

الدور القيادي لرؤساء أقسام المواد في نظام
« الإدارة المدرسية المطورة »
في المدارس الحكومية في دولة الكويت

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هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل وتقييم مدى ممارسة رؤساء أقسام المواد (٥٤ رئيس قسم في ١٠ مدارس حكومية) لعدد من السلوكيات والمهام القيادية والتي يدعوهم إليها نظام « الإدارة المدرسية المطورة » الذي بدأت وزارة التربية في دولة الكويت تطبيقه بشكل تجريبي منذ عام ١٩٩٢.

استعرضت الدراسة كذلك الدور القيادي لرئيس القسم (المدرس الأول) في عدد من الأنظمة التعليمية الأخرى وذلك فيما يخص دوره التوجيهي في العملية التعليمية.

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Examining the Departmental Leadership Role in Kuwaiti Public Schools

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Abstract : This paper examines the main features of a new school administration system adopted by the Kuwait Ministry of Education since 1992. The new "Developed School Administration" system considers subject head teachers as resident supervisors of their subjects in their schools and has changed their title to "department chair". Among other new responsibilities, the guidelines of the new system advise department chairs to work with teachers for the continuous evaluation and development of the school curriculum. The paper also examined the extent of which department chairs are performing their new duties according to their perceptions as well as their respective teachers' perceptions.

Introduction and Background:

Researchers have called for expanding the leadership role of the department chair due to the endless managerial responsibilities of school principals (al-Musailim, 1987; Costanza, Tracy, & Holmes, 1987; Anderson & Nicholson, 1987; Ploghoft & Perkins, 1988; Donmoyer & Wagstaff, 1990; Glickman, 1991). The role of department coordinator was recreated in some American school systems in order to develop a cadre of instructional leaders to break down the barriers between administrators and the classroom. Most principals, also, do not have the subject-specific expertise to influence all of the instructional activities in their schools (Costanza, Tracy, & Holmes, 1987). Many researchers

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believe that department chairs are the key to improving the quality of the learning process, and that they are the driving force for developing successful departments and successful schools (Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989, Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Turner & Bolam, 1998).

A Canadian study examined outcomes of a professional-development program designed to help department heads in 2 school districts facilitate change (Hannay, 1994). The program was part of the Canadian Ministry of Education's move from top-down to school-based management. Department heads recommended that organizational structures be revised to provide a more active and sustained role for them. They expressed their need to become more collaborative and less managerial. They also indicated that school administrators must perceive the heads as part of a decision-making team.

The Role of the Department Chair:

The "effective schools" research in the USA designates the school principal as the instructional leader (Andrew, 1986; Dwyer, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutherford, 1985; Lipham, 1981; and others). The term instructional leader, however, can apply to other administrators such as department chairs, assistant principals, and other central office personnel (Wettersten, 1992; Ginsberg, 1988). Since instructional leadership is broadly defined by many researchers as the coordination, supervision, and evaluation of curriculum and instruction (Wettersten, 1992; Krug, 1992), then department chairs are key instructional leaders as well in their schools because they are charged, as in many educational systems with evaluating teachers' instruction and monitoring students' progress and help both teachers and students improve effectiveness (TTA, 1995; Krug, 1992; Kuwaiti Ministry of Education, 1987, 1995).

Krug (1992) identifies five components of instructional leadership:

- . Defining the goals and means of schooling,
- . Managing curriculum and instruction,

- . Supervising and evaluating teachers,
- . Monitoring student progress, and
- . Promoting positive instructional climate.

The British Teacher Training Agency (TTA) on the other hand, identified a number of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed by “subject leaders” (i.e. department chairs) to achieve constant improvement in the teaching of the subject in the school, leading to the highest standards of pupil achievement (TTA, 1996). According to the TTA, these skills and abilities are needed by heads of department to perform their role properly and were classified in five key areas for assessment and development. These are:

- 1) Teaching, learning and the curriculum,
- 2) Monitoring, evaluating, and improving,
- 3) People and relationships,
- 4) Managing resources, and
- 5) Accountability.

“The Developed School Administration” System

The call for expanding the instructional leadership role of the department chair is endorsed by the Kuwaiti educational system where department chairs are charged with a number of leading instructional responsibilities. Department chairs, who are called in Kuwait subject “head teachers”, are expected, according to School Work Manual's guidelines and job descriptions (Ministry of Education, 1987), to evaluate teachers' instruction systematically and help improve their effectiveness. They are additionally advised to monitor students' academic progress by regularly reporting to the school principal test results within individual classrooms and across grades. They are also expected to provide their recommendation to help improve student achievement.

The new "Developed School Administration" system adopted by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (Developed School Administration Manual, 1995) further emphasizes the role of department chairs as instructional leaders. The new system, which is being implemented in a limited number of schools since 1992, has changed their title from "head teacher" to "department chair" and considers them as resident supervisors of their subject areas in their schools. It also has modified the role of the central supervisor to be consultative. Central office supervisors in the new system would visit teachers only upon the request of local school administrators. Thus, teacher evaluation and development is primarily the responsibility of the department chair and the school principal.

Educators and decision-makers in Kuwait presented this system so that local school administrators provide more instructional leadership to their schools. The manual of the new system divides the work of the department chair (and the school principal as well) into 3 main areas: Teachers, students, and curriculum; and lists the chair's responsibilities accordingly. It also includes some guidelines for establishing positive human relations with teachers (Ministry of Education, 1995).

Research Questions:

The new system nowadays is going through many evaluation studies by ministry officials and other researchers. This study aimed at examining the leadership role of department chairs in 4 domains: a) teacher instructional development, b) student academic progress monitoring, c) curriculum development, and d) human relations with teachers. Specifically, the study analyzed and assessed a number of department chairs' responsibilities prescribed by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education in the new system's manual. The responsibilities have been termed in specific instructional leadership behaviors in the above mentioned 4 domains. Thus, the two research questions of this study were:

1. How do teachers perceive their department chairs' instructional leadership with regard to department chairs:

- a) evaluation and development of teacher instruction,
- b) monitoring of students' progress and improvement,
- c) development of school curriculum and,
- d) human relations with teachers?

2. How do department chairs perceive their own performance of their leadership responsibilities in the above mentioned 4 domains?

Design of the Study and Data Collection:

The researchers developed a questionnaire, for the purpose of the study, that consists of a number of statements describing department chairs' instructional leadership behaviors. The statements were made up according to the guidelines and job descriptions of the new system's manual (Developed School Administration Manual, 1995). The researchers also consulted the literature dealing with the instructional leadership role of the department chair for the development of the questionnaire (Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Turner & Bolam, 1998; Wettersten, 1992; TTA, 1996). Teachers were asked to rate the performance of their department chairs¹ of those behaviors. Department chairs were also asked whether they perform those same behaviors, responding to the same items of the questionnaire. All teachers and chairs were asked to indicate their degree of agreement (or disagreement) with 20 statements about department chair's instructional leadership. The researchers decided to seek teachers' appraisal of the instructional leadership of their respective department chairs, since teachers are the ones who work and deal with department chairs most directly and frequently, especially with regard to department chairs' instructional responsibilities.

Ten schools were randomly selected from the 50 schools participating in the project in all of Kuwait's 5 educational areas (school districts). An average of 28 teachers of 4 subject areas were randomly selected from each of the 10 schools. Questionnaires were handed to 283 teachers of different subject areas in 3 different school levels: 51 teachers in 2 ele-

mentary schools, 122 teachers in 4 middle schools, and 110 teachers in 4 secondary schools. An average of 7 teachers of 4 subject areas were randomly selected from each school. 274 completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 97%. Another 54 questionnaires were handed to the department chairs of the surveyed teachers. All department chairs returned their completed questionnaires.

Face Validity and Pilot Testing:

The two questionnaires, teachers' and department chairs' questionnaires were sent to 20 school teachers and 6 department chairs for pilot testing. The teachers and chairs were asked to give their opinions of the validity of the items of the questionnaire. They were asked to a) answer the items of the questionnaire first and to critique them item by item, and b) to indicate whether teachers would be able to notice those behaviors in their chairs. All of the 26 teachers and chairs completed their questionnaires and provided their comments and suggestions for questionnaire improvement. Some of the items of the questionnaire were modified according to their suggestions.

Finally, both the teachers' and department chairs' questionnaires were sent to 2 professors of Educational Psychology and Measurement at the College of Education of Kuwait University who provided the researchers with their comments about the structure and the scale of the questionnaire.

Construct Validity and Reliability:

The 20 items of the questionnaire were factor analyzed (Table 1) in one combined data set to determine whether the items of the questionnaire were related to each other or not. The factor analysis indicated high correlation among all of the items of the teachers' and chairs' questionnaires.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of All Teachers " and Chairs" Responses to All Items

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
It 1	.78	-.03	.14	-.27	-.04	-.07
It 2	.69	.18	.03	.31	-.16	.32
It 3	.7	.46	-.13	-.18	.24	.11
It 4	.62	.52	.13	-.1	.24	.04
It 5	.76	.22	.22	-.05	-.16	-.06
It 6	.81	-.03	-.17	-.17	-.07	-.07
It 7	.81	.1	-.18	-.08	.02	-.01
It 8	.84	.11	-.17	.13	.06	.12
It 9	.76	.12	-.04	.15	-.38	.04
It 10	.83	.05	.21	.09	-.13	.11
It 11	.79	-.09	.1	-.05	-.26	-.03
It 12	.83	.14	-.07	.05	-.22	-.21
It 13	.87	4.31E-4	-.04	.06	-.1	-.14
It 14	.84	-.06	.22	-.07	-.08	.02
It 15	.75	-.29	.17	.13	.03	-.04
It 16	.8	.17	.19	-.18	4.65E-3	.01
It 17	.76	.1	-.01	-.24	.09	-.12
It 18	.78	-.12	-.16	-.18	-.01	.24
It 19	.78	-.26	-.36	2.25E-3	.23	-.01
It 20	.82	-.17	-.35	1.56E-3	.08	-.04

Results:

Teachers' and chairs' responses were entered in one data set and were analyzed statistically through factorial ANOVA. The data of the survey revealed that department chairs rated themselves higher than their respective teachers did in all of the 20 behaviors. The data also revealed some kind of agreement between teachers' and chairs' responses to eleven statements. That is, no statistically significant difference (Tables 2 & 3) between the ratings of the two groups regarding the eleven behaviors.

Table 2: Factorial ANOVA of Position (i.e. Teachers and Chairs) for behaviors 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 "F- test"

	Between Groups	Within Groups
Item 2	5.732	P= .0172
Item 4	6.595	P= .0107
Item 6	3.654	P= .0569
Item 9	3.48	P= .063
Item 12	6.13	P= .0138
Item 15	8.442	P= .0039
Item 16	7.739	P= .0057
Item 17	4.243	P= .0403
Item 18	2.121	P= .1463
Item 19	6.562	P= .0109
Item 20	6.058	P= .0144

Table 3: Means of Teachers "and Chairs" Responses to Statements 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20

Behaviors of Department Chairs' Instructional Leadership	Teachers,	Chairs'
2) Points out specific weaknesses of teacher's instructional practices.	3,5	3,7
4) Reviews examination results with teachers.	3,5	3,8
6) Encourages teachers to give suggestions for text-book improvement.	2,1	2,8
9) Visits teachers in classrooms.	3,8	3,9
12) Follows up curriculum plans' progress.	3,7	3,9
15) Takes time to meet and talk with teachers.	3,1	3,9
16) Explains to teachers the goals of the curriculum and their relation to instructional activities.	2,4	2,7
17) Helps teachers in analyzing examinations.	2,1	2,6
18) Examines students' notebooks.	3,6	3,8
19) Helps teachers in supporting high-achieving and talented students.	2,3	2,5
20) Encourages teachers to discuss the appropriateness of curriculum to students' cognitive abilities.	2,2	2,4

1 to 1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76 to 2.5 Disagree
 2.51 to 3.25 Agree. 3.26 to 4 Strongly Agree.

The data analysis of the study also indicates that teachers' and chairs' responses were statistically different (Table 4) regarding the other nine behaviors. The nine behaviors are listed in Table 5.

Table 4 : Factorial ANOVA of Position (Teachers and Chairs) for behaviors 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 "F- test"

	Between Groups	Within Groups
Item 1	11.02	P= .001
Item 3	11.02	P= .001
Item 5	15.68	P= .0001
Item 7	16.51	P= .0001
Item 8	14.91	P= .0001
Item 10	13.62	P= .0003
Item 11	14.71	P= .0002
Item 13	11.85	P= .0007
Item 14	13.49	P= .0003

Table 5: Means of Teachers "and Chairs" Responses to Statements 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and

Behaviors of Department Chairs' Instructional Leadership	Teachers,	Chairs'
1) Points out specific strengths of teacher's instructional practices.	2.9	3.8
3) Establishes positive human relations with teachers.	2.5	3.9
5) Discusses with teachers procedures to improve low-achieving students.	3.2	3.9
7) Encourages teachers to use different and innovative instructional methods.	2.8	3.8
8) Works to keep faculty morale high.	2.4	3.8
10) Follows up students' academic progress.	3.2	3.8
11) Takes special care of new teachers.	2.9	2.9
13) Encourages teachers to conform to instructional goals.	3.2	3.8
14) Encourages teachers to monitor students' progress.	3.1	3.8

1 to 1.75

Strongly Disagree.

1.76 to 2.5

Disagree

2.51 to 3.25

Agree.

3.26 to 4

Strongly Agree.

Findings:

Teachers believe that their chairs point out teachers' instructional weaknesses more often than reinforcing the strengths of their instructional practices. Department chairs, additionally, claimed that they do the following behaviors considerably more often than their teachers indicated. Those behaviors are: a) Establish positive human relations with their teachers, b) work to keep faculty morale high, c) discuss with them procedures to improve low-achieving students, d) follow up students' academic progress and encourage teachers to do so.

Both teachers and chairs indicated that chairs are following up curriculum plan progress and visiting teachers in their classrooms more often than performing other behaviors such as: a) explaining to teachers the goals of the curriculum and their relation to school instructional activities, b) discussing the appropriateness of curriculum to students' cognitive abilities, c) encouraging teachers to give suggestions for textbook improvement, d) analyzing examinations' results, and e) supporting high-achieving and talented students.

In conclusion, teachers, for the most part, perceived their chairs' instructional leadership positively, however; most of the department chairs, according to their respective teachers, are not attaining sufficiently to three major responsibilities, which are central motives behind the new system. Those responsibilities are: 1) working with faculty for the evaluation and development of school curriculum, 2) supporting high-achieving and talented students, and 3) establishing positive human relations with teachers.

Implications and Recommendations:

It is obvious that department chairs, whose schools were included in this study, need better training to help them better recognize their new duties and the major changes and the philosophy behind the new system, which is a major responsibility of school principals as well as district administrators. When the decision makers of the Kuwaiti educational system presented the new "Developed School Administra-

tion, system, their purpose was to improve the effectiveness of school administrators. That is, to enhance their role in improving the quality of the teaching/learning process. This is because they believe that school administrators, especially department chairs, are the key driving force for developing successful departments and hence successful schools, as the literature frequently indicate (Ploghoft & Perkins, 1988; Donmoyer & Wagstaff, 1990; Glickman, 1991; Costanza, Tracy, & Holmes, 1987; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Turner & Bolam, 1998). Thus, it is incumbent on central office as well as district officials to draw the attention of department chairs to the above behaviors (mentioned in pages 12 and 13). They should design some training courses that deal with those and possibly other instructional leadership behaviors if they wish the new system to be effective.

There are also other important issues that need to be clarified. Issues such as the new relationship between the department chair and the school principal; since both of them have a significant role in teacher instructional evaluation and development. Additionally, the functions of the district supervisor need to be rearranged and stated carefully in the light of the new system, to avoid any role conflict between them and school principals.

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