

**Rural Transformation through Instructional Leadership**

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## RURAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses about instructional leadership activities of teachers and the head teacher that have been constructively contributing to rural transformation. Based largely on field data, I analyzed and interpreted six key themes: additional time and efforts for school, conducive environment and key activist, collaborating and working with community people, learning for assimilation, coordination and living together, leading from different side and active, creative and responsible elected local leader. While analyzing data I argued that rural transformation is initiated through teachers, the head teachers and active local leaders conducting instructional, livelihood and infrastructural activities. I observed how teachers and the head teachers have been initiating additional instructional activities in school to promote students learning focusing on core functions of school. Similarly, instructional leaders also have been intervening livelihood educational activities collaborating with local people to promote awareness and income generation. Likewise, I explored how a former teacher has elected and brought visible change in academic and infrastructural development by providing efficient service delivery in the micro-level. Thus, instructional leaders are crucial change agents for rural transformation and give a new dimension to the school education system.

Key words: Teacher and head teacher, rural transformation, leaders, instructional and transformational leadership

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### **Background**

I worked as a primary teacher in a school of my village just for two years. I initiated some new programs in school collaborating with the head teacher and staff. Time increment for school, regular staff meeting on promotion of teaching learning, increase student inspiration to students for regular homework, regular meeting and consultation with parents and interaction with teachers from neighboring schools to promote students learning is some of the programs I initiated. These programs helped to increase learning level of students and promote relationship between teacher – students, school – community and school-school. After two years of teaching experience I switched the contemporary job and got elected as a chairperson of village development committee defeating the former chairperson and competitor from Tamang community. This all happened due to the good impression I left in the community through my instructional activities initiated by me as a primary teacher. These activities were helpful to improve the learning level of students and to build the relationship with teachers and the head teachers working in my neighboring schools in same village development committee. I initiated some new and constructive programs across the village as a newly elected chairperson of the village including upgrading school as lower secondary and secondary level, arrangement of additional land and building construction for school, irrigation facility for the farmers, road connectivity, health post building, well management of village development committee official works.

The above is a vibration story of a former chairperson of Kulekhani village development committee (VDC). According to the above story the former chairperson seems as a transformational leader by initiating and continuing different activities. In this regard, Pansiri (2008) said that the transformational approach to leadership encourages innovation, creativity

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and teamwork while at the same time it stimulates team members to maximize their full potentials. This village is located close to capital city of Nepal in Makawanpur district. He was male from Newari community holding bachelor's degree and was migrated from Lalitpur district. The majority of residents (more than eighty percentages) across the Kulekhani VDC are from ethnic Tamang community.

### **Introduction**

The term rural transformation or rural development is associated with agricultural, educational, financial, cultural and industrial development of the rural part of nation. Regarding this concern INRULED (2001) states the term rural transformation seeks to convey a vision of proactive and positive process of change and development of rural communities in the context of national and global changes in which education is a key instrument for shaping and fulfilling the goal of rural transformation. The report further states that education could enable individuals who inhabited in rural areas to become better equipped, increase their capacity to adapt and expand their choices in this changing environment. Similarly, Mukhopadhyay (2013) states it is true that the social and transformative role of education, for the nation and society at large, is much more valid in the case of rural transformation.

Population below 5,000 and the density of population of less than 400 per square kilometer qualities to be defined as a rural area (Bhola, 2013). He further adds that in such areas at least 75% of the males of the working population would be engaged in agricultural pursuits. Islam & Mia (2007) states the characteristics of rural areas including a space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only a small share of the landscape; natural environment dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and deserts; settlements of low density (about 5-10,000 persons); places where most people work on farms; the availability of land at a

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relatively low cost; a place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructures. Above mentioned characteristics are based on the data and information related to Bangladesh the neighboring country of Nepal. In the context of Nepal we can add; low level of awareness of people towards education and health care, low literacy rate, inadequacy of job opportunity and remaining traditional values and beliefs in existence in rural area.

Chauhan (2009) identified the area of rural development include road connectivity, provision of drinking water, quality education, public platform and electric connection and extension of health facility. In the context of Nepal there are majority of hilly and rural part in the country. Rural areas have been suffering in terms of access to quality education, health, proper road connectivity, job opportunities, and industrial development and so on.

Atchoarena&Sedel (2003) said that rural areas have been neglected in development policy. This difference results the growing needs of rural development. In this connection Gill, Mustafa &Jehangir (1999) said agricultural and industrial developments are the components of rural development.Regarding the purpose of rural development UNESCO & FAO ( 2003 ) argued that rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological, and social capital), and services, and control over productive capital that enable them to improve their livelihoods and lead to sustainable and equitable basis. Similarly, DEC (2002) defined the areas of rural development as drinking water, electricity, health and police post, agriculture, education, communication, drainage and tourism.

Leadership plays vital role for organizational establishment, development and sustain in the respective society and leaders are influential personality. Lussier and Achua(2008) defined

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leadership as the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objective through change. They further identified five key elements of leadership including influence, leader-follower, change, people and organizational objectives. Similarly, Northouse (2010) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Gurr, Drysdale and Murford (2009) explains the characteristics of creative leaders as knowledge, intellectual ability, personality and passion for the task and the experience of flow.

In the context of Nepal; teachers and the head teachers can be categorized as transformational leader through instructional activities in school. Similarly, majority of the teachers and head teachers are local residents living close to school and have been participating social, cultural and agricultural activities in villages. Due to their involvement in agricultural activities it helps to transform society in terms of higher productivity and additional income generation because teachers and head teachers help to employ modern techniques and technologies in agricultural activities. Northouse (2010) defined transformational leadership which involves attempts by leaders to move followers to higher standards of moral responsibility. Similarly, Bass and Riggio (2006) defines that transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers and developing followers' leadership capacity by coaching, mentoring and provision of both challenge and support. They further identified four components of transformational leadership include idealize influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Teachers and the head teachers have been influencing community people through instructional activities by focusing on teaching and learning as instructional leaders. McEwan

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(2003) defines instructional leadership as the creation of climate where the principal, faculty, students, parents and school board are able to work together to accomplish the task of education. She further identified the essential elements for instructional leaders which include vision, the knowledge base, willing to take risk, willing to put long hours, willing to accept constructive feedback, willing to change and grow constantly, thrive on change and ambiguity and can empower others. Similarly, she states seven steps to effective instructional leadership as establish, implement and achieve academic standards, be an instructional resource for your staff, create a school culture and climate conducive to learning, communicate the vision and mission of your school, set high expectations for your staff and yourself, develop teacher leaders, develop and maintain positive relationship with students, staff and parents. Likewise, Blasé & Blasé (2004) states instructional activities as modeling, classroom observation, dialogue, suggestion and praise. Moreover, Gaziel, (2007) states nine instructional leadership dimensions including framing the school goals, communicating these goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining administrator visibility, promoting professional development and academic standard and providing incentives for students.

There are so many responsible personalities and organizations focusing to contribute to the rural development. For the rural transformation and social change teachers are considered as change agent to circulate and initiate innovative, constructive and productive works for societal development. Regarding to the importance of teacher in rural part Mukhopadhyay (2013) said that in rural areas, teachers are the only educated and also relatively better informed people. Even the educated villagers migrate in search of greener pastures in the cities. Hence, for any development project in the rural areas, teachers are not only the best bet, but also the only

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bet. Similarly, among many organizations schools are leading organizations in the community and teachers and the head teachers have been playing strategic role as instructional leaders to create vibration in the society. The scholars also proclaim that the society is on the land of school that gives the direction for future development.

With regards to rural development through teachers Chauhan (2012) said that the role of teachers is quite significant in the development of society and teachers are the real nation builders. Similarly, Gupta & Aggarwal (2007) said that teachers and the head teachers are called the makers of man, the makers of a nation and the real makers of history. Regarding community development they further explain that teachers and the head teachers should actively participate in the social and cultural functions in the community. They added that the head teachers should be sensitive to the needs of the community, students, teachers and parents. Likewise, Durkheim (as cited in Shah, 2008) states that schools are social institutions that contribute to maintain social order and harmony. Schools as a human agency and teacher as a change agent which connect societal aspiration thereby lead to transformation. Thus, teachers and head teacher are the leader who can change the society from traditional to rationale.

### **Purpose and methodology**

This paper aims to explore how instructional leadership activities of teachers and the head teachers have been contributing to rural transformation and social development of the Nepal. I employed qualitative research approach and interpretive paradigm using different data collection methods including in depth interview, focus group discussion and observation.

### **Research site, data collection and theoretical lens**

I selected one VDC in Makawanpur district as my research site to complete this paper. Makawanpur is one of the hilly district situated southern part of capital city of Nepal and



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belongs to Narayani zone. There are two municipality and forty one village development committee in the district. Among forty one VDC Kulekhani is a hilly village close to capital city where Kulekhani hydro power project is situated. There are altogether six schools in this VDC. Among them one is secondary and rests are primary. I selected one secondary school to collect data.

I employed in depth interview, focus group discussion and observation to collect data from research field. There were altogether six research participants holding different responsibilities. My research participants were former chairperson (previous teacher) of village development committee, currently serving head teacher, two teachers and two guardians. Transformational leadership theory is embodied as theoretical lens during identifying research site, collecting and analyzing data. I analyzed data by categorizing them in the following different themes and sorting data into respective themes.

### **Increase additional time and efforts for schools**

"I initiated to utilize school time to promote students learning". This statement was from former head teacher and currently a primary teacher in the school. He is male from terai part of Nepal and has been working as head teacher and teacher since last twenty years in the same school. The meaning of his statement is that there remained a lack of using school time (from ten to four o'clock) for students learning before he joined in the school. This happened due to inadequacy of awareness of local people towards education, engaging family members in domestic works and the shortage of commitment of teachers towards students learning he further added. Similarly, the previous teacher and former chairperson of the village development committee also said "I provided additional time for students who have low level of learning". Likewise, currently working head teacher said "We are running extra classes for less performing

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students". In this context we have to know the core function of school; teaching and learning activities and the need to proper use of school time and provide additional time and effort for needy students. The improvement of students' learning level results happiness among students, parents, teachers, head teacher, non-teaching staff, members of school management committee and parent teacher association and other stakeholders of the school which helps for school effectiveness and community development.

The head teacher further added that they have been intensely caring and supporting these categories of students during classroom activities in friendly environment. One female guardian belonging Tamang ethnic community said that the learning level of her daughter has been increasing due to additional effort made by school staff in homely and friendly environment.

### **Conducive environment and key activist**

There is growing need to create child friendly environment in school to promote students attendance and participation in classroom for their excellent learning achievement. In this respect one female teacher said "I use some stories and songs to motivate students during classroom activities". The teacher has been working as primary teacher since nine years in this school. She further explained that use of short stories and songs helped to increase regular attendance and participation of students in the classroom activities. Similarly, it helps to improve relationship between students and teacher she argued. In this connection, Jagasia (2013) said that teaching through art, music, outdoor activities and workshops play very important role in his/her life. Similarly, Wakhlu et al (2013) said that teaching without love, lifeless and without any joy has no meaning. They further clarify that singing and joy are paramount for teaching and learning. They signify life and growth. That is what teachers and children should learn doing together, learning through experiencing joy. They further added that teaching is not just a profession; it is

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a joy, a service, a creation, devotion in itself. According to Ghoghari&Jha (2013) Accelerated learning programme (ALP) strived to make learning a pleasurable, natural process through the use of games, storybooks, role-playing and singing local folk songs together.

"I have been employing students as key activist to home guardians in participate schools activities and maintenance of good sanitation in home environment ". This is a statement from the current head teacher who resides close to school. He means that students are his right hands for convincing guardians to shoulder the responsibilities towards schools and the learning of students to participate in schools activities. He further added regarding sanitation that they are maintaining good sanitation in school employing students and asking the students to do the same in their home environment. Explaining on the implementation of the notion of sanitation in home environment teaching staff have been monitoring and supporting students and guardians for this purpose he further stressed. They found that the residents from Tamang community were not emphasizing on the sanitation but these days through students and monitoring of staff the scenario seems changing day by day positively.

### **Collaborating and working with community people**

"I was invited to join in training on horticulture in our locality". This statement was from currently serving head teacher of the participant school. Holding bachelor's degree he further explains that he has been farming fruits like orange; banana and guava collaborating with his neighbors that promoted the group farming. Due to this farming the income level of local farmers has improved with high productivity he added. Similarly, one female teacher belonging to ethnic Newari community from the same school said that she has been involving in farming potato, tomato, onion and ginger collaborating with local people. She further added that this activity helped to increase the financial level of farmers and make stronger relationship between school

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and community. In this context Zhang (2013) found that in the complex and diverse rural community practice, female village officials serve as important participants, active for the villagers' autonomy and grassroots leaders to shoulder the major task of the comprehensive development of rural society.

Because of working together with community people the enrolment and retention rate of children is increasing the head teacher and female teacher reflected. In this regard, Wakhlu et al (2013) said that the teachers should help young people to discover their vocations and responsibilities in the real life world and not merely gear their minds with facts. Similarly, Zhang (2013) states education for rural transformation is income increase in a poverty reduction program; connection with the outside world and empowerment of understanding one's rights and executing wise choices to improve livelihoods. Likewise, Sharma (2004) explains that teacher should exercise leadership in the community and win the esteem of adults as well as the pupils. He/she should relate school activities to the ongoing process of community improvement. According to Zhang (2013) the ultimate goal of rural education in China is to cultivate new types of farmers who are skillful, well-educated and capable of doing business.

Tilak, as cited in Zhang (2013) education is perceived as the driving force and proactive facilitator in the changing process of rural transformation. To be more precise, it is an effective instrument for poverty alleviation, elevating social and occupational mobility, empowerment and redistribution of resources and thereby, and an improvement of equity. Similarly, Chinapah & Blom (2013) states the transformation of rural areas in emerging economies is happening in a context of rapid globalization, making any change in an individual economy interactive with the rest of the world. They further explain that education in order to be transformative requires contextual sensitivity. Education in all its forms is contributory to a

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valuable life, a right for all individuals in their development. They emphasized education cannot be viewed only from a "schooling perspective but should be considered from the learning perspective".

### **Learning for assimilation, coordination and living together**

This is the age of collaborating and coordinating with each other to promote competencies for better productivity in respective field. According to Pansiri (2008) cooperation is another essential attribute of effective instructional leadership. In this concern currently serving head teacher said that they have been conducting short term training for teacher and head teacher, running extracurricular activities for students collaborating with neighboring schools this helps to conduct school based training, develop students competency and improve relationship between schools and community. With regard to this context Zhang (2013) states that local schools often play a significant role in grassroots education and training programs. According to his Chinese experience, he adds it is also important to carry out training demonstration bases or set up model households for the dissemination of knowledge and skills.

Conducting training and different activities in local level seems close to transformative leadership for which Bass & Riggio (2006) identified four dimensions of transformational leadership as setting direction, developing people, organizing and building relationship. Thus, teachers transform the belief system of people and their learning connects with real world situation through collaborative way.

### **Leading from different side**

"My head teacher asked me to observe his class and provide feedback to improve teaching strategies". This statement came from female teacher holding bachelor's degree. She means that there is the culture of class observation and feedback sharing among teaching staff

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which is associated with instructional leadership activity stated in McEwan (2003). Similarly, Philip (2003) states instructional observation skill essential for instructional leader. In this respect Blasé and Blasé (1999) found about effective instructional leadership because teachers were suggesting that SMTs should use classroom supervision to help them.

The previous head teacher and currently working primary teacher said "Our head teacher resides in this locality, works with local people to increase horticulture and fruit farming, vegetable farming, bee keeping and livestock farming. These types of activities are helpful to improve relationship between school and community to increase the enrolment and retention ratio of students in school and upsurge the participation of parents in schools activities". His statement came with the view of promoting relationship between school and community through the head teacher in participatory approach in one hand and on the other hand the involvement of the head teacher in agricultural activities by collaborating local farmer directly helps to educate the local people to farm in modern ways and to enhance the agricultural productivity of local people. Running and participating local need based activities the head teacher seems as transformational leader by idealized motivation for which Bass & Riggio (2006) states as the component of transformational leadership. Northouse (2010) defined transformational leadership that which involves attempts by leaders to move followers to higher standards of moral responsibility. He/she further evaluate one transformational leadership that Barus's theory of transformational leadership place a strong emphasis on followers' needs values and moral.

Islam & Mia (2007) found that the vast majority (70%) of rural working women are engaged in low-income activities like day-labor or unpaid family labor. Since these women lack literacy/basic education and skill training their marginal product and income remain at a low level.

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### **Active, creative and responsible elected local leader village**

Based on the story stated in background section of this write up, a question can raise as How the former teacher was elected as local leader by securing majority votes from Tamang community though he was from different ethnic community/family?

In response to the above question the former teacher and chairperson said that his village was backward due to majority of illiterate people across the village, lack of awareness towards education, lack of productive agricultural activities in the village and inadequacy of active teachers and the head teacher in the school to promote students learning and parental education to transform community. He further added that his competitor in the post of chairperson was former chairperson from Tamang community but success to secure only two hundred of votes which was not sufficient to elect him. It happened due to lack of proper development of education and constructive works across the village during his leadership in the village. In this context the head teacher and the local residents of the school said that the competitor of chairperson from Tamang community was illiterate and drunkard without any constructive and innovative works. Due to his behavior and manner the voters from Tamang community rejected him.

While working as a teacher I use to think about the new ways to promote the enrollment and regularity of the students and increasing the working hours of teachers in the school the former chairperson added. Arguing the need of teachers' activeness in the school and society he added that teachers' should think and concretize together constructive and contextualized ways to run the school effectively. In what areas the teachers and the head teacher have been involving and working with local people in the village to transform? I questioned him.

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Responding to my question he explained that primarily the head teacher and teachers should be duty full in the school by constructing and implementing new ideas and programs to promote learning achievement of students by collaborating with stakeholders. Similarly, they have to educate local people and guardians regarding the responsibility towards their children's' learning achievement. Similarly, majority of the teachers are local residents in this village. Being local residents teachers should participate agricultural activities with modern and productive thinking collaborating with local people he further added.

The head teacher said that the former chairperson initiated for irrigation facility and drinking water in the village and road connectivity with capital city during his time. Due to these facilities the agricultural productivity and the lifestyle of people increased he further explained. In this respect Pushpanadham & Panigrahi (2013) said that rural infrastructure is important for agriculture, agro-industries and overall economic development of rural areas.

### **Discussion**

Protecting instructional time is the instructional leadership dimensions prescribed by Gaziel (2007) which is associated with providing additional time and effort for student and intensive care for less performing students in participant school for which I talked in the first theme. In this context a question can be raised as how all staff provided additional time and effort for students though they were not experiencing this culture in school? According to participants, this happened due to additional time devotion with additional instructional initiation from newly appointed local teacher as role model and leader by works close to first and fourth transformational leadership components stated by Bass & Riggio (2006). Through this activity the local people enhance their awareness towards education by sending their children in school in



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time and providing educational environment for students at home as per the suggestion made by teachers and the head teacher in school.

The notion of second theme "conducive environment and key activist" is close to third step of instructional leadership which creates a school culture and environment conducive in learning stated by McEwan (2003). Similarly, the act of employing students as key activist of school seems close to the sixth step of instructional leadership (McEwan, 2003) and one dimension of instructional leadership stated by Gaziel (2007). Due to inspirational activities conducted by teachers has been empowering learning environment in school that motivates students and guardians to transform the culture in home environment. Activities associated with creating conducive environment in school is related to inspirational motivation Bass & Riggio (2006) states as the second component of transformational leadership.

Discussing on the summary of third theme that is associated with the seventh step of instructional leadership stated by McEwan (2003) as develop and maintain positive relationship with students, staff and parents. Similarly, there is a need to communicate the vision and mission of the school with stakeholders for which Gaziel (2007) indicated. Effective communication requires friendly environment for which teachers and the head teacher have been endeavoring in participant school through different activities. Continuing positive relationship among stakeholders through working together in friendly and homely environment helps school family for effective teaching learning that is close to the notion of transformational leaders. Likewise, this also related to the third component of transformational leadership prescribed by Bass & Riggio (2006).

The efforts made by former teacher and chairperson of VDC seem close to all components of transformational leadership and the dimensions of instructional leadership. He

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made friendly and inspiring environment without any type of criticism with his students, colleagues and local people as creative and responsible leader to transform the culture of the school, VDC office and across the VDC community working together. Similarly, he initiated new and innovative activities across the village as a local leader for positive change as per Chauhan (2009), UNESCO & FAO (2003) and Lussier and Achua (2008).

### **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that head teachers and teachers as instructional leader are working as figure head for change in the rural community. The enrollment, retention and participation of students in classroom activities have been increasing in dignified environment through additional instructional activities initiated teachers and the head teacher. Similarly, local people are benefited from local instructional leaders by promoting their awareness on the role and responsibilities towards their children's' education and the development of school. Likewise, they are improving livelihood by employing modern technologies in income generation and improving cultural activities through working together with instructional leaders. Moreover, local people offer their votes for active and innovative leader rather than candidate from same caste as traditional and lethargic ones. Due to instructional leadership competencies which gain through teaching experience a newly elected local leader initiated for strategic intervention in grass root level focusing on academic sector, income generation, and infrastructural activities, mobilizing resources and serving community being visible in local level as transformational leader. Thus, social and rural transformation takes place through human agency: school and teachers that connect people with real life learning which is fundamental for livelihood.

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