

The School Leaders' Roles In Promoting Effective Assessment: An Investigation On Effectiveness Of Assessment Policy Implementation

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Abstract— School leaders play an essential role in promoting better students academic achievement. They need to establish some policies which can guarantee learners performance during any examination. The purpose of this study is to understand the perspectives of school leaders in implementing assessment policies to enhance quality assessment for better student's achievement. This action research employs qualitative study to interpret the dataset. After data analysis, results show that the assessment policy is strickly implemented; however, the improvement of students' results has limitations. Student's result has just small changes due to the unupdated policy and variation in implementation. The results recommend that the institute should take set clear guidelines for implementation and adjust the policy depending on the actual practice.

Keywords: leadership, assessment policy, implementation, practice, effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

I.I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

School leaders create awareness and understanding of the school culture and the role of teachers as members of the profession; communicates the school's mission, vision, and values, responds to questions, and develops a community of practice that supports the continuous growth of all staff. White et al. (n.d) identified the four functions of school leaders which are planning, organizing, leading, and monitoring. It can be concluded that school leaders are key stakeholders who play their roles in guaranteeing school sustainability. Furthermore, school leaders have other roles in achieving better academic achievement for all students.

School leaders play a key role in promoting academic achievement due to their essential roles. A good school principal can create an environment that can enhance excellence in the education process. A principal as a leader and manager of a school is a key person in fulfilling the school's vision and goal by a specific approach to achieving the target (Tedla & Kilango, 2022). In this sense, school leaders play their key roles in enhancing the quality of education in schools. An article entitled "The 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader" supports that the principal doesn't attend only to the common role of having the *school vision* but also to identify the detailed actions that affect student achievement. The study further explains that school leaders must be involved in the designing and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, and they should be knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

Assessment is an important tool used to measure student's abilities throughout courses or programs. School leaders should be competent in how assessments should be carried out to meet school needs. Assessments are of two types: formative and summative assessments. Formative assessment involves collecting data for enhancing student learning, whereas summative assessment utilizes data to assess how much a student learns or has gained after a learning sequence (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Moreover, McNair et al (2003) identified that formative assessment is a daily and ongoing approach to checking students' progress and giving feedback to improve students' performance. School leaders and teachers use the information gained from formative assessment to evaluate students' achievement and to find out weaknesses that should be improved to meet the needs of schools. Summative assessment is also an important tool to measure students' outcomes, teaching methodology, or school

curriculum as a whole. Assessment is also a key tool for improving students' motivation. Aguilar (2017) claimed that the motivation of a student depends on the type of assessment practices used in the classroom, which in turn, affects student success.

Saint Paul Institute is the only one catholic higher education in Cambodia located in Trankak District, Takeo Province, around 70 kilometers from Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. It was established in 2009 offering five majors for bachelor degree and eight majors for associate degree. Those are bachelors in Information Technology (IT), English Literature (TEFL), Agronomy, Tourism Management, and Social Work. Saint Paul Institute is under the supervision of Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, so the curriculum follows the guardian ministry. Every semester, the institute offers a final examination which aims at measuring students' result comparing to course and curriculum objectives. In order to implement the examination, the institute establishes assessment policy which assure better students' performance during the exam. The purpose of setting the policy is to measure accurate performance of assessment results which can validly measure students' abilities. The policy is always announced to students and invigilators to completely understand.

I.II. PROBLEMS

Leadership roles are also a practical problem that impacts student achievement. What leadership roles affect student achievement is always been discussed, and it is difficult to discuss student achievement without studying leadership roles. School leadership by practice is possibly the most important indicators of student achievement. However, creating an effective teaching-learning process, developing a supportive school culture, positive school climate, participatory decision-making, equitable evaluation process, teacher advocacy, and implementation of assessment policies might take several leadership roles. Principals daily play their role in maintaining the quality assessment to achieve the educational goal. Schools display good results each year because the principals demonstrate appropriate roles in implementing and improving the assessment policies.

I. III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to understand the perspective of school leaders in implementing assessment policies to enhance quality assessment for better student's achievement.

I. IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the school leaders' perspectives about implementing the assessment policies for better achievement?
2. How is the policy implemented for better achievement?

I.V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This action research was conducted at a private institute with the participants of five school leaders including five department heads. Their leadership background ranges from three to seven years. The study will have limitations with the participants because of the numbers of the department heads.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term *assessment* is basically used to describe procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of sequences of instructional activities when the sequence was completed (Wiliam, 2011). Initially, assessment is defined as the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. Adedoyin (2016) explained that assessment in any educational system ascertains the extent to which educational learning outcomes are achieved and also the extent to which students have mastered the subject matter. He goes further to explain that educators can use the assessment to develop students' competencies or values and to learn whether students can experience the knowledge that can prepare them for careers.

School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning. School leaders enhance student learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. Further, successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices, although how school leaders apply these practices is responsive to, rather than dictated by, the context in which they work (Eide & Søreide, 2014). It is possible to conclude that working to improve student's learning outcomes is currently presented as one of the core tasks of school leaders. Neufeld (2014) stated that by setting a clear vision and direction, developing the staff, redesigning the organization to fit the direction of the school, and positively managing the teaching and learning program, school leaders can expect to see measurable and significant improvements of student achievement.

The school leaders' intention to support the students was closely related to facilitating teachers and their opportunity to develop digital teaching and assessment practices to enhance student learning. The school leaders were expected to be more involved, to guide and adjust teachers' assessment practices that did not support student learning. In the context of assessment leadership, ensuring the reliability and validity of assessments requires careful consideration of their form and function (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2020). Therefore, assessment leadership involves making informed decisions about the design, implementation, and interpretation of assessments. In that essence, school leaders should prioritize academic management, teacher autonomy, student's assessment, workload, structured time, teacher support, and implementing teachers' ideas into practice. By emphasizing these areas, leaders can create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section covers research design, participants, materials, action plan, procedure, and data analysis.

III.I. DESIGN

This study involves department heads from five departments at Saint Pual Institute, Takeo Province, Cambodia. The institute is selected to conduct useful action research to develop its assessment policy, starting with implementing it for the final examination.

III.II. PARTICIPANTS

Five department heads volunteered to participate in the interview. They are invited to the interview by using a semi-structured interview. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants because the number of participants was limited, and the researchers selected experienced participants for the interview.

III.III. MATERIALS AND ACTION PLAN

The wider plan is to observe the implementation of the assessment policy during the final examination. The assessment policy is created and implemented in every exam class. The purpose of observation is to find out the effectiveness and how it is implemented of the assessment policy. After assessing its effectiveness, it will be able to offer some recommendations to institute for improving the assessment policy for better outcomes.

The initial action plan is to develop an assessment policy that covers the most essential areas stated objectively and easily understood by the teachers or invigilators and students. The policy is read to students before their examination by invigilators or teachers.

The interview took place face-to-face. Participants were interviewed one by one. The interview questions cover their perceptions of the implementation of assessment policy, and their experience in implementing the policy. Responses from participants were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. An interview took around 20 to 40 minutes based on participants. The questions were designed to understand their perception and experiences of implementing the policy.

The evaluation strategies are in two phases. Phase one interviews all department heads to know their perception about implementation. It is also to understand their experience in implementing the policy. The second phase is to observe exam classes

during the examination to investigate the effectiveness of the policy implementation. Hence, the main focus is observations and interviews of department heads before coming to an evaluation.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative method was employed in the study. Qualitative research is a method in which aims at investigating and understanding the natural phenomenon of the content subject (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative method studies problem in their natural manners, attempting to understand or interpret subject matters in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative study is inductively interpreted, and the researcher generally comprehend meanings and insights in an investigated problem (Personal & Archive, 2018). This is a very convenient method action research and for the study because it is interested in creating an in-depth understanding of identifying the effectiveness in implementing the assessment policy.

IV.I. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

In this research, the researchers scheduled the interview with all participants. The researchers respectively asked permission from the vice director of the institute and to conducting the study. There is a challenge happening with time, for participants are difficult to find time participating in the interview. However, they manage time and are able to join the interview. The researchers interviewed a participant once. The interview duration varies from one individual to the other with a different schedule. All participants participated consecutively; hence it was a semi-structured interview questionnaire. It is like a normal conversation. The researcher had the role of asking questions, but at the same time, the researcher listened patiently when the respondents were answering. At the end of every interview, the researcher admired the participants for spending their priceless time attending the interview.

IV.II. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis describes or summarizes the generated data from interviews or observations, and various themes emerges from the data gathered which were identified by researchers (Kraska et al., 2020). Thematic analysis is a method for systematically determining, organizing, and offering insight into sets of meanings of data. By focusing on the importance of the dataset, thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and understand meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher utilized the thematic analysis method to analyze data. This method involves the process of coding and constructing themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This method is utilized because it is an applicable method of organizing data, as it takes together all the essential data for the specific concerns that interest the researcher.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

V.I. THE PERCEPTIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The result shows that the implementation of the assessment policy is good, but the ways it improves better achievement are limited. The assessment policy is strictly implemented, and it is announced to all teachers and students to understand the meanings; however, it has limitations for improving students' achievement. The problem is that there are no changes in the policy and the different implementation from one invigilator to others during the implementation. It is different because the autonomy was given to invigilators to implement The students' results have also little improvement, and the most challenging problem is the implementation of the policy. They should set a clear direction for implementation so that it will be convenient for invigilators to put into practice. In doing so, there will be no more variation in implementation.

I have been working in this institute for many years, but the policy is still the same. [P1], [P2], [P3], [P4], [P5]

There is no meeting or discussion to adjust the policy after every implementation. [P2], [P3], [P4], [P5]

The policy should be adjusted to meet the needs of the present context. [P4]

V.II. THE INVOLVEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

The involvement of all head departments in implementation of the policy is low because the policy is totally from the academic affairs. It is suggested that they should offer more chances for them to participate more in formulating or adjusting the policy for better improvement. The policy adjustment and implementation should involve more participants from department heads because they are also implementors, so they know what should be kept, and what should be adjusted for the betterment. It is also important that they should have more opportunities to observe the implementation of the policy because as their normal roles, they are just invigilators in exam classes, so they do not have time to investigate the implementation in all classes. Meanwhile, department heads should have ample time to observe the actual implementation of policy, so they are able to find out more about the implementation.

I don't have time to observe the general implementation because I am just an invigilator in an exam class. [P2], [P3], [P4], [P5]

I don't have any chance to attend meetings to adjust the policy. [P1], [P2], [P4], [P5]

V.III. THE IMPROVEMENT OF ASSESSMENT POLICY

It was found out that the assessment policy has never been updated. It should be updated because the new update will result in new improvements. When implementors see some points that need changing compared to the actual practice, the policy should be discussed and justified. When policy is changed, there will be some improvement in the implementation because the old version cannot compensate for the new development of current needs. A new development will always offer better results, so the adjustment of assessment policy will raise better students' academic achievement. It also suggests to have clear guidelines for the implementation, so all stakeholders know what they are going to do for betterment.

I support to have it updated to fit the current trends. [P1], [P2], [P3], [P4]

We need to compare it to real practice, find out problems during the implementation, and justify it. [P1], [P3], [P4], [P5]

The study results play a critical role in informing school leaders to take into account their roles in establishing the policy which can guarantee the better academic achievement of students. Policy needs to be adjusted by comparing the set policy to actual performance. School leaders are important stakeholders who take their closer role to enhance student achievement. Assessment is a tool which is used to gather data to inform school leaders about student's result. Regardless of adjustment, policy cannot fulfil the current needs of education.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The policy implementation can really help improve the assessment quality, but it have little improvement on students' achievement. It can just improve a little because the policy is strictly implemented, but there are some variations of implantation when putting into practice, and the policy has never been updated. Some recommendations should be offered to the school. The policy should be adjusted by involving all related stakeholders for their insights and roles in implementation. Moreover, it is important for academic affairs to take more roles in implementation, evaluate the implementation, and discuss and adjust the policy as evidence from the actual practices. For better achievement, school leaders ranging from top to first-line leaders should work collaboratively to enhance the quality assessment, so that it can help improve students' result which can meet the needs of education.

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