

An Application of the Instructional Leadership Model at Schools in the Kachin Area of Myanmar

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The model is created to develop instructional leadership with the purpose of promoting the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement at schools in the Kachin area of Myanmar. Therefore, a development of an instructional leadership model will be applied to prepare the Kachin students for the 21st century. Thus, five projects, namely: (a) motivation for teachers and students; (b) managing teaching and learning; (c) developing collaborative culture; (d) relationship with other countries and inside the country; and (e) professional development for headmasters and teachers are created as an application of the model. The application is expected to prepare students from the present situation to reach the 21st century paradigm within three years.

Keywords: instructional leadership model, the Kachin area of Myanmar, the 21st century

Introduction

The Kachin schools are situated in the northern part of Myanmar under the administration of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). Centralization still dominates school administration in these areas, because all school policies, including instruction, are controlled by the education officers and central education department. Traditionally, management style is based on listening to the superior due to respect, and the involvement of teachers and parents is limited in making decisions for schools. In addition, the Kachin schools' leaders do not provide much instructional leadership due to being busy with teaching. This indicates that the Kachin schools' leaders might not know that instructional leadership develops vision of instruction; builds relationship with teachers, students, parents, and other schools; empowers teachers for innovative instructions; enriches teachers with new theories of instruction; and encourages teachers to provide feedback and share practices (Jones, 2010). There are some other issues, such as poor instructional strategy and limited teaching and learning materials, impair students' achievement at schools in the Kachin area of Myanmar. Thus, students work for just completing courses that focus on memorization rather than critical and creative thinking. Students, on the other hand, have low motivation to learn in school because of families' financial difficulty and environment, in which educational incentive is poor. Furthermore, teaching profession is seen as a poor job in the Kachin area of Myanmar, because those who depend on this profession have difficulties in surviving with

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their salaries. This also makes teachers to have low motivation to their jobs. These are the main reasons that the schools are unable to promote students' achievement at schools in the Kachin area of Myanmar.

Theories and Researches Related

The instructional leadership model was created by relying on Transformational Leadership Theory and Instructional Leadership Theory.

Transformational Leadership

Bass (1985) defined that transformational leadership includes the practices that enhance the level of awareness about the importance and value of specified results. This leadership theory emphasizes actions and process of behaviors that promote the motivation of followers to perform beyond what is usually expected of them. Besides, this kind of leadership gives attention to the needs of followers and helps them reach their highest potentialities (Northouse, 2010). Four factors of transformational leadership are applied for developing the model: 1. Idealized influence is that followers are dragged and dominated positively by the leader who has high moral standards and ethical behavior. As a result, leaders with idealized influence have a charisma and provide followers with a sense of mission (Greiman, Larson, & Olander, 2007); 2. Inspirational motivation is used by leaders who communicate with high expectations to followers through providing them with motivation to commit to a shared vision of the organization. In practice, leaders apply symbols and heartfelt requests to focus on followers' efforts to obtain more than they would in their own self-interest (Northouse, 2010); 3. Intellectual stimulation is shown by transformational leaders, and it includes that leaders should support followers to be creative and innovative in problem-solving skills. This type of leadership encourages followers to challenge their own beliefs and values (Greiman et al., 2007); and 4. Individualized consideration is that leaders provide a supportive condition for their followers and show individualized consideration when they perform as coaches and mentors, and motivate followers to reach their own goals and potential (Greiman et al., 2007).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leaders are paramount in promoting the quality of teachers' instruction, the students' achievement, and the degree of performance in school (Chell, 2011). They work with teachers in the improvement of instruction by providing a school culture where all teachers and parents, including school leaders, can work together for the best knowledge about student learning, and leadership in instructional matters must be emerged from both teachers and school leaders (Woolfolk & Hoy, 2009).

As school leaders have responsibility for supporting the best instructional practices, they should shape a partnership with teachers with the primary purpose of promoting teaching and learning (Woolfolk & Hoy, 2009), because the focus on student learning; instructional leadership includes direct or indirect behaviors that affect teacher instruction and the results of student learning (Gupton, 2010). This suggests that instructional leaders may be required to spend time in classroom as colleagues and engage teachers in conversations about learning and teaching and to work with teachers in the improvement of instruction by providing a school culture and condition where teachers can learn from each other for the improvement of teaching quality (Woolfolk & Hoy, 2009). However, schools' outcomes are shown better, including students' test scores obtained if school leaders spend more time on school management activities (Wilson, 2011). Consequently, the instructional leadership is enlarged to pay attention to both instructional and non-instructional tasks by

balancing the administrative role and instructional role. Besides, viewing leadership in terms of what it enables others to do will be effective in promoting student achievement. Meanwhile, the characteristics of instructional leadership is as a facilitative leadership that empowers others and a more effective approach in engaging staff (MacNeill, Cavanagh, & Silcox, 2003).

An Application of Instructional Leadership Model

The model is taken from Seng (2013), which has one circle and five arrows (see Figure 1). The circle which is surrounded by arrows represents the final outcome of this model, and the five arrows indicate the issues that need to be developed in the Kachin schools in order to obtain the final outcome of student achievement. The objectives of applying instructional leadership model in the Kachin schools are to help: (a) promoting motivation of teachers and students; (b) promoting the quality of teaching and learning and changing paradigm of teacher-centered to student-centered; (c) reducing power distance and sharing leadership matters together by headmasters and teachers; (d) promoting student achievement; (e) increasing the involvement of all stakeholders, including parents in teaching and learning; (f) preparing students for the 21st century and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community; and (g) promoting professional development of teachers and headmasters.

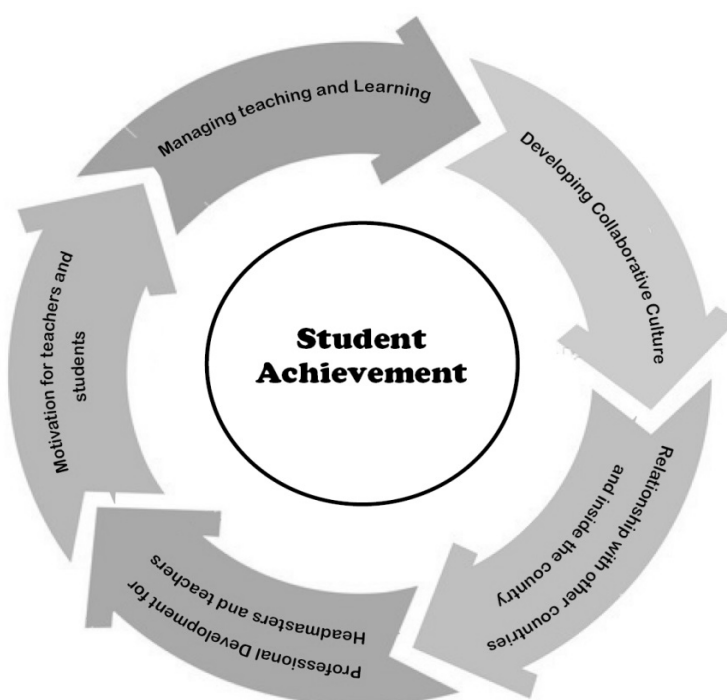


Figure 1. An instructional leadership model for schools in the Kachin area of Myanmar.

In order to achieve the objectives of this model and to tackle problems in the Kachin schools, the application of this model will be conducted by five projects as follows.

Project (1): Motivation for Teachers and Students

Purpose: Motivation intends to strengthen teachers to have more passion on their jobs and to help them reach their highest potentialities. Besides, motivation aims to increase students' learning and to provide students with opportunities to initiate and direct their own learning.

Time: The time needed for this project is one year.

Benefit: The project can be beneficial to schools, teachers, and students.

Activities: Activities include providing teachers enough salaries and incentives, using new approaches and innovative ways of dealing school issues, designing school programs in terms of students' interests and needs, and giving students positive feedbacks and opportunities to initiate and direct their own learning.

Evaluation: This can be conducted by distributing, for example, questionnaires to teachers and students, and by conducting meeting for evaluation if necessary.

Possible difficulty: Financial difficulty might be encountered to provide teachers with enough salaries.

Project (2): Managing Teaching and Learning

Purpose: This project aims to promote the quality of teaching and learning, to provide students with the 21st century skills and knowledge, and to prepare students for the 21st century outcome.

Time: This project will need one year.

Benefit: This project can be mainly beneficial to students and teachers, including schools.

Activities: Activities include upgrading curricula and instruction, using the 21st century skills and knowledge in supporting teaching and learning, evaluating objectives of teachers, giving teachers a clear responsibility for coordinating curricula, and supporting technology and up-to-date instructional materials to promote the quality of teaching and learning.

Evaluation: This could be done by assessing students' knowledge and skills, including teachers' competencies in teaching.

Possible difficulty: Supporting technology and up-to-date instructional materials might be difficult for the Kachin schools.

Project (3): Developing Collaborative Culture

Purpose: This project aims to reduce power distance, to increase sharing leadership matters, and to obtain more collaboration in promoting the quality of teaching and learning.

Time: The time needed for this project is about six months.

Benefit: This project can be beneficial to school leaders and teachers, including students.

Activities: Activities include establishing multiple forms of teams, involving all teachers in decision making, creating autonomous and positive team working environment, and increasing the involvement of all stakeholders.

Evaluation: This can be done by distributing feedback forms to teachers and stakeholders and conducting meeting for evaluation.

Possible difficulty: The Kachin schools' leaders and teachers may not be accustomed to sharing leadership matters and collaborating school works due to long-term dominance of high power distance.

Project (4): Relationship With Other Countries and Inside the Country

Purpose: This project intends not only to promote the relationship of school, but also to increase the relationship with other institutions, experts, and educators.

Time: The time needed for this project is about one year.

Benefit: The project can be beneficial to schools, school leaders, and teachers.

Activities: Activities include linking between different countries, making educational network, and using media, up-to-date technology, and two-way communication with teachers and all stakeholders of the school.

Evaluation: Conducting meeting and reviewing relationship can be done for evaluation.

Possible difficulty: Language barrier and using media and up-to-date technology might be difficult for the Kachin schools.

Project (5): Professional Development for Headmasters and Teachers

Purpose: This project aims to promote the professional development of teachers and headmasters and to enhance student achievement.

Time: Time needed for this project is three years.

Benefit: The project can be beneficial to headmasters and teachers, including students.

Activities: Activities include promoting the abilities of headmasters and teachers, giving training for up-to-date skills and knowledge, developing headmasters to have high morality and ethics, sending teachers for further study, supporting professional materials and resources, and facilitating technology for searching new knowledge.

Evaluation: This includes assessing the competency of teachers and headmasters and looking at the schools' outcomes.

Possible difficulty: The financial and material supports might be difficult for the Kachin schools.

Conclusions

The activities that described in the five projects are the priority of improvement according to the needs of the Kachin schools, and the rest of improvements are already developed in the Kachin schools. These improvements are maintained as a continuous improvement for the Kachin schools. The five projects can be accomplished within three years in the Kachin schools. This means that if the Kachin schools conduct the five projects properly, they can prepare students from the present situation to the 21st century paradigm within three years. Besides, the objectives of applying this model can be achieved and the problems in the Kachin schools can be obviated by conducting the five projects as previous mentioned. In addition, the five projects, such as motivation for teachers and students, managing teaching and learning, professional development for headmasters and teachers, developing collaborative culture, and relationship with other countries and inside the country are the priorities of development for the Kachin schools, and they are also the characteristics of instructional leadership. This suggests that if the Kachin schools apply the model successfully, student achievement is expected to be increased accordingly (Gupton, 2010; Sharma & Roy, 1996; Weber, 1996; Woolfolk & Hoy, 2009; Blasé, 2004; Northouse, 2010).

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