

Stakeholders Views about Preparation for Implementation of School Improvement Program

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the status of preparation for School Improvement Program implementation in secondary schools of Assosa Zone. To accomplish this purpose, the study employed a descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in randomly selected eight (50%) secondary schools of Assosa Zone. In these sample schools, 111 teachers (50 female and 61 male) were selected using simple random sampling technique. 40 School Improvement Program committee members, 75 student representatives and 6 education supervision coordinators were included in the study by using purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection. Interview, document analysis, and observation were also utilized to substantiate the data gained through the questionnaire. Percentage, mean, and standard deviation were employed to analyze the quantitative data, while the data obtained through open ended questionnaire items; interview, document analysis, and observation were analyzed using data driven category based narration. The results of the study revealed that the preparation made for School Improvement Program implementation was not satisfactory. Stakeholders were involved in School Improvement Program implementation without having prior trainings. On the basis of these findings, related recommendations were forwarded.

Key Words: School Improvement Program; Secondary school; Domains; Implementation; Challenges; Preparation

Introduction

Background of the Study

Education is a process by which a person transmits his/her experiences, new findings, and values accumulated over the years, in his/her struggle for survival and development through generations. It enables individuals and society to make all-round participation in development endeavours by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes (MOE, 1994).

It is equally sensed by researchers and theoreticians that education is a cornerstone of economic and social development. It improves the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions. In addition, it plays a role in the promotion of respect for human rights and democratic values, creating the condition for equality, mutual understanding and cooperation among people. In this regard, quality education is the base for all rounded development of any nation (MOE, 1994; Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991).

Research evidence concerning school improvement underlines the importance of leadership at different levels within the organization (Hopkins, *et al.*, 1997 cited in Harris, *et al.*, 2003). The importance of school; department and classroom level change has been shown to be essential in successful School Improvement Program (hereafter SIP) implementation (Hopkins, *et al.*, *loc cit.*).

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The emphasis of such research is to determine change that leads to quality improvement. Reports generated by aggregating data from specific stakeholder groups such as students, teachers, parents and educational leaders identify specific strengths and weaknesses of schools or system level school improvement research focuses on processes that explain how schools use inputs and attempts to identify those that are critical to ensuring school improvement. The premise is that if schools manifest these processes, then quality is present and quality outcomes will be achieved. Such quality constructs as school climate, leadership style, supportive relationships and time on task have been mentioned in quality improvement research as important indicators (Cohen, 2004).

Over the past thirty years, the school improvement research field has become a powerful influence in both educational policy and practice. The message that schools make a difference has provided the rationale for various school improvement programs and reform efforts. These have varied in scope and scale but all have been focused upon increasing student

performance and achievement. One common way in which governments across many countries have sought to improve schools is through restructuring the education system. Within the United States, for example, school restructuring has been a central component of educational reform and has dominated school improvement efforts. Yet, the success of restructuring as a means of improving schools remains questionable (Harris, 2002).

According to Hussen and Postethwore (1994), challenges to school improvement efforts may vary in accordance with the variations with the unique features of schools as well as with the external environment in which schools are operating. One simple example could be the size of a school is associated with innovative behaviour for that smaller schools apparently lack the resources to engage in significant change. However, there are common challenges that most school improvement programs face. These are lack of schedules in schools that permit teachers to meet and work together for sustained periods of time; the demanding nature of teachers work as an increasing number of students arrive at school less well-socialized, less prepared to deal with materials, and more frequently from family settings that are not supportive; the aging and often demoralization of teachers due to declining resources; increasing levels of bureaucratization and the rapid and frequent demands for change that comes from central authorities. In addition, an organizational structure where teachers work is less autonomous and more integrated with that of other teachers affects the development of

commitment to change. Moreover, the continues transfer of teachers, principals and educational administrators at the local level puts pressure on the program to continuously train new staff who may not serve in schools for long (Plan Sudan, 2006).

Similarly, Marzano (2003) pointed out that the initiatives of SIP in South Africa faced with challenges of lack of material resources; limited capacity of educational leaders; poor participation and lack of safe institutional environment. Hopkins (2002) also noted the difficulty to change school management and working culture to SIP implementation in developing countries. Supporting this point, Rondinelli, et al., (1990) described that promoting change is difficult under any circumstance, and it is especially challenging in developing countries with uncertain and unstable economic, social and political conditions. Most developing countries lack the physical infrastructure and experienced skill professionals needed to assure successful results.

It is on these background that one of the most successful school improvement projects in the UK entitled 'Improving the Quality of Education for All' (here after IQEA) project acknowledged that without an equal focus on the development capacity or internal conditions of the school, innovative work will soon become marginalized (Harris, 2001). The IQEA project works from the assumption that schools are most likely to strengthen their ability to provide enhanced outcomes for all pupils when they adopt ways of working

that are consistent with their own and the current reform agenda (Harris, 2001).

The School Improvement Framework supply the schools with a structure for raising quality, achieving excellence and delivering better schools for better future. The framework sets up a dynamic relationship between research and planning that will assist schools to undertake self-assessment, which is context-specific, evidence-informed and outcomes focused (ACT, 2009).

School improvement can be defined as "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at changing learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate goal of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (Dalin, 1998). Supporting this idea, Harris (2002) disclosed that school improvement is an approach to educational change that has twin purposes of enhancing students' achievement and strengthening the schools' capacity for change. Generally, the ultimate goal of school improvement is to enhance students' progress and achievement. Research (e.g., Harris, 2001) shows that this is best achieved when schools extend their own capacity for development.

According to Improving Quality of Education for All (IQEA) project, as cited in Hopkins, *et al*, (1994), schools are most likely to strengthen their ability to provide enhanced outcomes for all pupils when they adopt ways of working that are consistent with their own aspirations as well as the current reform agenda. In this light, the IQEA approach to school improvement emphasizes on development in teaching and

learning through the creation of conditions within schools for managing change successfully, collecting and engaging with evidence in order to move thinking and practice forward and collaboration among colleagues in partner schools (Harris & Hageman, 2006).

It is with all these theoretical and conceptual frameworks in mind that the General Education Quality Improvement Package (here after GEQIP) in Ethiopia has been designed. It was designed with the intention of improving the quality of the general education in primary and secondary schools of the country. It consists of six programs, namely, School Improvement Program (SIP), Teacher Development Program (here after TDP), School Management and School Leadership, Civic and Ethical Education Program, Curriculum Improvement Program, and Information Communication Technology (here after ICT) Program (MOE, 2007).

Hence, SIP, as one component of GEQIP, is a national program in Ethiopia developed by the Ministry of Education in 2006 to improve students' results in primary and secondary schools. The objectives of the school improvement program were improving the capacity of schools via prioritizing needs and developing a school improvement plan; enhancing school and community participation in resource utilization, decisions and resource generation; improving the government's capacity to deliver specified amounts of school grants at the woreda level; and improving the learning environment by providing basic operational resources to schools (MOE, 2008).

Following the national agenda, the regional government of the Benishangul Gumuz, where this study was conducted, started SIP implementation in the year 2006 in all primary and secondary schools of the region. The schools in the region have been practicing SIP by formulating strategic plan that helps them in implementing the program. The SIP implementation consists of four domains, including *teaching-learning practices, safe and healthy school environment, school leadership and management, and community involvement*, which are the focuses of students' academic achievement and quality education (MOE, 2007). When such new programs are introduced to an educational system and began to be implemented, it is worthy to assess the implementation process so as to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the process. Assessment of this kind not only enables schools and educational leaders to identify the strengths and weakness in the implementation of SIP, but also it provides insight about what measures to be taken to improve the weaknesses and to expand their strengths as well. This in turn helps schools to benefit the most out of the implementation of the program. Therefore, making an assessment of practices and challenges of SIP implementation was found essential in secondary schools of Assosa Zone.

Statement of the problem

The education system in Ethiopia has been suffering from quality and relevance, efficiency, poor educational leadership practices and organization problems (MOE, 2005). These problems caused dissatisfactions and critics from stakeholders

and suggestions and recommendations for change in the education system at national level were forwarded from educators. This condition in turn calls for reform or improvement at schools (MOE, 2006).

Marzano (2003) also suggest that in South Africa the initiatives of SIP was faced with challenges such as lack of material resource; limited capacity of educational leaders, poor participation and lack of safe school environment. Similarly, Hopkins (2002) noted the difficulty to change school management and working culture the way it fits to SIP implementation in developing countries. Supporting this, Rondinelli, et al., (1990) described that promoting change is difficult under any circumstance, and this is especially challenging in developing countries with uncertain and unstable economic, social and political condition, lack the physical infrastructure and experienced professionals.

Nowadays, it is reported that SIP was being implemented in all secondary schools of Ethiopia (MOE, 2006). There are, however, unavoidable challenges, whenever new programs such as SIP are being introduced and implemented. These challenges may stem from different sources. First of all, the fact that new insights fail to put into practice because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit our familiar ways of thinking and acting can be the major one. Resisting change can be considered as the nature of human being which appears that no one is free from it (Carlson, 1996). Secondly, in poor countries there are financial, social, and technical constraints

that put forward undesired influence towards the implementation of new programs.

According to MOE (2006), the appointment of secondary school leaders in Ethiopia is very much based on experience and there is lack of qualified school leaders and it was found that it is less than satisfactory in performing technical management; building school culture and attractive school compound; participatory decision making and school management for teachers and students; creating orderly school environment by clarifying duties and responsibilities; and being skilful in human relations; communicating with different stakeholders. So, the capacities of secondary school leaders could hinder the plan and implementation of SIP. In addition to this, UNDP (2010) stated that one of the challenges of GEQIP is how well schools integrate all the various components of the program and align them on the key performance indicators of the program, namely increased learning outcomes, completion rates, and secondary entrance.

Also ESDP IV revealed that major investment in improving the number and qualification of teachers and the availability of equipment, student achievement has not been sufficiently improved. The gains in access are of little meaning if they are not accompanied by improving student learning. If students do not acquire significant knowledge and skills, Ethiopia will not be able to compete within a global economy. It is necessary, therefore, to shift attention to quality concerns in general and to those inputs and processes which translate more directly into improved student learning and which help change the school into a genuine

learning environment like quality-focused school supervision, internal school leadership, increased student participation, strong school-community partnerships.

According to Kalayou (2011), effective implementation of SIP in the light of meeting the needs of learners has been mainly affected by factors such as lack of financial and material resources, low follow up and support of education officials, lack of commitment of the school community to support learners, and poor cooperation and support of parents and partner organizations. Frew (2010) also suggested that the major problems that affected the effective implementation of SIP include lack of trained special need teachers, insufficient budget and lack of school facilities, limited support of the community, and lack of necessary awareness and practical involvement of students in the program. Supporting the above suggestions, Stoll and Fink (1996) also noted that lack of adequate preparation, capacity and lack of commitment are the major problems to SIP implementations.

As a result of all these challenges noted in the literature, the researcher doubts the effective implementation of SIP as per the MOE standards in secondary schools of Assosa Zone. The researcher's experience also showed that though access in secondary schools gets increased, the students result was not improved as expected. This is due to various challenges that inhibit the effective implementation of the program at school level. By analyzing school supervision reports and panel discussion made with key stakeholders on SIP implementation, the regional education office identifies poor

planning and its implementation (REB, 2008). This is indicated by various planning procedures used by secondary schools and incorporating all 150 indicators in the schools strategic plan. Therefore, to run the program effectively, the regional education bureau in collaboration with key stakeholders decides to focus on 74 selected indicators and distributed in a form of circular for all schools in the region at the end of the fourth quarter of the 2008 academic year. However, focusing on half (74) of the indicators did not improve the effective planning and implementation of SIP.

Furthermore, to the researcher's best knowledge there is scarcity of studies related to SIP implementation in secondary schools of Assosa Zone. All these initiated the researcher to make an investigation into the status of SIP implementation preparation in secondary schools of Assosa Zone. To this end, therefore, the researcher attempted to answer the following basic research question:

- *To what extent is adequate preparation made for effective implementation of SIP in secondary schools of Assosa Zone?*

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the status of SIP implementation preparation among stakeholders of secondary schools of Assosa zone.

Significance of the Study

The result of this study is hoped to contribute to the following:

- Reveal the strength and weaknesses of the preparation for SIP implementation in secondary schools of Assosa Zone. Such attempts are hoped to generate alternatives for the improvement of the preparation for other innovation implementation at secondary schools,
- Help to fill in the knowledge gap regarding the approach for SIP implementation preparation, and thereby build consensus and raise awareness of stakeholders for better preparation of SIP implementation,
- Encourage the PTA, teachers, principals, cluster supervisors, woreda

education office experts, and Assosa Zone education district to take appropriate remedial actions against problems they faced during SIP implementation preparation.

Delimitations of the study

This study was conceptually delimited to areas related to SIP implementation preparation. Moreover, the scope of this study was geographically delimited to the sixteen secondary schools of Assosa Zone. The study was also delimited to preparations made for SIP implementation from 2009-2012/013 of the secondary schools in Assosa Zone.

Diagrammatic Representation of Conceptual Framework of the Study



Research Design

The research design employed in this study is descriptive survey.

Sources of Data

Data for this research was collected from school SIP committee members (school principals; cluster supervisors; PTAs,

teacher and student representatives), teachers, students, and woreda and zone education office supervision coordinators. The decision to use these subjects as a source of data was based on the assumption that they have a better experience and information about the preparation for SIP

activities implementation in secondary schools. Moreover, documents related to SIP implementation preparation like minutes of discussion were examined.

The Study Site and Population

The site of the population for this study was limited to sixteen secondary schools of Assosa Zone in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, North Western Ethiopia. Assosa Zone is one of the three Zones in the Benishangul Gumuz Region of Ethiopia. Assosa Zone is bordered on the south by the Mao-Komo special woreda, on the west by Sudan, on the northeast by the Abay River which separates it from Metekel zone, and on the east by the Dabus River, which separates it from Kamashi zone. The largest town in this zone is Assosa which is the capital city of the region. Total numbers of secondary schools in the zone were 16. The number of secondary school teachers was also 237 (147 male and 90 female).

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

All SIP committee members (school principals, cluster supervisors, PTA representatives, students and teachers representatives) of the selected secondary schools of Assosa zone were included in the study by using purposive sampling technique. Among the three zonal education experts, the one who was at the position of supervising secondary schools was selected purposively. Also, from the 20 woreda education office supervisors, 5 supervision coordinators were selected purposively as they were closely assisting every school activities. The researchers hoped that they could provide relevant and adequate information regarding SIP implementation in the schools. Accordingly, 45 SIP

committee members (8 school principals, 8 PTA representatives, 8 students' representatives, 16 teachers' representatives from selected secondary schools, 5 cluster supervisors), 5 woreda supervisors (1 from each woreda), and one supervisor from Assosa zone were included in the study.

There were 16 secondary schools in the different woredas of Assosa Zone. Amongst these secondary schools, 8 (50%) were selected through simple random sampling technique. To determine the sample size of teachers from the total target populations (237) of Assosa zone secondary schools, the researcher selected 111 (50%) teachers using simple random technique.

Regarding student respondents, the researcher selected grade 10 students and from this grade level students the researcher selected those students who were classroom monitors from each section (two students from each section) and student representatives from the respective school (three from each sample school) using purposive sampling technique as these students have better experience, knowledge, participate in school internal evaluation and quarterly reports. Accordingly, 23 students from Assosa, 7 students from Goh, 9 students from Nebarkomoshiga, 9 students from Hoha No-2, 5 students from Euket Fana, 9 students from Sherkole, 9 students from Menge, and 5 students from Horahazab Secondary Schools were included in the study.

Instruments of Data Collection

The data gathering tools employed in this study were questionnaire, interview, observation and document analysis.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire included practices and challenges of SIP implementation. The questionnaire was constructed by referring the review of the related literature on practices and challenges of SIP implementation. Both open and close ended items were developed as the main instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was prepared in English Language and administered to all teachers and SIP committee members (school principals, cluster supervisors, and teacher representatives) with the assumption that they can understand the language. The instrument was translated into Amharic for SIP committee members such as parents and students. The closed types of questions were in the form of Likert-scale. In addition to this, open ended type questions were used in order to give opportunity to the respondents to express their feelings, perceptions, problems and intentions related to school improvement practices at the schools. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part deals with the general background of the participants. The second and the largest part contain items that address the basic questions of the study. To increase the chance of return, the administration of the questionnaire was made by the researchers with the help of teachers and supervisors working in the selected schools.

Interviews

To get further information on how secondary schools of Asossa zone practice SIP, semi-structured interview was prepared. The interview has two parts. The first part was about personal background and the

second part focuses on the extent to which SIP has been implemented. The interview was used to collect information from Woreda and Zone education office supervision coordinators regarding the practices and challenges of SIP.

Document Review and Observation

In order to check the preparation and progress of SIP implementation, document analysis and observation were carried out at school level. The document analysis was supported by a check list. The observation checklist had 17 items. It focused on areas that reveal what is really going on in each school with regards to the practices and challenges of SIP implementation.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure the validity of the instruments, a pilot study was carried out to pre-test the instrument. Specifically, to avoid ambiguity and unclear statements, the draft questionnaire was first tested with the Sherkole Secondary School teachers (12), students (15), and SIP committee members (5). The respondents of the pilot test were not included in the actual study. Based on the respondents' response, improvements were made on the questionnaire to make it clear and relevant to the basic questions. The reliability of the items was found .879 coefficient of Alpha (α).

Methods of Data Analysis

For the sake of meaningful analysis, the data collected through close ended questionnaire was tallied, tabulated and filled into SPSS version 21 and interpretation was made on different themes. Thus, depending on the nature of the basic questions to be addressed

and variable to be treated, the researcher used percentage, mean, and standard deviation. More specifically, the percentage was used to analyze the background information of the respondents, whereas, the mean, standard deviation, and one sample t-test were used to summarize the data in simple and understandable way (Aron, *et al.*, 2008)..

On the other hand, the data obtained from observation and document analysis, open ended questionnaire items and semi-structured interview items were analyzed using data driven thematic qualitative analysis.

Results and Discussion

Preparation made for SIP Implementation in secondary schools of Assosa Zone

SIP is made up of four domains namely teaching and learning, leading and managing, school environment, and community involvement. The domains

represent the four key areas in which school improvement takes place.

To implement SIP, making the necessary preparation is an important issue. Besides, for schools to enjoy sustained improvement, it is necessary that school staff and surrounding communities take responsibility for program improvement. Therefore, the school community and other stakeholders are expected to know the essence and contribution of SIP in solving teaching and learning problems. In doing so, they are supposed to have adequate knowledge on preparations for school improvement plan implementation. So, teachers, students and SIP committee members were asked to respond the degree to which preparation was made for SIP implementation as indicated in SIP framework manual (MOE, 2007). Their perceived preparation for SIP implementation was obtained using a five point Likert scale ranging from a very low value of one to a very high value of five.

Table1- Respondent's views about preparation made for SIP implementation

No	Indicators	Respondent	N	X	SD
1	The extent to which the purpose were communicated	Teachers	107	3.69	.926
		Students	75	3.67	.991
		Community	40	3.48	.877
2	The degree to which shared vision has been created	Teachers	107	2.34	.890
		Students	75	2.36	1.035
		Community	40	2.20	.853
3	The willingness and commitment created among the local level authorities	Teachers	107	2.23	.917
		Students	75	2.65	1.191
		Community	40	2.35	.893
4	Attempt made to acquire support from different stakeholders	Teachers	107	2.30	.913
		Students	75	2.13	.935
		Community	40	2.45	1.108

5	The degree of transparency among actors	Teachers	107	2.48	1.085
		Students	75	2.43	1.055
		Community	40	2.45	1.108
6	The extent of clarity on the strategies to be used	Teachers	107	2.27	.896
		Students	75	2.25	1.028
		Community	40	2.28	1.086
7	The degree to which resources(human and financial) were mobilized	Teachers	107	2.31	.915
		Students	75	2.48	1.143
		Community	40	2.32	1.118
8	The extent to which surveys were conducted to define the school status	Teachers	107	3.34	.980
		Students	75	3.61	.971
		Community	40	3.68	1.047
9	The extent to which schools identify its/their problems and set priority accordingly	Teachers	107	3.55	1.048
		Students	75	3.67	.991
		Community	40	3.42	1.035

As indicated in item 1 of Table 1, the three groups of the respondents were asked the degree to which the purpose or objectives of school improvement program were communicated. The three groups of the respondents gave almost a similar result. The mean score for teachers ($X=3.69$) and students ($X=3.67$) revealed that objectives or purposes of the school improvement program are highly communicated. While, SIP committee members ($X=3.48$) reported as objectives or purposes of the school improvement program are moderately communicated. Similarly, the data obtained from the interview conducted with Woreda and Zone education office supervision coordinators revealed that almost all stakeholders have clear ideas about the general objectives or purpose of school improvement program. The implication, thus, is that stakeholders have an opportunity to have clear understanding of

the key purpose and objective of SIP and it is an opportunity to achieve better results.

As depicted in item 2 of Table 1, the ratings of teachers (2.34), students (2.36) and SIP committee members (2.20), disclose their disagreement over the degree to which shared vision has been created among possible stakeholders of secondary schools in the zone. This implies that the effort made by secondary schools in creating public awareness about the school vision is low.

As it can be seen in item 3 of Table 1, the three groups of the respondent were asked the degree to which willingness and commitment were created among the local level authorities. The mean score for teachers ($X=2.23$) and SIP committee members ($X=2.35$) reveal that willingness and commitment created among the local level authorities was low. Students reported it as moderate ($X=2.65$). Based on the responses of the majority, it is likely to

suggest that the effort made by the schools' in developing willingness and commitment among key actors was found low. This finding implies that lack of stakeholders' willingness and commitment had serious negative repercussion for the proper implementation of SIP.

As depicted from item 4 of Table 1, teachers (2.30), students (2.13), and SIP committee members (2.45) were found to have low perception about the attempt made by the secondary schools in acquiring support from different stakeholders. Data obtained from open ended questions showed a similar result. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the school management and principals did not exercise more to get adequate support and assistance from different stakeholders to the effective implementation of the program.

In item number 5 of Table 1, the respondents showed that there was low transparency among actors. That is, the mean scores of teachers (2.48), students (2.43) and SIP committee members (2.45) were found below the test value (3.00). Thus, it is possible to say that there was lack of transparency among school level actors.

Item number 6 of Table 1 was designed to obtain information about the degree to which strategies to be used during SIP implementation were essentially clear and easily understandable. The rating of teachers (2.27), students (2.25) and SIP committee members (2.28) showed low clarity of the strategies. In addition, data obtained from interviewees revealed that the strategies used were not adequately known by all stakeholders due to lack of sufficient

training. In fact, all secondary school strategic plans have included outcomes, strategies, resources and measures of achievements. But, the plans had not clearly put the required outcomes, strategies, resources and measures of achievement. In addition, majority of the sample schools' strategic plans did not incorporate goals, values, ethics, and guiding principles. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the clarity of the strategies used were low.

As to the results of item 7 of Table 1, teachers (2.31), students (2.48), and SIP Committee members (2.32) showed poor perception of the capacity of secondary schools in mobilizing human and financial resources. The data from open ended questions and interview conducted with Woreda and Zone Education Office supervision coordinators further pointed out that majority of the secondary school principals did not design strategies that could mobilize human, financial resources and community support. They expect all sorts of resources from government rather than increase their ability to generate income/revenue. In fact this inability could emanate from school leaders lack of training in the area of effective planning and management of resources and budget allocation. Generally, it seems that secondary schools were running below capacity to do the job of mobilizing human and financial resources for SIP implementation. In spite of this capacity, scholars attest that using human and financial resources strategically and aligning them with pedagogical purposes help to focus school activities on improving teaching and learning.

With regards to item 8 of Table 1, the three groups of the respondents rated differently concerning the degree to which surveys were conducted to define the status the respective schools in implementing SIP. The mean scores for students (3.61) and SIP committee members (3.68) unveiled that the secondary schools more often conducted surveys to define their status. Teachers were also in a position to rate this practice as moderate (3.34). Data obtained from document analysis also indicated that majority of the secondary schools had conducted survey to determine their status before designing their improvement plan. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that all secondary schools had experience of conducting survey, which is one of the basic constituents of the school improvement program where school plan should be based. In this line, MOE (2007) suggest that self-enquiry is an essential means to create a sense of responsibility and accountability for students learning, to practically show schools accountability to their stakeholders, and to assess the extent to which they are satisfying the needs of their students and the impact of their services as well as future directions of improvement.

In item number 9 of Table 1, the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement whether or not secondary schools identify their problems and set priority accordingly. Teachers (3.65) and students (3.67) agreed that schools had experience of identifying their problems and setting priority. Similarly, SIP committee members indicated that the issue is moderately ($X= 3.42$) practiced. Besides, the data obtained through document analysis

(school strategic plan review) showed that almost all secondary schools had exerted a good deal of effort to identify their problems and set priority on the basis of surveys conducted to define their status. Hence, one can recognize that the experience of secondary schools in identifying their problems and set priorities accordingly showed encouraging result.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, one could get a clear picture that the majority of the activities in the preparation phase of the school improvement program were not effectively implemented.

Finally, the findings in this study showed that the major challenges for the adoption of SIP implementation at the secondary schools in Assosa Zone include lack of clarity of the school level policy and guidelines, guidance and counselling services, collaborative planning culture, support from stakeholders, capacity to build team, and commitment among school level actors.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- School improvement program implementation needs to have the necessary knowledge and skill on how to prepare and implement its strategic plan and annual plan of the school from the side of the practitioners. However, the school communities and stakeholders lack a well kept and adequate understanding on these

components of school improvement activities. Therefore, it is advisable that the school principals, Woreda officials, supervisors and teachers in collaboration with Zone education department, Universities and NGOs should organize training opportunities on school improvement program that enhance the effectiveness of School Improvement Program. Besides, the school leaders collaboratively with school teachers should develop experience sharing habits among schools to facilitate or disseminate the school improvement program

preparation and implementation to the whole community.

- Secondary school leaders in collaboration with cluster supervisors should design a strategy to ensure strong awareness among stakeholders so as to get the involvement of stakeholders in all activities of SIP through seminars, workshops and various supportive items for the realization of goals of SIP.
- Finally, the researcher recommends a more detailed and comprehensive study in the area that could strengthen the result of the findings.

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