# Innovations

## Assessing the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Regional State

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*Abstract*

*The aim of this study was to assess the role of school leadership in improving students' academic performance with reference to secondary schools in the Sidama region of Ethiopia. The mixed research approach was employed. Primary data were collected through interviews&questionnaires. Document review was also part of the data collection instrument for the study. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as independent sample t-test and Pearson correlation while the narrative analysis approach was used to analyze qualitative data. The findings of this evidenced that leaders' promotionof communication among teachers, providing individual support for teachers, and developing the practices in the school to improve students' academic performance were found poorly performed. Lack of confidence on the part of principals to exercise leadership, lack of courage and commitment of the principals, and, shortage of adequate guidance and support from higher ofreported as the major challenges that hindered leadership in improving student's academic achievement. The study concluded that lack of materials and equipment and lack of enough time to support teachers were the major challenges to the school leadershiproles in the study area. Based on the findings providing training, providing required guidelines, and anther relevant manuals for instructional supervisors, and awareness creation for teachers and school leaders were recommended to improve students' academic achievement in the study area were recommended.*

*Keywords: 1.school leadership, 2.academic achievement, 3.secondary schools, 4.Sidama Regional State*

## Introduction

Leadership is the process by which a person exerts influence over others and inspires, motivates and directs their activities to achieve group or organizational goal. There is no uniform conceptualization that won acceptance by all. Sometimes people confuse leadership with status, power or authority Gardener, 2003 (cited in Fullan, 2006).School leadership has become a priority in education policy because it believe to play a key role in improving classroom practice, school policies and the relations between individual schools and the outside world. As the key intermediary between the classrooms, the individual school and the whole education system effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling (Pont, Nusche& Hopkins, 2008).A leader can play a vital role in the development of well-rounded students. In many businesses and corporations, a leadership style can greatly influence one's ambition and concern for the success of the company in ways in which he/she disseminates authority and power to influence (Daresh, 2002).School

principals frequently balance the interests of varying groups. Leadership also requires positive relationships with students to ensure student achievement.

According to Ibram and Al-taneiji, (2013) the general assumption is the absence or presence of the responsibility of school leaderships' can make whether the positive school climates or negative school climates, attitudes of students and teachers can directly influence school performance and students' academic achievement. Effective school leaders can be increase student achievement in a group or individuals. In this study researcher intended to conduct on school leadership practices particularly school students' academic achievement. Therefore, this proposed study is going to examine the assessing the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region.

Many researchers have viewed principals as key component for achieving good results in terms of students' academic achievement. Barth (2004) noted that the primary role of the school principal is to maintain high expectations to coordinate the schools, curriculum and monitor student progress which lead to achieving high students 'academic achievement. The school leadership is crucial to the students' academic achievement. It determines the quality of learner performance. A high standard of performance is necessary because the effectiveness of the school leadership is measured by the academic success of learners and vice versa. This measurement is indication of the importance stakeholders in education attach to examination results. Hoy and Miskel (2001:247) recognized that the importance attached to examination results and say: many parents and other citizens, government policy makers and scholars define organizational effectiveness narrowly; they equate school effectiveness with students' academic achievement. From the above explanation we can infer that the role of school leadership and the school's success are judged by the results learners produce. High school education is the most relevant and significant level of education in every country.

In Ethiopia, the number of students is increasing every year. However, despite the rapid growth in the number of school admissions, it has been concluded by Oduro, Dachi and Fertig (2008) that the expansion of schools alone may not contribute fully to individuals and society's development. The rapid expansion of schools could, in fact have an adverse effect of student academic achievement and the effectiveness of leadership. More specifically, it could have a serious impact on the competency of principals and teachers in a nation such as Ethiopia. A study by O'Hanlom and Clifton (2004) reveals that a principal can facilitate or school's effectiveness through the leadership style he/she adopts. Furthermore, they observe the school mirrors the principal's personality in various ways.

Moreover, there have been many studies related to school leadership. The secondary school principals, who must also be the instructional leaders, must focus on processes related to teaching and instruction and also support the achievement of students in every other conceivable fashion (Marks &Printy, 2003), because school leader is one of the role player in school leadership to improve students' achievement (MoE, 2007). It is unknown the level of school leadership that would be a positive or negative contribution to a student's education or the practice of school leadership on students' academic achievement. Moreover, there have been many studies related to educational leadership. Aklilu (2011) in his assessment of "Instructional leadership practice in the secondary school of Sheka Zone" found out that instructional leaders do not process the necessary knowledge and skills that help them in leading the school community as they were all subject specialist. Alemayehu (2011) study of "Educational leadership problems of government secondary school principals in East Shewa Zone of Oromia Regional State" found out that the focus of the principals in their leadership activities were not in academic activities, as much of their time was spent on administrative tasks. It is obvious that the previous studies were focused on leadership styles, practice, leadership problem and role of instructional leadership.

However, it is found that the first two studies is very much general. Moreover, most researches including the mentioned ones were done abroad and the local studies were conducted in Oromia and Sheka Zone not in

Sidama Region context as far as the present knowledge of the practitioner are concerned. However, in the study area research could not found which focused on leadership practices such as setting direction, developing people, redesigning organization and managing instruction. These are the gaps that the researcher may try to fill and initiated to conduct this study on this specific area.

In the study area there is lack of training in instructional leadership and inefficiency and lack of commitment (SRSEB, 2020). Researcher also looks in to the gaps that affect the improving students' academic achievement on the side of instructional leadership practice. School leadership did not design conduct training need assessment from the basis of pedagogical gaps. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no studies have been conducted to show the extent of school leadership roles in study area. Similarly, the students' academic achievement particularly national examinations were low in Sidama Region.

Therefore, the above ideas motivated researcher to carry out this study isassess the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region.

In addition, region education department realized that the school leadership practices such as setting direction, developing people, redefining and aligning the organization and improving teaching and learning-process in order to improving students' academic achievement were insufficiently practiced. Investigator also observed that school leaders don't give much effort for the success of student out comes with the help of supervision or school leader did not design conduct training need assessment from the basis of teachers' academic gaps such as principals did not design various interventions to assist teachers to improve their limitations, instructional leadership did not provide, professional support to teachers to improve their instructional skills. As a result, the reasons for poor performance of students of the region cannot be easily discerned without focused investigation. The researcher, therefore, decided to conduct research upon this serious problem. Therefore, researcher initiated to investigate the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region.

**Research Objectives**
The general objective of this study was to assess the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region. The specific objectives of this study were:
❖ To identify the major leadership practices that the school leaders to improve students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama Region.
❖ To identify the major challenges for principals in implementing school leadership practices that would improve students' academic performance.

## Methodology
**Research Design**
The descriptive research design is used when the aim of the study is to describe the current status without controlling over variables. Similarity, descriptive research design useful to obtain precise information concerning the role of school leadership in improving students' academic achievement and help to draw valid general conclusions, because of the apparent ease and directness of the design. It is also the most the popular and widely used research design in the education.

**Research Method**
In this study, the researchers employed mixed research method due to quantitative and qualitative nature of data.

**Sources of Data**

The source of data for this study is primary sources. The respondents selected from secondary schools in Yirgalem.

**Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The target population of the study was secondary school leaders, teachers, parent teachers and students association (PTSA) and KETB (Kebele Education and Training Board). In this study the researcher believed that they are the right source of information on the issue under investigation. Sample size determination based on Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), describe a sample size as a subject of the population which is representative. In selecting the number of schools to be involved in the study, the guidelines given by Orodho and Kombo (2000), that the sample should be proportionate to the target population was considered. In Yirgalem and surrounding woredas, there are 3 woredas and 1 town administrative, with total of 11 secondary schools. For this study, the student researcher took all woredas and one town administration was selected by using availability sampling techniques. This is because of researcher believed that from these selected woredas and town administration sufficient information can be obtained. The selected woredas were Wonsho, Dale, LokaAbbaya and Yirgalem town administration.

In selected woredas' and town administration there are 11 secondary schools, from these 8 secondary schools were selected by using simple random sampling method. This sample schools accounts 72.7% of schools in the selected areas. These secondary schools include: Bokasso, Hunkute, Motto, Berra, Boa, Hantate, Aposto and RasDesta secondary schools (see Table 1).In selected schools; there are 380 teachers and 60 school leaders. Out of these, 190(50%) of the teachers and 100% (60) of the school leaders were selected to be the participants of this study. This is because of the researcher believed that from these respondents to get more sufficient information on the issue under investigated. Moreover, 8(100%) of KETB coordinators and 8(100%) PTSA coordinators were included in the study.

In order to select samples from target population, the researcher used simple random sampling for teachers, census sampling was used to select school leaders, KETB and PTSA selected through purposive sampling, this is because of researcher imagine that they have better/sufficient information and experiences in relation to the study.

**Methods of Data Collection**

This study mainly employs questionnaires, interview and focus group discussion:

**Methods of Data Analysis**

To analyze data, the researchers were used descriptive methods of data analysis.

**Results**

Questionnaires were distributed to 60 school leaders and 190 teachers. Among the distributed questionnaires, 60(100%) of school leaders were filled and returned correctly. Whereas the questionnaires distributed to teachers 180(94.7%) were filled and returned correctly and the rest 10(5.2%) of teachers' responses were rejected because their responses were incomplete. According to Babbie (1998) 50% response rate is adequate, a 60% response is considered good while a 70% response rate is considered very well. A low reply rate is not acceptable and leads to concerns regarding external validity of the study. Thus, in the following section analysis and interpretation of data were presented in the following sub-sections corresponding to the basic research questions and characteristics of respondents.

**Characteristics of the Respondents**

The demographical profile of respondents is presented below. The characteristics of respondents included the sex, age, educational qualification, work experience and current position.

**Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics**

| SN | Items | Variables | Respondents Type | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Teachers (N=180) | | School Leaders (N=60) | |
| | | | N<u>o</u> | % | N<u>o</u> | % |
| 1 | Sex | A) Male | 155 | 86.2 | 48 | 80.0 |
| | | B) Female | 25 | 13.8 | 12 | 20.0 |
| | | Total | 180 | 100 | 60 | 100 |
| 2 | Age | A) 20-25 | 35 | 19.4 | 14 | 23.3 |
| | | B) 26-30 | 108 | 60.0 | 24 | 40.0 |
| | | C) 31-35 | 16 | 8.9 | 12 | 20.0 |
| | | D) 36-40 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 6.7 |
| | | E) 41-45 | 7 | 3.9 | 4 | 6.7 |
| | | F) > 45 | 5 | 2.8 | 2 | 3.3 |
| | | Total | 180 | 100 | 60 | 100 |
| 3 | Level of Educational Qualification | A) Diploma | 3 | 1.7 | - | - |
| | | B) 1$^{st}$ Degree | 168 | 93.3 | 52 | 86.7 |
| | | C) 2$^{nd}$ Degree | 9 | 5 | 8 | 13.3 |
| | | Total | 180 | 100 | 60 | 100 |
| 4 | Work experience in Year in leading or teaching | A) 1-5 | 38 | 21 | 10 | 16.7 |
| | | B) 6-10 | 78 | 43.4 | 24 | 40.0 |
| | | B) 11-15 | 34 | 18.8 | 14 | 23.3 |
| | | C) 16-20 | 17 | 9.5 | 10 | 16.7 |
| | | D) Above 21 | 13 | 7.3 | 2 | 3.3 |
| | | Total | 180 | 100 | 60 | 100 |
| 5 | Current Position | Principal | - | - | 8 | 13.3 |
| | | Vice Principal | - | - | 24 | 40 |
| | | Unit Leaders | | | 28 | 46.7 |
| | | Teachers | 180 | 100 | - | - |
| | | Total | 180 | 100 | 60 | 100 |

Source: Personal Survey, 2022

As can be seen from item 1, Table 1, sex distribution of teachers 155(86.2%) of them were males and 25(13.8%) females. The study indicates that there is few numbers of females' teachers who participate in principals' school leadership roles in Sidama Region. On the other hand, 48(80%) of school leaders were males and 12(20%) of them were females. This indicates that the majority of the secondary schools leadership roles were dominated by males in the Sidama Region. According to Emebet (2003) and MoE (2005) witnessed that participation of females in education had been low and this has resulted in lower rate of employment.

Table 1, item 2, concerning to age structure, 35(19.4%) of teachers and 14(23.3%) of school leaders were in the age category between 20-25 years, 108(60%) of teachers and 24(40%) of school leaders were between 26-30 years; 16(8.9%) of teachers and 12(20%) of school leaders were between 31-35 years old; 9(5%) of teachers and 4(6.7%) of school leaders were between 36-40 years old and only 7(3.9%) of teachers and 4(6.7%) of school leaders were between 41-45 years old. The rest 5(2.8) of teachers and 2(3.3%) of school leaders were 45 years and above years old. This shows that majority of teachers and school leaders were found between 26-30 years or they are active working age groups and they can know that the factors influencing school leadership practices in order to improving students' academic achievement.

As illustrated in Table 1, item 3, regarding the educational qualification of the respondents, 3(1.7%) of teachers were diploma holders, 168(93.3%) of teachers were first degree holders, while 9(5%) of them were MA/Msc degree holders. On the other hand, concerning the educational level of principals, 52(86.7%) of school leaders respondents had first degree and the remaining 8(13.3%) of principals were $2^{nd}$ degree holders. According to the new education and training policy of Ethiopia, degree is the minimum requirements of qualification for teachers to teach in the secondary schools (MoE, 2004). But most of the principals in the study area were under qualified i.e. currently government has given high attention for employed qualified competent principals, but still now majority of secondary schools/study areas/ were $1^{st}$ degree holders, so this calls for special attention to enhance those principals according to standard for the better improving instructional process in the school. This indicates that majority of the principals in the study area were below the standard set by MoE or they were not trained in school leadership profession.

Table 1 item 4, indicates that the service year as teacher/school leaders or work experience of the respondents 38(21%) of teachers and 10(16.7%) of school leaders belongs to experience years ranging from 1-5, 78(43.4%) of teachers and 24(40%) of school leaders belongs to the range of 6-10 years' experience, 34(18.8%) of teachers and 14(23.3%) of school leaders belongs to the range of 11-15 years' experience, 17(9.5%) of teachers and 10(16.7%) of school leaders belongs to the range of 16-20 years' experience. Whereas remaining 13(7.3%) of teachers and 2(3.3%) of school leaders belongs to the years' experience of above 21 years' experience. This result showed that the majority of teachers and school leaders had inadequate work experience on current position or had less working experience and this also one of the factors influencing the school leadership in improving students' academic achievement in the study area.

As can be seen from item five in Table 1, on the aspect of work experience, in relation to current work position of school leaders 8(13.3%) of respondents were main principals, 24(40%) of them were vice principals and 28(46.7%) were unit leaders and 180(100%) of them were teachers who carried out teaching learning process in the classroom. This also implies that school leadership position which could have its own negative impacts on their practices performances.

**The major leadership practices that the school leaders implement to improve students' academic achievement**

The following table presents about the major leadership practices that the school leaders to improve students' academic achievement such as creating conducive environment in the school, motivate people by providing goals that they find compelling and challenging but achievable and provide direction through actions that demonstrate expectations for quality and high performance from staff.

**Table 2: The major leadership practices leaders to improve students' academic achievement**

| S N | Items | Respondents Type | | | | t-value | p-value |
|-----|-------|------------------|---|---|---|---------|---------|
| | | Teachers (N=180) | | School Leaders (N=60) | | | |
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| 1 | Encouraging new ideas and creativity | 2.45 | 1.30 | 2.49 | 1.39 | -.276 | .783 |
| 2 | Creating conducive environment in the school | 2.59 | 1.23 | 2.73 | 1.24 | -.874 | .383 |
| 3 | Manage changes constructively | 2.53 | 1.39 | 2.79 | 1.18 | -1.46 | .144 |
| 4 | Inspiring a shared vision | 2.37 | 1.30 | 2.62 | 1.34 | -1.43 | .153 |
| 5 | Articulating clearly the strategic goals of the school | 2.42 | 1.30 | 2.73 | 1.24 | -1.80 | .072 |
| 6 | Set direction by encouraging staff to develop common goals | 2.59 | 1.32 | 2.68 | 1.29 | -513 | 609 |
| 7 | Motivate people by providing goals that they | 2.39 | 1.08 | 2.73 | 1.24 | -2.30 | .022 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | find compelling and challenging but achievable | | | | | | |
| 8 | Orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact | 2.66 | 1.27 | 2.81 | 1.15 | -.957 | .339 |
| 9 | Provide direction through actions that demonstrate his/her expectations for quality and high performance from staff | 2.73 | 1.25 | 2.79 | 1.18 | -.340 | .734 |
| 10 | Encourage colleagues to take intellectual risks | 2.63 | 1.33 | 3.04 | 1.22 | -2.43 | .015 |
| 11 | Look at his/her staff work from different Perspectives | 2.05 | 1.24 | 1.95 | 1.19 | -.354 | .724 |
| 12 | Provide available resources | 2.26 | 1.14 | 2.35 | .601 | -.495 | .621 |

Source: Personal Survey, 2022

**Key** SDA= Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49) DA= Disagree (1.50-2.49) UD=Undecided (2.50-3.49) A=Agree (3.50-4.49) SA=Strongly Agree (4.50-5.00). M- is mean, SD- is standard deviation, t-is independent sample t-test and p-value. According to Zaidaton and Bagheri (2009) the mean score below 2.50 was considered as disagree the mean score from 2.50 up to 3.49 was considered as undecided and mean score above 3.50 up to 5.00 was considers as agreed.

As it can be seen in Table 2, item 1, respondents were requested that whether the school leaders encouraging new ideas and creativity or not, the computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.45, SD=1.30) and school leaders (M=2.49, SD=1.39) indicated that inadequately encouraging new ideas and creativity. On the others hand, the calculated t-test value (t=-.276, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents in relation to the school leaders encouraging new ideas and creativity. Therefore, the above data showed that the school leaders unable to encouraging new ideas and creativity are insufficient.

Table 2, asks for the school leaders creating conducive environment in the school (see item, 2). In this concern, the calculated mean score of teachers (M=2.59, SD=1.23) and school leaders (M=2.73, SD=1.24) indicated undecided level on the issue. In the same way, the calculated t-test value (t=-.874, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two group of respondents on the issue. Therefore, the above data showed that school leaders incompetent creating conducive environment in the school.

Table 4, respondents were requested the school leaders manage changes constructively or not (see item, 3). The computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.53, SD=1.39) and school leaders (M=2.79, SD=1.18) reported that school leaders practical manage changes constructively. On the others hand, the calculated t-test value (t=-1.46, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents in relation to manage changes constructively.

As it can be seen in Table 2, concerning the major leadership practices that the school leaders to improve students' academic achievement particularly inspiring a shared vision(see item, 4). In this regard, the computed mean score result for teachers and school leaders (M=2.37, SD=1.30) showed disagreed on the issue and (M=2.62, SD=1.34) performed undecided about school leaders inspiring a shared vision. On the other hand, the calculated t-test value (t=-1.43, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents on the issue. In general, the above data showed that major leadership practices that the school leaders to improve students' academic achievement particularly inspiring a shared vision are unsatisfactory.

Table 2, item 5, asked for articulating clearly the strategic goals of the school or not, the computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.42, SD=1.30) showed disagreed level on the issue and school leaders (M=2.73, SD=1.24) indicated that undecided level in relation to the school leaders articulating clearly the strategic goals of

the school. This is confirmed by the t- test value (t=-1.80, P>0.05) this showed that there is significant difference between teachers and school leaders respondents in relation to articulating clearly the strategic goals of the school. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the school leaders poorly articulating clearly the strategic goals of the school.

Table 2, item 6, concerning the set direction by encouraging staff to develop common goals, the calculated mean score result for teachers (M=2.59, SD=1.32) and school leaders (M=2.68, SD=1.29) indicated that moderate level in relation to set direction by encouraging staff to develop common goals. This is confirmed by the t- test value (t=-.513, P>0.05) this showed that there is significant difference between teachers and school leaders respondents on the issue. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the school leaders incapable to set direction by encouraging staff to develop common goals. Interviewed PTSA said that;One of interviewed participant pointed out that school leader unable to encouraging and promoting teacher's skills and ability through preparing different capacity building training in the school. Therefore, school leaders should be always show a high degree of commitment in the implementation of their instructional leadership responsibilities, share best practice for other school leaders, must be aware of the documents about leadership and management as well as current educational policy, delegate instructional functions to concerned bodies, should focus on academic rather than administration work to prioritize instructional activities.

As it can be seen in Table 2, asked for school leaders to motivate people by providing goals that they find compelling and challenging but achievable (see item, 7). In this regard, the computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.39, SD=1.08) reported disagreed on the issue and school leaders(M=2.73, SD=1.24) performed undecided about the school leaders motivate people by providing goals that they find compelling and challenging but achievable. On the other hand, the calculated t-test value (t=-1.43, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents on the issue. In general, the above data showed that school leaders don't motivate people by providing goals that they find compelling and challenging.

Table 2, item 8, respondents were requested that school leaders whether orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact or not. The computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.66, SD=1.27) and school leaders (M=2.81, SD=1.15) indicated that undecided about school leaders orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact. This is confirmed by the t- test value (t=-.957, P>0.05) this showed that there is significant difference between teachers and school leaders respondents in relation to orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the school leaders not capable to orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact.

As it can be seen in Table 2, asked for school leaders provide direction through actions that demonstrate to expectations for quality and high performance from staff(see item, 9). In this regard, the computed mean score result for teachers and school leaders (M=2.73, SD=1.25) and (M=2.79, SD=1.18) performed undecided about school leaders provide direction through actions that demonstrate to expectations for quality and high performance from staff. On the other hand, the calculated t-test value (t=-.340, p>0.05) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents on the issue. In general, the above data showed that school leaders poorly provide direction through actions that demonstrate to expectations for quality and high performance from staff.

As it can be seen in Table 2, item 10, respondents were requested that school leaders encourage colleagues to take intellectual risks or not. The computed mean score result for teachers (M=2.63, SD=1.33) and school leaders (M=3.04, SD=1.22) indicated that undecided level in relation to encourage colleagues to take intellectual risks. This is confirmed by the t- test value (t=-2.43, P>0.05) this showed that there is significant difference between teachers and school leaders respondents on the issue. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the school leaders poorly encourage colleagues to take intellectual risks.

Table 2,, item 11, asked for school leaders looks staff work from different perspectives. In this regard, the calculated mean of teachers (M=2.05, SD=1.24) and school leaders (M=1.95, SD=1.19) disagreed that looks staff work from different perspectives. Similarly, the calculated t-test value (t=-.354, p>.724) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents regarding look staff work from different perspectives. From this, it is possible to infer that the major leadership practices leaders to improve students' academic achievement in relation to look staff work from different perspectives.

As it can be seen in Table 4 item 12, respondents were requested that provide available resources, the calculated mean of teachers (M=2.26, SD=1.14) and school leaders (M=2.35, SD=.601) disagreed that provide available resources. Similarly, the calculated t-test value (t=-.495, p>.291) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two respondents to provide available resources. Therefore, the above data showed that school leaders were unable to provide available resources.

In general regarding to the major leadership practices that the school leaders to improve students' academic achievement such as encouraging new ideas and creativity, manage changes constructively, inspiring a shared vision, articulating clearly the strategic goals of the school, encourage colleagues to take intellectual risks, provide direction through actions that demonstrate expectations for quality and high performance from staff, motivate people by providing goals that they find compelling and challenging, set direction by encouraging staff to develop common goals and orient organizational activities in common directions for maximal impact were poorly achieved.

**The challenges in implementing the school leadership practices that would improve students' academic performance**

This part of the analysis presents the challenges in implementing the school leadership practices that would improve students' academic performance includes: administrative work-load, lack of leadership competency, lack of competent teachers; lack of courage and lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership. Mary and McCulloch (2003) states that being overloaded, insufficient material supply and lack of training and experience in managing the school, staff turnover due to the dissatisfaction with the benefit in the school, and maintaining optimism are the challenges of implementing the school leadership practices.

**Table 3: The challenges in implementing to improve students' academic performance**

| SN | Items | Respondents Type | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Teachers (N=180) | | School Leaders (N=60) | |
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| 1 | Administrative work-load | 4.00 | .587 | 3.20 | 1.07 |
| 2 | Resource constraint to each activity | 3.76 | .727 | 3.67 | 1.10 |
| 3 | Shortage of teaching materials such as text book, stationary | 3.96 | .490 | 2.84 | 1.23 |
| 4 | Shortage leadership competency | 3.75 | 1.42 | 3.57 | 1.50 |
| 5 | Shortage of adequate guidance support from higher official | 4.51 | .739 | 4.20 | .406 |
| 6 | Lack of competent teachers | 4.10 | 1.36 | 4.26 | 1.03 |
| 7 | Lack of training for teachers, supporting staff and principals | 3.62 | 1.49 | 4.07 | 1.16 |
| 8 | Unwillingness of principals to allow shared leadership | 4.06 | 1.39 | 4.20 | 1.01 |
| 9 | Lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership | 3.72 | 1.51 | 3.65 | 1.02 |
| 10 | Lack of confidence on the part of principals to exercise leadership | 4.04 | 1.25 | 3.57 | 1.20 |
| 11 | Lack of motivation of teachers | 4.02 | .886 | 4.03 | .182 |
| 12 | Unable to demonstrate participation in innovation/creative | 3.84 | 1.12 | 4.13 | .434 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | activities | | | | |
| 13 | Use of inappropriate instructional technology by students and staff | 3.30 | 1.46 | 4.00 | .371 |
| 14 | Poor communications among staffs | 3.78 | .817 | 3.90 | .803 |

Source: Personal Survey, 2022

**Key**: VL= Very Low (1.00-1.49) L=Low (1.50-2.49) M=Medium (2.50-3.49) H=High (3.50-4.49) VH= Very High (4.50-5.00). M- is mean, SD- is standard deviation, t-is independent sample t-test and P-value.

Table 3, teachers reported that lack of adequate guidance support from higher official (Mean=4.51, SD=.739), lack of competent teachers (Mean =4.10, SD=1.36), unwillingness of principals to allow shared leadership (Mean =4.06, SD=1.39), lack of confidence on the part of principals to exercise leadership (Mean =4.04, SD=1.25), administrative work-load (Mean =4.00, SD=.587), lack of motivation of teachers (Mean =4.02, SD=.886), shortage of teaching materials (Mean=3.96, SD=.490), unable to demonstrate participation in innovation/creative activities (Mean =3.84, SD=1.12), poor communications among staffs (Mean=3.78, SD=.817), resource constraint to each activity (Mean =3.76, SD=.727), lack of leadership competency (Mean =3.75, SD=1.42), lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership (Mean =3.72, SD=1.51), lack of training for teachers, supporting staff and principals (Mean =3.62, SD=1.49) and use of inappropriate instructional technology by students and staff (Mean =3.30, SD.915) rated as the challenges in implementing to improve students' academic performance.

On the other hand, school leaders respondents reported that lack of competent teachers (Mean = 4.26, SD=1.03), unwillingness of principals to allow shared leadership (Mean =4.20, SD=1.01), lack of adequate guidance support from higher official (Mean =4.20, SD=.406), unable to demonstrate participation in innovation/creative activities (Mean =4.13, SD=.434), lack of training for teachers, supporting staff and principals (Mean =4.07, SD=1.16), lack of training for teachers, supporting staff and principals (Mean =4.03, SD=.182), use of inappropriate instructional technology by students and staff (Mean =4.00, SD=.371), poor communications among staffs (Mean=3.90, SD=.803), resource constraint to each activity (Mean =3.67, SD=1.10), lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership (Mean =3.65, SD=1.02), lack of leadership competency (Mean =3.57, SD=1.50), lack of confidence on the part of principals to exercise leadership (Mean=3.57, SD=1.20), administrative work-load (Mean =3.20 (x=3.20, SD=1.07), shortage of teaching materials (Mean=2.84, SD=1.23) were reported the challenges in implementing to improve students' academic performance. As majority of study participants confirmed that lack of courage and commitment, use of inappropriate instructional technology by students and staff, over-loaded administrative work, lack of school facilities and lack of teachers' facilitation role are the major hindering or influencing factors for leadership practices of principals in the study area. As interview participant of KETB said that Lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership practices, principals also use of inappropriate instructional technology by students and staff, over-loaded administrative work, lack of school facilities and lack of teachers' facilitation role. Majority of the interview participants or respondents supported the above ideas about the challenges that influence leadership styles of school principals to create positive school climate.

Therefore, both teachers and school leaders showed lack of adequate guidance support from higher official, lack of competent teachers, unwillingness of principals to allow shared leadership, lack of motivation of teachers, unable to demonstrate participation in innovation/creative activities, poor communications among staffs, lack of training for teachers, supporting staff and principals, lack of confidence on the part of principals to exercise leadership, resource constraint to each activity and lack of courage and commitment of the principals in school leadership were the factors that influence the leadership styles of school principals to create positive school climate.

**Conclusions**

It can be concluded that the extent of school leadership roles in improving students' academic performance such as building collaborative processes, provide timely feedback for stakeholders and opportunities for staff to participate in decision making were low. Therefore, study it can be concluded that the role of school leadership were not efficiently improve students 'academic performance, thus, this may have negative effect on students' academic achievement. Based on the finding study concluded unwillingness of principals to allow shared leadership, lack of motivation of teachers, unable to demonstrate participation in innovation/creative activities, poor communications among staffs and lack of training for teachers were the challenges in implementing the school leadership practices that would improve students' academic performance. This is due to school leaders don't successful performed their roles with focus of students' academic achievement.

**Recommendations**

The study shows that reducing various factors influencing the school leadership better to use different system for the success of leaders. In this endeavor, the most important and worthy recommendation is, that the Woreda education office should set criteria for selecting and appointing school leadership. The school leaders suggest taking the responsibility and initiative to influence the Woreda Education Office/regional education bureau to provide the necessary resources timely and adequately. Strategies in the selection of school leaders shall take into consideration the higher level of educational attainment of school leaders. Woreda education office better to providing seminars, workshops on the improvement of teacher leader work relationships could be the other alternative. Finally, the researcher having identified the needs, recommends further researcher in the area with broader scope and depth including other variables like leaders attitude to their profession and staff morale.

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