Educational Leadership and Management

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CHAPTER 11

Major Theories of Instructional Leadership

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Definition of Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership has been defined in many different ways. Most of these definitions usually specify the broad functions of instructional leadership, the behaviour that it comprises, and what it produces. In a broad sense, it can refer to actions undertaken with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children (Greenfield, 1987).

The most common definition of instructional leadership partially explains the term although it does include the observation and evaluation of teachers, and curriculum development in terms of the initiation of innovative academic programmes. Calabrese (1991) stated that instructional leadership also defines and promotes the school's mission. It establishes parameters and goals for the school's instructional programme and it promotes an environment in which learning is encouraged.

Meanwhile, some have defined instructional leadership as comprising the following tasks: defining the purpose of schooling; setting school-wide goals; providing the resources needed for learning to occur; supervising and evaluating teachers; coordinating staff development programmes; and creating collegial relationships with and among teachers. (Wildy & Dimmock, 1993).

The term instructional leader clearly describes the primary role of the principal in the quest for excellence in education. To achieve this quest, it will take more than a strong principal with concrete ideas. According to Richardson et al. (1989), he or she must lead towards educational achievement, must be a person who makes instructional quality the top priority of the school, and must be able to bring that vision to realization.

Furthermore, Leithwood (1994, as cited in Quinn, 2002) described instructional leadership as a series of behaviour designed to affect classroom instruction. Leithwood and his colleagues as cited in Southworth (2002) recently reviewed six approaches to school leadership. One of the six approaches to school leadership was instructional leadership which assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students. It was also noted that some versions of instructional leadership focus, additionally, on other organizational variables such as school culture because these are believed to influence teacher behaviour as well.