

The Practice and Challenges of School Leaders' Preparation in Ethiopia: in reference to Mekelle and Aksum Universities

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess the Practices and Challenges of School Leaders' Preparation in Mekelle and Aksum Universities. Mixed method design with embedded approach was used to achieve the research objective. Both primary and secondary data sources were used. As the population was heterogeneous, stratified random sampling was employed. Accordingly, 67(30%) of primary and 30(39.5%) of secondary school principals, 30(45%) of primary and 30(79%) of secondary school supervisors were selected by using random sampling technique. Quantitative data were analyzed and interpreted using mean, standard deviation, grand mean and one-way ANOVA whereas descriptive information was given from qualitative data. The obtained results revealed that the Ministry of Education (MoE) informed about the new preparation program to Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) only. Needs assessment was not undertaken to determine the needs of primary school principals and supervisors which reflected unmet needs. Decision about school leaders' training was made based on tentative directives and draft of blue print which lacked clarity and empirical evidence to justify the need for this new preparation program. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the MoE informed about the new preparation program to REBs only excluding wereda education offices(WEOs) and hence, schools sent uninformed trainees with little readiness to learn: Besides, misaligned organizational, and individual needs toward post graduate diploma in school leadership (PGDSL) program appeared to be source of trainees' dissatisfaction on the program. On top of this, the directives used to guide the program lacked uniformity and clarity and were inconsistent. The directives about the new preparation program were not designed thoughtfully and there was little survey report.

Keywords: Challenges, Preparation, Practices, Postgraduate diploma in school leadership, School leadership

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Introduction

Harris, Day, Hadfield, Hopkins, Hargreaves, & Chapman (2005) indicated that "... from a policy maker's perspective, school leaders are viewed as holding the key to resolving a number of the problems currently facing schools and this has led to a major investment in the preparation and development of school leaders across many countries ..." (p.9-19). Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen (2007) have further verified that a new effort to recruit and prepare school leaders is getting strong attention by states, districts, universities and other program providers. Suggesting the need for improving university programs, Africa Region Human Development Department (2007) found that beside to their poor preparation, many secondary school principals in Africa are failing to properly manage new developments resulting from the changing nature of their roles. And it recommended a more promising point of intervention and intensive effort to improve school leadership in much of Africa (pp. x-xi).

Moreover, Cawelti (1982) pointed out that the mix of accountability laws, competency tests, mandates for equity and more responsive curriculum and declining enrollments put a demand on school administrators for skills unheard of several years ago, much less taught in universities, hence improved university preparation programs are introduced (p.324). Validating this Oulai, Lugaz, Alemayehu, and Hailesilassie (2011) wrote that the Department of Educational Planning and Management (EdPM) of Addis Ababa University established in 1962 [*sic*] had been providing pre-service and in-service training in EdPM. Other universities *like Mekelle, Dehub, Haramaya, and so on* [emphasis added] had also established preparation programs and trained school principals and other educational experts working in REBs and WEOs. Yet, training programs remain on small scale and many professionals still need to be trained (pp.38-39).

As a rationale for launching the new school leaders' preparation program, Ministry of Education (MoE, 2013) in the National Curriculum framework further demonstrated that secondary school completers without any teaching experience in schools were trained in the undergraduate pre- service Educational Planning and Management program with neither a minor nor a major area in a school subject; they have faced difficulties in working as principal. Regions have also expressed concerns on their placement and flexibility to assume teaching positions when they no longer work as principals. Besides, concern on the part of MoE to align the recently developed standards of school principals and supervisors with the new preparation program and with licensing and relicensing process were additional reasons to launch this new preparation program (pp.3-5).

National Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (MoE, 2013) further substantiated that the new school leadership preparation program is developed to provide training to school principals and supervisors so as to reach the growing number of schools in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education has initially been launching the newly designed Post Graduate Diploma in School leadership (PGDSL) program in 2013.

Despite this effort, the postgraduate diploma in School Leadership has become less attractive for trainees. It was obvious that prior to the start of the scheduled teaching and learning processes, almost all trainees have been active in boycotting. For example, the report by the department of educational planning and management of Mikelle university revealed that out of the 300 students registered to attend the program in the 2013/2014 academic year, about 200 of them were able to continue their study (MU-IPS,2015). Besides, in the 2014/2015 academic year, of the 95 trainees placed by MoE, 38 of them were able to continue and finish their study (ibid).

These problems have impacted the realizations of the program and thus it is based on these backgrounds that the researchers were motivated to conduct this study. As a result, the study attempted to address the following research questions.

- To what extent is awareness created throughout the study area regarding the postgraduate diploma in school leadership program?
- How were the organizational and individual needs addressed in preparation of the postgraduate diploma program?
- What directives are in place to guide school leaders' preparation in Ethiopia?
- What survey reports give ground for the newly developed preparation program?

General Objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to assess the Practices and Challenges of School Leaders' Preparation with particular reference to Mekelle and Aksum Universities and ultimately pinpoint alternative solutions for the identified challenges.

Review of the related literature

Concept of school leadership

According to Pont, Nusche, & Moorman (2008) leadership is a broader concept where authority to lead does not reside only in one person but can be distributed among different people within and beyond the school. School leadership can encompass people occupying various roles and functions such as principals, deputy and assistant principals, leadership teams, school governing boards and school-level staff involved in leadership tasks. (p.18)

Focus areas for school leaders' preparation program

As Pont *et al.* (2008) stated, school leaders are no longer alone in their endeavors but can rely on specialized institutions and training programs that target their specific needs (p.116). In this regard, Sparks and Hirsch (as cited in Darling -Hammond et al. 2007) enumerated such contents of preparation programs as learning strategies to foster continuous improvement, to understand how to build supportive school culture, to develop knowledge about individual and organizational change processes and knowledge of effective staff development strategies, to understand how to use data to guide instructional improvement efforts, and to learn public engagement strategies, including interpersonal relationship skills (p.6). The National curriculum framework for MA degree in school leadership (MoE, 2014) further indicated that the new school leadership program is designed based on the underlined theme that development of committed school principals who value ethical, distributed and instructional leadership to improving school culture and student outcomes and with a challenging, experiential and practice-oriented approach so as to impact on graduates who complete the program (p.9).

Research Design and Methodology

An embedded mixed method design that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection simultaneously was followed to address the research questions. This was done because quantitative and qualitative approaches complement with each other and hence one data collection form could support the other form (Creswell, 2012, p. 540; Best & Khan, 2008, p.81).

Sources of Data

Primary and secondary data sources were used to collect data for the study. Primary sources used include instructors (from EdPM departments), trainees, Teachers Development Program(TDP), experts from MoE, Regional Education Bureau and Woreda Education Office experts. The secondary sources consulted for the study include MoE selection and salary scale guide lines, Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership and Master of Arts in School Leadership Curriculum Frameworks and related reports.

Sampling procedures and sample size

Table 1: Principal and supervisor respondents by university, program & place of work

Trainer University	Type of Respondents	Program	Work Place (School)	Population	Sample (per group)	Total Samples	
						N	%
Mekelle	Principals	MA (ScL)	Secondary	76	30	30	39.5
		PGDSL	Primary	*96	22	67	27
Akum		PGDSL	Primary	150	45		
Mekelle	Supervisors	MA (ScL)	Secondary	38	30	30	79
		PGDSL	Primary	22	10	30	45
Akum		PGDSL	Primary	45	20		

*96 (71 were graduated in 2014 summer; 25 are 2014 summer entrants and they were yet attending the program)

In the 2014 and 2015 summer the total student populations registered at Mekelle University for the Master of Arts in School Leadership (MAScL) program were 76 principals and 38 supervisors of secondary schools (note that both groups of trainees were firstly admitted by Mikelle University in the PGDSL program in 2013/14 and later readmitted in the MAScL program in 2014/15). Besides, 96 principals and 22 supervisors of primary schools were registered in the PGDSL program. Those student populations registered in Aksum University in the PGDSL program were 150 principals and 45 supervisors of primary schools.

Accordingly, a stratified random sampling was used to take samples from the populations; because the population was composed of different strata. Therefore, different strata were formed based on the researchers' past experience and personal judgments. Besides, due to the existence of different population size and variability in the strata, disproportionate sampling design was employed to select participants from each stratum. Based on this, 67(30%) of primary and 30(39.5%) of secondary school principal trainees, 30(45) of primary and 30(79%) of secondary school supervisor trainees from both universities were taken to constitute the sample size using simple random sampling. Besides, participants of the semi-structured interview were drawn through purposive sampling from relevant offices of the universities, the ministry of education, Regional Education Bureaus (Tigray and Amhara Education Bureaus) and Wereda education offices. Thus, four instructors (from the two universities) and two experts (from MoE), two experts from regional education bureaus (one each from Tigray and Amhara Region Education Bureau) and five experts (from Wereda education offices) were participated in an in-depth interview.

Instruments for data collection

In this study, questionnaire, semi-structured interview and document analysis were employed to collect data.

Procedure of data collection

Similar questionnaire with five-point rating-scale was developed in English to primary and secondary school principals and supervisors. On the other hand, different semi-structured interview guides were prepared in English for supervisors, university instructors and experts and hence was translated into Tigrigna language to enhance the clarity and communication on the part of respondents. By doing so, the quantitative data were collected by assistant data collectors and the interview was carried out by the researchers themselves.

Pilot test

The questionnaire was piloted on four principals and four supervisors. Accordingly, spearman's split-half method was calculated to examine the internal consistency of the opinion scale and the result of the reliability analysis for the 26 items which was found to be 0.92. Hence, the questionnaire was strongly reliable (see Yalew,2006. p.228).

Methods of data analysis

SPSS version 16.0 was used to compute the descriptive statistics (mean, grand mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one-way ANOVA). These statistical tools were applied to quantify, explore and describe differences and similarities among groups of questionnaire respondents. Keeping this into account, data collected through interview and document review were analyzed inline with the themes created to analyze the quantitative data.

Results and discussions

Table 2 Professionalizing recruitment of high-performing school leaders

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster Supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	GM	F	
1	School involvement is in place to contextualize principals' recruitment	3.27	1.32	2.73	1.23	3.17	.83	2.13	1.16	2.93	6.896	.000*
2	Recruitment criteria is effective and transparent	3.22	1.28	2.77	1.45	2.07	.74	2.60	1.35	2.8	6.246	.000*
3	Policy is in place to identify, develop and enhance quality of school leaders	3.19	1.38	3.23	1.16	2.23	1.22	3.63	1.09	3.1	6.724	.000*
4	Human resource administrator act in line with civil service code	2.88	1.27	2.87	.93	3.47	1.07	2.33	.99	2.89	5.055	.000*

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' < 2.50 = Highly disapproved '

Table 2 showed that primary and secondary school principals confirmed that school level involvement is in place to contextualize principal's recruitment; that recruitment criteria is effective and transparent; where policy is in place to identify, develop and enhance quality of school leaders; and that human resource

administrators act in line with civil service code were averagely practiced with rated minimum mean value of 2.73 to a maximum mean value of 3.27. The calculated minimum grand mean value 2.80 and maximum 3.10 further confirmed average practice for item number items 1, 3 and.

However, in the face of this fact, cluster supervisors rated transparency of recruitment criteria and availability of policy with mean values of 2.07 and 2.23 and secondary school supervisors rated human resource act in line with civil service code with mean value of 3.63; all implied poor practice of the activities. The calculated F values for all items were found to be statistically significant implying that there was opinion difference among the different groups of respondents concerning the recruitment of high performing school leaders.

Besides, results of the in-depth interview implied that despite the 2007 Blue Print is under revision, school leaders' preparation program was practiced using tentative directives so that inconsistency and lack of clarity on directives by experts was available. The analyzed documents also proved that the available recruitment and selection guidelines were tentative, and yet, some were missing.

Table 3 Focus on the relative attractiveness of school leadership

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	GM	F	
1	Policy makers used to monitor Remuneration compared to similar grades in the public and private sectors	3.06	1.27	2.60	1.13	1.90	.995	2.3	.83	2.61	8.3	.000*
2	Current salary scales established for teachers and principals attract more candidates	3.34	1.05	2.43	1.19	2.23	1.16	1.7	.87	2.22	3.04	.031*
3	Salary scales in place used to reflect leadership structures and school-level factors	2.63	1.25	2.43	1.07	2.27	1.11	2.5	1.10	2.5	.70	.556
4	Options are in place for school leaders to move between schools as well as between leadership and teaching profession	3.22	1.19	2.53	.93	2.40	1.24	2.5	.86	2.8	5.95	.001*

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' 2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and ' < 2.50 = Highly disapproved '

As shown in the above table, all group of respondents confirmed that current salary scales established for teachers and principals do not attract more candidates. The mean response of the item ranges between 1.70 – 2.43 and with grand mean value of 2.22. Hence, it seems to imply that the existing salary scale of principals has such considerable influences on the supply of high quality candidates. Although primary and secondary school principals moderately proved that policy makers used to monitor remuneration compared to similar grades in the public and private sectors to make school leadership more competitive with rated mean values of 3.06 and 2.60, cluster and secondary school supervisors in contrast strongly disapproved it with mean values of 1.90 and 2.30. Despite the calculated average mean value (2.61) strengthened average practice, monitoring of remuneration by policy makers was yet at average and poor practice level.

On the other hand, almost all secondary school principals and cluster supervisors highly proved that the salary scales in place were not used to reflect leadership structures and school-level factors with rated mean values of 2.43 and 2.27. But primary school principals and secondary school supervisors rated this same item with mean values of 2.63 and 2.50 and with grand mean value of 2.50 where all values proved a moderate practice. Besides, primary and secondary school principals and secondary school supervisors averagely proved that

options are there to allowing school leaders to move between schools, leadership and teaching and other professions with mean values of 3.22, 2.53, and 2.50 and with grand mean value of 2.80 respectively. But, cluster supervisors rated this similar activity with mean value of 2.40 implying that there exists poor practice.

The obtained F value also revealed that the difference among all group of responses is significant for all items except for item number 3. The conducted structured interview with REB and WEO experts revealed that directives regarding salary scale were available. But, differences in the use of directives were clearly observed that it was an indication of absence of clarity on the available directives. Even though the revised Blue Print is at a draft stage, it was actually guiding school leaders' career development and professional growth.

Table 4 Acknowledging role of professional organizations of school leaders

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	GM	F	
1	Providing a forum for dialogue, knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices among professionals	2.81	1.31	2.87	.77	2.43	1.10	1.90	1.21	2.57	4.95	.003*
2	Providing a forum for dialogue, knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices between professional and policy makers	2.33	1.22	2.33	.88	2.13	.97	1.67	.95	2.17	2.93	0.35*
3	Engage in the realization of salary and career reform development and implementation	2.39	1.27	2.40	1.13	2.00	1.17	2.53	1.13	2.34	1.11	0.34

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' <2.50 = Highly disapproved'

As it is shown in the above table, all primary and secondary school principals, cluster and secondary school supervisor respondents attested that there was a poor practice of providing a forum for dialogue, knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices between professionals and policy makers. The mean response for the item ranges between 1.67 and 2.33 and with grand mean value of 2.17 implying the respondents have strongly disapproved its existence in the actual practices. Although secondary school supervisors averagely proved (with mean value of 2.53) that there was average practice of school leaders' salary and professional career reform development and implementation through their representative organizations, all primary and secondary school principals and cluster supervisors rated the item with mean values ranging from 2.0 to 2.40 and with grand mean value of 2.34; all together implying that the respondents have strongly proved that it was poorly practiced.

Whereas cluster and secondary school supervisors strongly proved that professional organizations did not provide a forum for dialogue, knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices among professionals with mean values 2.43 and 1.49; primary and secondary school principals in contrast proved that this activity was averagely practiced with mean values 2.81 and 2.87; and with a grand mean value of 2.57.

The obtained F value also revealed that the difference among all group of responses is significant for items 1&2. Nonetheless, the varied group of respondents seem to reflect comparable mean response for the third item. As per the document analysis made, guidelines that acknowledge the role of professional organizations (Ethiopian Teachers' Association) are available in the newly proclaimed salary scale. But this acknowledgement is not for school leaders' professional association.

Table 5 Responsibilities of MoE to offer basis for guiding school leaders' policy and program development

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA sig		
		M	Sd	M	SD	M	Sd	M	Sd	GM	F	
1	Selection and placement guideline is in place	2.73	1.08	2.97	1.12	2.73	1.11	3.40	1.24	2.90	2.71	.047*
2	Standard for principals and supervisors are in place	3.00	1.15	3.10	1.21	2.77	1.19	2.93	.98	2.96	.47	.705
3	These standards are reflected in the school leadership preparation program	3.06	1.14	2.97	1.06	2.60	1.22	3.17	1.11	2.97	1.50	.218
4	MoE make decision by consulting regions once a year	3.33	1.00	2.70	.98	2.00	1.08	2.43	1.38	2.36	2.10	.103

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' < 2.50 = Highly disapproved '

The above table revealed that all primary and secondary school principals, cluster and secondary school supervisor respondents averagely agreed that selection and placement guideline and standards for principals and supervisors were in place and these standards are reflected in the school leadership preparation program with rated mean values ranging from 2.60 to 3.17. The grand mean value rated with 2.90 to 2.97 also support that these activities were averagely practiced.

On the other hand, although secondary school principals averagely plead that MoE makes decision by consulting regions once a year with mean value of 2.70; primary school principals, cluster and secondary school supervisors in contrast confirmed poor practice of the activity with mean values ranging from 2.0 to 2.43. The grand mean also supports that this activity was poorly practiced. The obtained F value also revealed with the exception of item number 1, the mean responses of the three groups is found to be not significant.

As per the conducted structured interview, Teacher Development Program experts from MoE said that awareness creation was given to experts working in all regional education bureaus.

Table 6 Responsibilities expected from REBs to offer basis for guiding school leaders' policy and program development

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	GM	F	
1	REBs enable principals and supervisors get incentives assigned to them after training	2.45	1.14	2.8	0.99	2.4	1.22	2.8	1.47	2.57	1.16	.237
2	REBs conduct research to check assigned school leaders meet the required profile and report it to MoE	2.88	1.08	2.83	0.87	2.23	1.13	2.27	1.23	2.63	3.1	.009*
3	REB or WOE offices communicated the new preparation program	2.43	1.22	2.97	1.18	1.9	1.24	2.90	1.29	2.52	4.9	.003*

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' <2.50 = Highly disapproved '

As it is revealed in the table above, although secondary school principals and supervisors rated the items REBs enable principals and supervisors get incentives assigned to them after training; and REB or WOE offices communicated the new preparation program as averagely practiced with a minimum mean value ranging from 2.80 to a maximum mean value of 2.90. Primary school principals and cluster supervisors rated this same item as poorly practiced with minimum mean values ranging from 1.90 to a maximum mean value of 2.45. In spite of this difference, the rated grand mean values that range between 2.52 and 2.57 supports average practice of the activities.

On the other hand, primary and secondary school principals proved that REBs averagely conduct research to prove whether trained and assigned principals and supervisors meet the required profile and report it to MoE with mean values of 2.88 and 2.83. But cluster and secondary school supervisors in contrast rated this same item as it was poorly practiced with mean values of 2.23 and 2.27 respectively. Despite the existed perception differences between principals and supervisors, the grand mean value of 2.63 supports average practice of the activity. The obtained F value for items 2 and 3 also revealed that the observed difference in the responses is significant. But, the mean response of the respondents for item 1 is not significant.

As per the conducted structured interview it was obtained that one of the regions have participated at a work shop organized by MoE to create awareness about the new training program so that they were able to cascade it to woreda education offices and give them tentative guideline prepared by MoE to facilitate the selection process. But, the other region did not participate in the MoE's awareness creation and due to that the regional education bureau together with zones and woredas depended on the old civil service code to facilitate selection of trainees. Woreda education office experts, however, said that they did not clearly know the new preparation program.

Table 7 Relevance of research on school leadership preparation program

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	
1	Research focused on the changing roles and effectiveness of school leaders is evident	1.91	0.79	1.97	0.71	1.93	0.64	2.2	0.8	1.98	1.08	0.359
2	Research focused on factors promote success of females as leaders is evident	2.79	0.91	2.63	1.03	2.70	0.98	2.6	1.00	2.71	0.34	0.797
3	Research on the effects and consequences of training interventions is carried out	2.30	0.71	1.87	0.81	1.80	0.71	1.97	0.85	2.06	4.12	0.008*
4	Visible effort is made to find ways to make the research conducted more widely available	1.85	0.65	1.63	0.71	1.43	0.67	1.53	0.68	1.67	3.24	0.024*

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' < 2.50 = Highly disapproved '

As table 7 shows, all groups of primary and cluster and secondary school supervisors strongly proved that no research that focused on the changing roles and effectiveness of school leaders is evident; no research is carried out on the effects and consequences of training interventions, and no visible effort is made to find ways to make the research conducted more widely available with a minimum mean values ranging from 1.43 to a maximum mean value of 2.30 and with a minimum grand mean value of 1.67 to a maximum grand mean value of 2.06.

On the other hand, all group of respondents proved that there was average research practice that focused on factors which promote success of females as leaders with rated mean values ranging from 2.60 to 2.79 and also with grand mean value of 2.71. Difference in responses is significant and is just not a matter of chance for items 3 and 4 given that the calculated value of F is greater than the table value of 2.60. But, for items 1 and 2 the mean response difference among the three group of participants is found to be not significant. According to the conducted structured interview, MoE experts indicated that they did not know a survey report regarding school leaders' preparation. But they said that group of professionals from MoE conducted supervision visit to some selected schools in different regions of Ethiopia and abroad. Based on that, they have recommended the need for introducing the new school leaders' preparation program. On the other hand, regional and woreda TDP experts indicated that they did not conduct survey regarding this new preparation program. Besides, all interviewee asserted that when this program was conducted there was boycotting on the part of trainees in most of the universities. As a result, a group of TDP experts from MoE were sent to discuss with trainees. Hence, it was this practical incidence during the time of summer training program that led to the change from PGDSL to MA in school leadership program for secondary school leaders in 2013/14.

Table 8: School leadership preparation Challenges

No	Item	Primary school principals N=67		Secondary school principals N=30		Cluster supervisors N=30		Secondary school supervisors N=30		One-way ANOVA		sig
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	
1	Misalignment between program objective and candidate needs	3.36	1.29	3.7	1.02	3.07	1.11	4.23	0.89	3.54	6.12	.001*
2	Presence of alternative and more attractive job opportunities elsewhere	3.34	1.27	3.43	1.07	3.03	1.32	3.57	1.38	3.34	0.96	0.416
3	Variability in entry and exit standards, program structure, and program duration	3.64	1.17	3.53	1.1	2.87	1.27	3.7	1.02	3.48	3.63	.014*
4	Limited career prospects and inadequate support and rewards	3.99	1.27	4.03	0.99	3.13	1.3	4.17	0.87	3.87	5.06	.002*

Level of agreement: ' ≥ 3.50 = Highly approved'; ' $2.50 - 3.49$ = Moderately approved'; and ' <2.50 = Highly disapproved'

The above table showed that misalignment between program objective and candidate needs were proved by primary school principals and cluster supervisors as average challenges of the preparation program while secondary school principals and supervisors reacted for the same item as high challenge. The mean response of the participants for the item is found to be 3.36, 3.07 and 3.70, 4.23 respectively. The grand mean value 3.54 also supported that it was high challenge. Whereas secondary school supervisors proved that presence of alternative and more attractive job opportunities elsewhere as high challenge with rated mean value of 3.57, primary and principals and cluster supervisors proved the item was an average challenge with mean values of 3.34, 3.43 and 3.03 respectively. The rated grand mean value 3.34 also strengthened that the activity was average challenge. Although primary and secondary school principals and secondary school supervisors proved that variability in entry and exit standards, program structure, and program duration was a high challenge with rated mean values of 3.64, 3.53 and 3.70 respectively, cluster supervisors proved this same item as an average challenge with mean values of 2.87, where also the rated grand mean value 3.48 strengthened that the activity as average challenge.

Even though cluster supervisors proved that limited career prospect and inadequate support and rewards was average challenge with rated mean value of 3.13, primary and secondary school principals and secondary school supervisors proved this same item as high challenge with mean values of 3.99, 4.03 and 4.17 respectively. The rated grand mean value 3.87 also strengthened that the activity as high challenge.

The results of all items above were perceived by all respondents at a rate from average challenge to high challenge after wards need to be concern of other researchers how and to what extent they are able to affect the preparation program. Hence, with the exception of the responses for item number two, the mean response differences were found to be significant.

As to the undertaken structured interview, all MoE, Regional Education bureau & Woreda education office experts verified that prospective school leaders who are currently in the position with teaching background are reluctant to join the program. Other competent school teachers that were expected to compete for the leadership position tend to avoid assuming the responsibility. Of course, this was a problem related to primary school principals and cluster supervisors due to absence of immediate return for their engagement and completion of the program. The assumption was that their individual needs are divergent with organizational needs.

Conclusions

MoE's awareness creation mechanism about school leaders' preparation program was largely through cascading but without written communication plan; limited to regional education bureau experts; if not at all to woreda education office experts which in turn resulted to less informed trainees and with little readiness to learn. Since it was merely based on organizational need priority that the program developed, organizational and individual needs were diverged. Accordingly, the readiness and learning interest of student's in the PGDSL program was low given that expected rate of return by students after their graduation is frustrating and may result in little interest towards the program.

Misalignment between program objective and candidate needs, limited career prospects and inadequate support and rewards were among the major factors that prevent school leaders from competing for the school leadership position and the training program. Despite low effort was made to make school leadership relatively attractive, average option was available for school leaders to move between schools as well as between leadership and teaching professions.

Differences in the use of directives were clearly observed that it was an indication of absence of clarity on the part of experts. Even though the revised Blue Print was at a draft stage, it remained as premier document to guide school leaders' career development and professional growth. Besides, there was no clear guideline that acknowledge the role of professional organizations of school leaders. However, average effort was made to professionalizing recruitment of high-performing school leaders, and to make available principal and supervisor standards and reflect them in the preparation program.

The new school leadership preparation program was not designed on grounds of sound thought and survey report. Hence, immediate incidents were major driving forces to change PGDSL program to MA in school leadership for secondary school leaders.

Recommendations

MoE in collaboration with Universities, REBS and WEOs:

- Need to employ clear communication strategy concerning the newly designed educational leaders' preparation program so as to arrive at a solid understanding about objective of the in-service training.
- Are expected to give focus on individual needs of school leaders and align it with organizational needs.
- Should provide better career prospects, adequate support and rewards.
- Ought to work with a consistent and final Blue Print so as to guiding school leaders' career development and professional growth.
- Should create ease access of the necessary guidelines, manuals and other relevant policy documents to reduce inconsistent use of directives during recruitment and selection process.
- Be supposed to allow and strengthen professional organizations direct participation in policy and program development initiatives.
- Be supposed to support decisions about changing school leaders' preparation programs with widely known research findings.

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