

Role of School Principals in Promoting Academic and Behavioural Performance of Students

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the role of principals in promoting academic and behavioral performance of students in government boys' high schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Enhancement of students' achievement is related to proper learning environment, effective classroom practices, continuous assessment, and academic standards as well as monitoring of learning outcomes of students. The principal is instrumental in setting a proper school climate that includes consideration of safety measures, committed staff, good discipline and availability of needed human, physical and financial resources. The dangers posed to the school environment include the occasional threat posed by some deviant students to the lives and safety of other students, when they resort to violence and vandalism, resulting in the destruction of school property, or when they are discovered in possession of weapons, disrupting the otherwise school environment. Here, the role of principal in relation to students becomes important and risky because he has to protect the school climate from all these and many other dangers to the smooth discipline and good environment of the school. Principals are expected in their role to restore good order, maintain proper discipline and bring improvement in school functioning in such a way that they contribute to students' better outcomes.

Keywords Safety, assessment, discipline, deviant student, school climate, learning outcome.

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Introduction

Principals develop a comprehensive students' welfare and discipline policy in consultation with staff and the community. It is based upon positive, proactive responses, clearly articulated and consistently implemented procedures in the classrooms and playgrounds. It requires clear and regular communication systems and practices, which are reviewed from time to time to promote their academic pursuits, safety and welfare. The welfare needs of each student should be addressed through the establishment of clear and open line communication and support, modeling the nature of interpersonal relationships, which supports students and their parents in the educational journey. The special and individual needs of the students should be properly looked after through promotion of appropriate practices to avoid conflict with school policy, programme and staff professional development. The principal provides feedback to faculty and students to ensure the consistent implementation of students' welfare decisions and maintain disciplinary procedures

through communication derived from school-based decisions.

According to Legotlo et al (2002), the dedication of students to work is affected by the level of troublesome behaviour of the students. They sometimes overlook the directions of teachers and support a tradition of escapism from work. A few students are involved in political activities and disrupt the peaceful environment of the school.

The principals are responsible for checking political intervention in school and taking such measures that check the non-academic activities of students. These measures pertaining to the role of principal include suspension, expulsion, fine, involvement of students in co-curricular activities, effective classroom management and a focus on students' activities. These measures are discussed in some detail in what follows:

Suspension and Expulsion

Sometimes the actions of some students threaten the health and safety of other students or create violence either by destruction of school property or by possession of illegal weapons and substances, or their actions generally disrupt the good order and management of school. The

principal utilizes his delegated powers to suspend, expel or punish a student for breaches of school rules, regulations and discipline. Riddle (2005) stated, "We have a moral and ethical imperative to educate every student. [If] we let them languish in mediocrity, shame on us " (p. 33).

Suspension occurs where a student is prevented from attending school for a specified period of time. The suspension period may be limited or longer depending on the age of the child. A student should be suspended by order of the principal from the school while attending school or traveling to and from school or taking part in any school organized activity away from school, including camps, playgrounds, and co-curricular activities. If a student: endangers the health and safety of staff, students, or anyone else involved in the conduct of school activities; commits serious violence, causes significant damage to school property; steals school property or assists others in stealing or damaging school property; brings or sells prohibited substances in school; disobeys clear and reasonable instructions from teachers or principals;

If the principal believes that the behaviour of the student is serious enough to warrant immediate suspension, he suspends him immediately from school and communicates the decision to his parents or guardian within 24 hours. The notice should state: reasons for suspension; the school day when the suspension occurs and the opportunities for parents and guardians to meet the principal in person in which the parents or guardian is informed about the disciplinary strategies in relation to the student and discusses future strategies to accommodate the weaknesses of the students.

Expulsion occurs when a student is permanently prevented from attending school. This punitive action is taken when there is a serious breach of rules or commitment of misconduct on the part of the student. This action is taken when all other forms of reformative measures fail. Expulsion of a student is made when minor punitive actions do not reform the student. It is a severe penalty, and principals are advised to strictly adhere to the rules of the game because his failure to do so may cause difficulties for him, and the aggrieved student may resort to seeking legal remedies in a court of law.

According to Donohue et. al. (1998), criminologists warn against the use of exclusions

for crime control unless there is evidence of a real threat. Outside the school environment and often unsupervised, expelled or suspended students can see themselves as social misfits and victims of an authoritarian regime. Resentment may build up, increasing the likelihood of participation in more serious forms of delinquency and anti-social behavior.

Corporal Punishment

There was a long tradition in Pakistan in general, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular, to stop indiscipline and gross misconduct of students by resorting to corporal punishment. However, this was not a common feature of the school. In rare cases when forgiveness and minor punitive actions did not reform the behavior of a deviant student, the principal on the recommendation of the disciplinary committee resorted to such action. The tradition is now legally prohibited as a result of a legislative measure implemented by the Government of Pakistan in March 2013. What now seems relevant is to reform students by bringing about behavioral change in their attitudes.

According to the Education Code of the former N.W.F.P. now called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revised in (1975), extra drills; fines; corporal punishment; rustication and expulsion were suggested punitive actions. However, corporal punishment can not be given in the light of recent legislation of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Rustication or expulsion may be imposed only after consultation of the disciplinary committee where such exists. The following practices are strictly forbidden: spitting in the school building; smoking in or near the school building or on the way to or from school; the use of drugs or intoxicants; any form of gambling; disfiguring the school furniture or building and loitering or noisy behaviour in school premises.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

The principal is responsible for the overall development (social, physical, moral, mental and aesthetic) of the students. All school activities (curricular and co-curricular) when planned should reflect their need and importance. Some of the co-curricular activities include play, drama, recitation, debates, physical exercise, music and craft, which are not done on a regular basis due to a shortage of experts, time and resources. However, principals rarely support some of these

activities according to the situation and availability of resources.

The National Educational Policy (2009: 40) documented that different types of co-curricular activities like quizzes, debates, poetry, national anthem, recitation & drawing competition, and culture activities are missing from secondary schools. The absence of these activities in school adversely affects their effectiveness.

Academic Standard and Monitoring Learning Outcomes

The principal is responsible for developing and enforcing high standards for the students. They are expected to acquire mastery over important instructional objectives. He directs teachers to start class on time and to teach to the end of the period. He makes known what is expected of students at different grade levels, enforces promotion standards and supports teachers, when they enforce academic policies (e.g. on grading, homework, promotion or discipline). He provides incentives for learning by recognizing students who do excellent academic work with formal rewards such as an honor roll. For this purpose, students' assembly is used to honor them for their academic work, sports, debates, recitation, attendance and good behavior in the class and improved performance of their wards in school is also communicated to their parents.

According to Williams (2006), the focus of schooling should be shifted from effective teaching to effective learning to improve the quality of education. Such a shift would necessitate a re-examination of how teachers teach and why success for some students is so elusive.

The principal monitors students' progress by meeting personally with teachers to discuss students' academic progress. He shares the evaluation of item analysis of tests with the faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses in the instructional process. The test results are used to assess progress toward goals of school, distribute reports in a timely fashion and inform teachers and students about their results. The slow learners are identified whose test results indicate a need for special instruction such as remediation or achievement and developing an appropriate instructional programmer for students whose test results indicate a need. He monitors the learning outcomes of the students identified by teachers. Through the implementation of outcome-based

teaching programs, student learning outcomes are evaluated in accordance with school assessment policy. For achieving quality, learning outcomes as reflected in school management plan. The principal should target available financial, physical, human and technological resources.

According to Michael Fullen (2003), school capacity is the collective power of the full staff to improve students' achievements. This capacity is further described as including and requiring: individual knowledge, skill, and dispositions; a sense of professional community focused on the moral purpose of the school; coherence in the school's educational program, including curriculum and learning resources aimed at supporting teaching and learning; and the principal's leadership capacity and technical resources, which in the 21st century school include access to appropriate information and communication technology (ICT).

Effective Classroom Management and Continuous Assessment

The principal focuses attention on effective classroom management to develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing of the students. The purpose is to achieve the objectives of the curriculum. In order to ensure effective classroom management, the principal keeps in view the following strategy. The student should: feel a friendly, attentive atmosphere; learn intelligently and joyfully; reflect easily, freely and critically; demonstrate creative abilities; participate in activities; work not only individually but in pairs and groups. They move around for demonstration; listen to teachers and other students, keenly; wait for their turn to share or ask a question; and let other students do, tell or show and perceive their contributions attentively. Mc Kinsey (2007) documented in a study that classroom instruction is of prime importance in promoting students' gains, while school leadership is second to it.

The principal performs continuous assessment of the students to evaluate their progress in all subjects from different dimensions on a regular and continuous basis. It is necessary to integrate it into the teaching-learning process and to help, shape and direct it. It gives regular information about the learning process, the achievement of objectives and competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude based on curriculum) of the students.

Two types of continuous assessment procedures are used for an effective teaching learning process. (a) Less structured continuous assessment demands that the teacher ensures the use of an observation program or diary given by the principal to record his observation in all necessary aspects. (b) More structured continuous assessment is performed by the principal with the help of a teacher who sets up small tests, quizzes, worksheets and activities, who allocates and translates marks into a point scale.

According to Mansoor (2000), framing classroom rules are good indicators of the objectives of a programme. They send out a clear message to the students about expectations, commitments and consistency of principal. These rules are: setting of goals and objectives; identification of aspirations for classroom management; maintaining the tone for the class; raising expectations of students to realize that the rules are beneficial for them.

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) documented that the school principal is a key figure in developing staff commitment to excellence. Shared beliefs are the foundations upon which school improvement rests, and value leadership by the principal is the means by which this is achieved. The specific practices of the principal include: ensuring that classroom goals and objectives coincide with those of the school; evaluating teachers on school objectives; mentoring instruction to ensure that teachers' practices are appropriate to their classroom objectives; pointing out in oral conferences and written evaluation specific instructional strengths and weaknesses based on classroom observations; reviewing students' work; and noting students' time on task in their feedback to teachers after classroom observations.

Methodology of the Study

The study attempted to identify the role performance of principal with regard to pupil related duties in the context of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It chose a descriptive methodology based on scientific method of research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied for analysis of data. The study was delimited to boys' high schools in the public sector both in urban and rural areas of Peshawar district. Girls' schools as well as private schools were not included in the scope of the study.

The sampled population of the study included 70 principals, 70 teachers and 70 selected parents of all 70 boys' high schools in the public sector in Peshawar district. The sample of the study included twenty-five (35.71%) schools with a distribution of fourteen (20%) in urban areas and eleven (15.71%) in rural areas of Peshawar district. Of those, 25 (35.71%) principals and 25 (35.71%) teachers were randomly selected in the sampled schools while 25 parents were purposively selected.

Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires for collecting data from principals, teachers and parents regarding role performance of principal with respect to pupil-related duties. Three types of questionnaires were framed for each category of subjects (teachers, parents and principals) using the Likert Scale with five options for each question. They were handed over to participants and collected in person.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data was collected through closed-ended questionnaires delivered personally to the principals, teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of district Peshawar. The secondary data was obtained from office records, documents and review of relevant literature both in local and global perspectives.

The analysis of data was given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The quantitative data was supported by statistical measures and converted into percentages in tabular form duly supported by graphic presentation. The qualitative data was placed under different patterns and categories, discussed and interpreted for drawing inferences.

Table showing Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents

Options	Respondents	Questions				Total	Percentages
		1	2	3	4		
Almost Never	Principals	1	1	1	1	4	4
	Teachers	0	0	0	2	2	2
	Parents	0	0	0	0	0	0
Seldom	Principals	3	3	1	3	10	10
	Teachers	9	5	3	5	22	22
	Parents	10	2	2	7	21	21

Sometimes	Principals	6	4	6	4	20	20
	Teachers	9	9	9	11	38	38
	Parents	9	13	11	9	42	42
Frequently	Principals	7	9	8	11	35	35
	Teachers	4	5	8	8	25	25
	Parents	3	7	10	8	28	28
Almost Always	Principals	8	8	9	6	31	31
	Teachers	2	3	6	2	13	13
	Parents	3	3	2	1	9	9

According to the data analysis shown in the table, a majority of 35 (35%) responses of principals chose 'Frequently,' 38 (38%) responses of teachers chose 'Sometimes,' and 42 (42%) responses of parents chose 'Sometimes,' confirming teachers' views that principals occasionally performed pupil-related duties but supervised the implementation of these duties by teachers. It revealed that both teachers and parents realized that the role performance of principals with respect to pupil related duties ought to be more effective. The following graph further illustrates the analysis of data.

Figure showing Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents

Outcome of the Study

The analysis of the responses revealed that principals should formulate a comprehensive students' welfare and discipline policy, which should be regularly reviewed, developed in consultation with staff and community. It should be based upon positive, proactive responses, clearly articulated and consistently implemented procedures in the classroom and playground, promoting the protection, safety, and self-esteem of the students. They should also motivate and encourage teachers to identify the learning needs of students and assist each student to maximize learning outcomes through establishment of a systematic process of assessment.

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