to circumvent experiential grievances that cause principals' disempowerment. Finally, principals are required to practice shared leadership under the concepts of empowerment and continuous professional development

6.3. Suggestions for Future Research:

Future research would be conducted to determine the long-term impact of challenges to instructional leadership on student achievement. Relying on self-reports from principals and may OCPTPSDs not be the best source for indicating the level of empowerment experienced by principals and OCPTPSDs only. Thus, more interviews were needed to get a better idea of what principals' empowerment means and what empowering opportunities are needed by public secondary school principals to perform instructional leadership roles. Future research would focus on a set of variables affecting principals' performance that can serve as illustrative indicators for meaningful empowerment

6.4. Contribution of the Study

Well-informed and well-trained school leaders are more empowered. Empowerment also facilitates human capability in an organisation to foresee and enhance the prospects for autonomy, authority, responsibility, and choice. The provision of some directions for future research, this study has made two important contributions to the literature on empowering public secondary school principals to perform instructional leadership roles in the Amhara region, Ethiopia.
- The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of what school leaders need to improve their effectiveness in performing instructional leadership roles.
- The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of what school leaders need to improve their effectiveness in performing instructional leadership roles. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study could attract other researchers' attention to this field of discipline.

6.5. Limitations of the Study

The survey was conducted in the time when the federal government of Ethiopia declared six months of state of emergency rule in October 2016 to be implemented in all regions among which Amhara was one of the major parts of the protest areas. This was an unfortunate time of the year when the schools' communities were engaged mentally and emotionally with activities to bring the school year to an end through turbulent situations. Accordingly, many respondents may simply have chosen not to respond due to stresses they faced because the survey was administered at the time of unrest and anxiety.

A number of other important limitations also need to be considered. First, the purposive sampling procedure might have decreased the generalisability of findings so that this study may not be to principals in all areas of the country. Because of the hugeness of Ethiopia, the second populous country in Africa, the study was delimited to the Amhara regional state. Accordingly, the study focused only on OCPTPSDs and principals from a limited number of zones, woredas and schools pertaining to their experiences of empowering the practice of school principals.

The study excluded questionnaires and interviews with other key stakeholders such as school learners, school board members, higher government officials that could have enriched the data. Leaving out the experiences of these stakeholders either in the survey questionnaire or during the interviews was a drawback as it would have benefited the findings.

Financial problems, time constraints and lack of baseline research done in the country were also limitations of this study. Regardless of the fact that it is limited to the Amhara regional state and cannot be generalised to other contexts, the study can offer insights on how empowering secondary school principals enhance instructional leadership role performance of school principals.

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