



The Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Secondary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was the attempt to assess the changing roles and responsibilities of the secondary school principals in district Peshawar. Change plays an important and meaningful role in the lives of individuals, communities, organizations, establishments and nations. The population of the study consisted of all the principals of the secondary schools of district Peshawar. The total sample size consisted of 60 principals, out of whom 30 were males and 30 were females. The collected data were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by using the statistical tool chi-square test. The recommendations of the study were a set of general and specific factors developed on the basis of review of literature and responses of the principals. They included a focus on within and out of school factors such as leadership skills of principals, qualified and devoted teachers, better school environment and infrastructure as well as effective school-home relationships.

KEYWORDS: Secondary School Principle, Changing role, Leadership skills

1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership in our schools needs to be dynamic like in western countries. Majority of our secondary school principals need required skill to change themselves according to the changing scenario. They are required to have an updated knowledge of the new roles and responsibilities of the school principals to lead the schools of today successfully in the new millennium. A principal without proper leadership skills is just like a captain who sets out on a voyage without having proper navigational appliances. Now the safe journey of the ship will depend entirely on sheer luck and captain's navigational skills (Ruqebetu, 2008). Principals can be referred to as 'change agents' because they are responsible for bringing innovation and improvement in schools. It is evident from the vast literature on school improvement that quality leadership is must if a school is to make progress (Blasé and Blasé, 2000; Anderson, 2008) and effective improvement will take place only if conditions in the school are conducive for teaching and learning process. The principal's major role is to motivate teachers, establish collegial working relationships and ensure high student achievement (Skulsumpapol, 2010). The school principal serves as the educational leader and is the centre of the school's social system. S/he is responsible for processes like administration, organization, evaluation, quality of education and solving day-to-day problems in the school. S/he is to make sure that all these activities are directed towards effective and efficient teaching learning in the school so as to achieve high students' achievements. S/he is responsible for the success or failure of the school. S/he is skilful enough in maintaining positive, cooperative and mutually supportive relationships with staff, students and parents. S/he serves as role model for students both ethically and professionally. S/he accepts responsibilities willingly and shows pride in his/her career and encourages all teachers to do the same (Sakulsumaopol, 2010; Ruqebetu 2008).

Rationale of the Study. The population of Peshawar has increased due to the migration of the people from the war hit tribal areas as well as earthquake and flood hit areas. With increased immigration, the number of students entering schools has definitely increased. This has made the position of the principal more complex, more complicated, with many new responsibilities to shoulder. The researcher has observed and experienced the fact that majority of the secondary school principals in Peshawar find it extremely difficult and challenging to change their role as per needs of the society. The researcher, therefore, undertook this study to investigate various means for providing guidance to secondary school principals towards positive change.

Objectives of the study. This study was designed to analyze the changing roles and responsibilities of the secondary school principals in District Peshawar. The more specific objectives of the study are:

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1. To assess the changing approaches of school principals about their roles and responsibilities.
2. To identify the constraints of school principals in bringing highly effective change in their roles.
3. To offer guidance to the relevant organizations and policy makers in formulating systems and policy recommendation for the changing roles and responsibilities of the school principals in the country.
4. To suggest ways that will encourage the secondary school principals to bring necessary change in their schools to make them real learning institutions.

Review of Literature: At the start of the new millennium, almost every sphere of life is changing both in Eastern and Western world. Things around us are changing very quickly, very dramatically. The world has been changed into a global village by the advent of information and communication technology. We now live in an increasingly diverse, globalized, complex, and media-dominated society (Sheehan, 2006). Managing school change is one of the most complicated jobs of school principals. For school improvement efforts to be successful, principals must work in collaboration with staff by building valuable relationships (Lorenzi and Riley, 2008). Successful schooling will require principals who are capable of building common purposes and beliefs to unite all of the stakeholders in the schools (Sergiovanni, 1990). A shared vision is more than an important idea. A vision becomes a powerful force when it is shared by everyone within an organization (Senge, 1990). S/he must try to create such an atmosphere where autonomous and independent citizens may know the significance and potential of interdependence offers (Cushman, 1992). Lambert (2003) contends that leadership is a ceaseless learning process which helps us in achieving the desired aims and objectives of the school. Glanz (2006a) describes leadership as persons who work together towards common goals and try to bring about cultural changes for school improvements.

School principals extend all kind of support to their teachers to make them clear about their instructional goals and work with them to improve teaching and learning to meet those goals. They are required to make sure that assessment of student learning is aligned with both the school's curriculum and teachers' instruction (Carr & Harris, 2001). In order to run the school smoothly and to attain outstanding student outcomes, principals are required to establish strong relationships and communication with the educational authorities and the community members. (Fullen, 1992, 2002, 2003; Glanz, 2006a). They need to focus their attention on academic achievement, maintaining high standards, promoting positive, respectful, responsible and caring relationships between staff and students and encourage parental and community involvement. These qualities are the blood and soul of effective leadership and are responsible for creating positive learning environment at school (Sergiovanni, 2000, Thomas, 2006).

Research Population/ Sample There are about 200 government and 360 private secondary schools (both male and female) in district Peshawar. Thus the total number of secondary school principals became 560. A list of all these principals served as sampling frame or universe of the study.

Since the basic characteristics like qualification, experience and grades are more or less homogeneous; therefore a small sample size fairly represented the whole population/universe. It was proposed that a sample size of 60 principals was the true representative, if selected randomly. For the random selection the simple random sampling technique (lottery method) was used. For the allocation of sample size to government and private schools the proportionate method was used. In this way 22 principals from government schools and 38 principals from private schools were included in the list of respondents. The researcher also kept in mind the gender equality.

Data Collection: The data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 24 items. It took about two to three months in administering the questionnaire to the principals and conducting interviews with them. Two schools were visited everyday; sometimes it was not possible to meet the principals due to their pre-planned engagements. The questionnaires were administered personally and were collected on the same day and sometimes within three to four days. Each principal took 20 to 30 minutes to complete it.

METHODOLOGY

As the study was descriptive in nature, only one questionnaire consisting of 24 items was devised to collect data from all the 60 sampled heads of the secondary schools regarding the changing roles of the secondary school principals in district Peshawar. Chi-square test at 5% level of significance was used to get accurate results.

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

Where; O_{ij} indicates the observed frequency and e_{ij} shows the expected frequency.

RESULTS

Table 1. The role of the principals has changed during the last 15 years

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	2(3.3)	-	2(3.3)
Disagree	1(1.7)	4(6.7)	5(8.3)
Undecided	1(1.7)	6(10)	7(11.7)
Agree	16(26.7)	10(16.7)	26(43.3)
Strongly Agree	10(16.7)	10(16.7)	20(33.3)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 8.756, DF = 4 and P-Value=0.067. Chi-square test was applied to check the association between the attitude of male and female principals towards the changing role and responsibilities of the secondary school principals. The value of Chi-square shows that there is no significant association ($P > 0.05$) between the two variables.

Table 2 You always try to create a trusting and collaborative climate in the school

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	-	-	-
Disagree	-	-	-
Undecided	-	-	-
Agree	14(23.3)	15(25)	29(48.3)
Strongly Agree	16(26.7)	15(25)	31(51.7)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 0.067, DF = 1 and P-Value=0.796.

All the sixty principals had agreed/strongly agreed to the statement that there should be trusting and collaborative atmosphere in the school. In the strongly agreed category, male principals were in majority; whereas, in the agreed category female principals are more than males.

Table3. You listen to diverse point of views of all the stakeholders

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	-	-	-
Disagree	1(1.7)	-	1(1.7)
Undecided	2(3.3)	6(10)	8(13.3)
Agree	22(36.7)	13(21.7)	35(58.3)
Strongly Agree	5(8.3)	11(18.3)	16(26.7)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 7.564, DF = 3 and P-Value=0.056.

The table shows that majority of the principals (both male and female) agreed that they listen to the diverse points of view of all the stakeholders. Of these, the number of the male principals was greater as compared to the female principals. Moreover, the percentage of the respondents who had strongly agreed was 26.7%.

Table 4 You think that the attitude of the principal is democratic

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	-	3(5)	3(5)
Disagree	5(8.3)	3(5)	8(13.3)
Undecided	1(1.7)	2(3.3)	3(5)
Agree	13(21.7)	16(26.7)	29(48.3)
Strongly Agree	11(18.3)	6(10)	17(28.3)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 5.614, DF = 4 and P-Value=.230
Twenty nine out of Sixty principals (male and female) agreed that the attitude of the principal should be democratic. The number of the female principals was greater as compared to male; whereas Seventeen principals strongly agreed to the above statement.

Table 5. You think that schools must be related well to their surrounding communities if they are to be effective

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	-	1(1.7)	1(1.7)
Disagree	-	1(1.7)	1(1.7)
Undecided	2(3.3)	1(1.7)	3(5)
Agree	19(31.7)	22(36.7)	41(68.3)
Strongly Agree	9(15)	5(8.3)	14(23.3)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 3.696, DF = 4 and P-Value=.449 Forty one out of sixty principals (both male and female) agreed that schools must be related well to their surrounding communities.

Table6. You think that Majority of your staff members are qualified enough to meet the challenges of the 21st century

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	2(3.3)	4(6.7)	6(10)
Disagree	8(13.3)	5(8.3)	13(21.7)
Undecided	-	-	-
Agree	13(21.7)	14(23.3)	27(45)
Strongly Agree	7(11.7)	7(11.7)	14(23.3)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 1.396, DF = 3 and P-Value=.706

Percentages in the table revealed that 45% of the respondents principals (both male and female) agreed that majority of the staff member were qualified enough to meet the challenges of the 21st century. 23.3% of the respondents, 11.7% each, strongly agreed to the stated opinion.

Table7. You think that political interference has disturbed the education system

Options	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Disagree	1(1.7)	2(3.3)	3 (5)
Disagree	-	-	-
Undecided	1(1.7)	1(1.7)	2(3.3)
Agree	12(20)	16(26.7)	28(46.7)
Strongly Agree	16(26.7)	11(18.3)	27(45)
Total	30(50)	30(50)	60(100)

Values given in the brackets are percentages of the sampled population whereas those in the columns and rows of the table are frequencies. Chi-Sq = 1.831, DF = 3 and P-Value=.608

The table revealed that 26.7% male and 18.3% female out of 45% respondent principals strongly agreed that political interference has disturbed the education system. Similarly, 46.7% principals (20% male and 26.6% female) agreed to the above stated opinion.

Conclusions Research findings testified that a school principal plays a pivotal role in bringing change and an effective principal can smoothly lead the change in the school framework. Scholars like Kotter (2002) and Masci, Cuddapah and Pajak (2008), also support this opinion and propose that for bringing an effective change in an organization, effectiveness of the principal is a key factor. In the present circumstances it is

very difficult to bring the schools in line with the schools of the developed countries but the principals are expected to continue their efforts for bringing desirable changes.

There is no denying the fact that excellence in schools cannot be achieved without excellent leaders (ONEC, 2000). In order to lead the educational reform, the school principal needs to possess sufficient knowledge and capabilities. Managing school change effectively is one of the most complicated jobs faced by the leaders of schools. He is required to ensure such a change which is useful and meaningful for teachers, students and the society as a whole.

In Pakistan all the secondary schools are managed according to the laws and regulations formulated by the provincial Governments. The role of the federal Government is to coordinate and facilitate the provincial governments so as to ensure standards of education across the entire federation. School principals, especially in Government schools, are entrusted with no powers regarding hiring of teachers, construction in schools and making budgets for their respective schools. School principals, who can well interpret the provincial Government's rules and regulation, may employ them to form a mechanism for the improvement of the schools. However such an approach needs to possess essential understanding, skill and courage. All the government schools are facing serious problems such as strict bureaucratic rules, less involvement of parents, incompetent and less qualified teachers, uninterested school heads and using traditional methods and techniques in teaching learning processes. (Kapusuzoglu, 2007).

From the responses of the respondent principals, the changing roles and responsibilities of the secondary school principals could be summed up as follows:

- The study indicated that the roles and responsibilities of the secondary school principals had changed during the last two decades. They perform various roles in order to support change in their schools i.e. improving collaboration between stakeholders, fostering innovative teaching and improving teachers' professional development. This implies that for the smooth running of the school, a constant coordination between the principal and the staff is a must.
- The study explored that secondary school principal were required to bridge the gap between the school and the Ministry of education, school and the concerned government departments and, school and the community at large. (Coffin, 2008). The community includes among others the local bodies, religious groups, family units, general public and all community based organization. The secondary school principal should have the ability to involve the community in the school activities. By doing so, s/he will encourage the community confidence in the school.
- It also indicated that the sole aim of the secondary school principal was to create a trusting and collaborative atmosphere in the school. The principal must be expert in collaboration and cooperation and should have the ability to develop these skills in teachers and students. S/he should try best to involve all the staff members in policy-making, decision making and problem solving in relation to the school-community relationship.
- The data also indicated that information and communication technology plays an important role in today's education. Secondary school principals are required to have a good knowledge of the modern technologies to help teachers get the technological training they need. It will contribute a lot to the teaching-learning improvement. The research has indicated that successful schools are run by effective principals (Coffin, 2008).
- More than 91% principals (both male and female) agreed that political interference was a main hurdle in revolutionizing the schools. Corruption and political interference have badly affected the system. Politicians exercise their influence in the recruitment, posting and transfers of teachers all over the country. These politicians appoint corrupt officials to carry out their unlawful orders and thus have held the whole system hostage. This practice is in vogue under successive governments for the last more than three decades. (Aly, 2007. p. 13).

Recommendations

1. The result of the study revealed that majority of the principals agreed that the role and responsibilities of the secondary school principals had changed. It is, therefore, recommended that principal training centers should be established on the analogy of Pakistan Military Academy Kakool, etc. where principals shall acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to run the schools in line with the schools of the developed countries.
2. In Pakistan, every government frames rules and laws which unluckily, remain unimplemented due to the change of the government. It is, therefore, necessary that such policies and plans are

- formulated which are long terms, realistic, practical, consistent, flexible and well related to the needs of the society.
3. Political interference should be diminished to the minimum level. Merit and laid down rules should be strictly followed in the appointment of both the teachers and administrators. Nepotism at all levels should be discouraged in the education administration system.
 4. In order to ensure better performance and understanding to their role and responsibilities, the Executive District Education Officers, Deputy District Education Officers and principals be given special courses training in management. To enhance the management capabilities of the school principals, strict accountability system should be implemented.
 5. Collaboration and coordination between the school community and the community at large should be strengthened through mutual understanding. It will help the school principals in bringing effective reforms and changes.

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