

## The Leadership Role of Secondary School Principals and Its Impact on Students' Academic Achievement

Muhabat Khan and Ajaz Shaheen

Hamdard University Karachi

The study determined how the leadership role of secondary school principals of Karachi would influence on students academic achievement? The study used two major hypotheses related to demographic variables, for example status of school and professional qualification of principals. The population was large and diverse, therefore, stratified random sampling design was adopted for the study. The total size of the sample was 90 principals and 360 students from 90 government and private secondary schools of Karachi. The researcher selected 15 schools from each district i.e,  $15 \times 6 = 90$ . A questionnaire and an interview protocol were used as research instruments. The collected data was analyzed through percentage and 't' test. Private and trained secondary school principals were found more effective as compared to government and untrained secondary school principals in respect of academic achievement of students.

**Key words:** leadership, secondary school, principal, students, academic achievement.

We all accept the significance of education in our daily life because education is the only instrument through which the challenges of the modern era can be faced. Therefore, a strong system of education is indispensable for the progress and development of a nation. Similarly, it has been divided into three periods, for example primary, secondary and higher education. Thus, secondary education can draw a line between primary education and higher education. In addition, secondary education is very much essential for everyone while higher education is useful which depends on the interest. To increase the literacy rate in Pakistan, many plans and policies have been made which targeted to overcome the rapid dropout rate of students, but unfortunately these government educational policies have not yielded positive results in uplifting the literacy rate.

In addition, there has been a vivid difference between the government and private secondary schools of Karachi. The main purpose of this study is to identify the leadership role of the principals that truly impact on the academic achievement of students. Moreover, it is determined in this study that what promotes effective teaching-learning and the academic achievement of students.

Bass (2008) stated, "Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and of the perceptions and expectations of the members".

Hall (2004) stated, "To differentiate instruction is to recognize students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preference in learning, interests, and to react responsively" (p. 1). The leadership style of the principal influence on the achievement level of students as well on the performance of teachers.

Indeed, a school system is a cooperative enterprise, and school management is a cooperative responsibility, where every individual has to put efforts for the grooming and development of the school under the guidance and supervision of an effective leader. Such a leader is a principal. Marzano (2003) argued that the role of a leadership in a successful school is the most important factor of a principal which may be very essential steps for useful amendments related to the teacher, student at school levels. Heck (1992) stated that an effective leadership role of the principal can improve student achievement, in spite a number of problems such as "diverse" students' background and insufficient parental involvement in their education.

Moreover, in the similar perspective, Millett (1998) noted, "The quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of a school".

Mkhize (2005) argued that principal determines the standard of students' performance. Moreover, the principal has to adopt a style of leadership that can ensure a high standard of performance where the leadership of the principal is measured by the academic achievement of the students and vice versa. Potier and Powell (1992) agreed with the aforementioned opinion and stated: "Measures of outcome are, clearly, the most clear-cut indicators of a student performance" (p.10).

Chawla and Renesch (1995) stated that leadership holds the key to provide stimulating climate for quick learning, and the leaders keep their people ready for any challenge so that to achieve their vision and goals.

Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood and Weinfeld (1979) and Shimada (2010) concluded that family background of students is an important factor which influences on students achievement. Though, Goodlad (1984) emphasized that an effective school improves students' academic, intellectual, moral, vocational, social and cultural aspects. Therefore, effective school increases the achievement level of students. Reeves (2002) emphasized that leadership time is inextricably linked to student achievement. Every element of achievement: from professional development to organization, to assessment and to collaboration, requires an enormous investment of time. Moreover, he argued that if an educational leader (principal) fails to use time intelligently, in a way that is persistently focused on the academic standards and on improved learner achievement, then his time is utilized in a thousand other tasks. On the part of leader the time management creates a clear difference between the practice of standard-based leadership in the organization and the theory of standards (Reeves, 2002).

Marzano (2003) stated that the good governance of a school principal positively impact on students' achievement. Dufour (2002) noted that the leader should know "To what extent are the students learning the intended outcomes of each course?" Moreover, the school principal should be inquiring himself, "What steps can I take to give both my students and teachers the additional time and support they need to improve learning?" (p. 13).

Lezotte and Levine (1990), Corcoran and Wilson (1989) described some key characteristics of effective schools. They stressed that the school must have the leadership of a competent principal and dedicated teachers with strong determination to focus on the development of students' skills. In this context, effective school expects quality education standards for every student in caring and positive atmosphere supported by principal and teachers. Bollen (1996) also supported the idea of Lezotte and Levine stated that an effective school can sustain the positive climate in which high standard teaching and learning process will grow.

Callahan (1999) identified that teachers should pay equal attention on the process of learning and its application in the practical sense. In the proportion of process and product, the learner interests, learning style, intelligence level and cultural differences will be addressed for developing the range of instructional planning and curricular approaches. In this regard, the achievement level of the students is easily assessed.

Koeze (2007) stated that classrooms are mostly full with students who have great differences in their interests, social or cultural background, previous knowledge and learning attitude. In such kind of environment of the class, the teachers who cannot differentiate among the diverse nature of students would hardly be able to teach a friction in spite of diligent and whole heartedly efforts are made by them. It has been admitted by all that teachers intend to teach but unless without having proper teaching tools and proper leader guidance, the teaching learning process become futile which results low academic achievement (Koeze, 2007).

Tomlinson (2000) described that learners can be challenged by providing sufficient materials and responsibilities on the standard at varying measures of scaffolding, through the use of multiple instructions in groups, and with time variations. Moreover, differentiation suggests that teachers can adopt certain methods to craft lessons in ways which tap into numerous student interests to encourage and promote finely tuned learner interest in the standard. Kaplan and Owings (2004) analyzed

that the quality of teaching as well as the teacher are the most powerful indicators of student success. If the students stay for a longer period with effective teachers, literally their achievement level will go higher and higher.

The achievement level of students can be improved through co-curricular activities. Many studies show a great relationship between students' participation in co-curricular activities and their academic achievement. Educators consider that the co-curricular activities are the integral part of education which keeps the students fit to avail chances for success in all aspects. Effective principals plan these activities and give enough space in the curriculum for the entire session.

Robinson (2006) investigated that the quality of principal leadership influences the quality of students' achievement. Furthermore, the professional development of teachers has a remarkable impact on students' outcome. The foremost indicator of students' academic achievement is the professional training of teachers who incorporate personal and professional qualities among the students.

### Method

The overall strategy of the study was survey. The population of the study contained on the government and private secondary school principals and students of Karachi. Stratified random sampling design was adopted for drawing a sample. The total sample size was 90 principals and 360 students from 90 secondary schools of Karachi. There are 6 districts in Karachi division. Therefore, 15 schools were selected from each district. Two research instruments, a self administered questionnaire of 30 items and an interview protocol were used for the collection of data. The items of the instrument were modified through pilot testing. The data was obtained through personal visits. The data was analyzed through statistical techniques.

### Results

**Table 1**

*Classification of Secondary School Principals of Karachi by Status of School*

<i>Status of School</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Government	40	44.5
Private	50	55.5
Total	90	100

The above table shows that out of 90 principals 44.5% were government and 55.5% were private.

**Table 2**

*Classification of Secondary School Principals of Karachi by Professional Qualification*

<i>Professional Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Trained	60	66.7
Untrained	30	33.3
Total	90	100

The above table shows that out of 90 principals 66.7% were trained and 33.3% were untrained.

#### Hypothesis: 1

There is no significant difference between the leadership role of government and private secondary school principals in the academic achievement of students.

#### Analysis of the Problem

1 : =2. : ≠ 3.  $\alpha$  : 0.05, 4. Test Statistics:  $t - test = 3.15$

5. Result: The null hypothesis is rejected if the computed  $t \geq 1.98$ .

6. Conclusion: According to table t, it is found that the tabulated value of  $t = 1.98$  with  $df = 88$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$  is less than the computed value of  $t = 3.15$ . Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the leadership role of government and private secondary school principals in the academic achievement of students. From the assessment of the table, it is found that private secondary school principals are more superior to government principals in using the leadership role for the academic achievement of students.

**Hypothesis: 2**

There is no significant difference between the leadership role of trained and untrained secondary school principals in the academic achievement of students.

: =2. : ≠ 3.  $\alpha$  : 0.05, 4. Test Statistics:  $t - \text{test} = 5.6$

5. Result: The null hypothesis is rejected if the computed  $t \geq 1.98$ .

6. Conclusion: According to table t, it is found that the tabulated value of  $t = 1.98$  with  $df = 88$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$  is less than the computed value of  $t = 5.6$ . Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the leadership role of trained and untrained secondary school principals in the academic achievement of students. From the assessment of the table, it is found that trained principals are more superior to untrained principals in using the leadership role for the academic achievement of students.

**Discussion**

It was determined in the study to find the leadership role of principal in the academic achievement of students in secondary schools of Karachi. Significant factors were found from face to face interviews, review of the related literature and responses of the questionnaire. Mostly interviewees recommended that effective principals share power rather than hoard it and find ways to increase an organization's brainpower by getting everyone in the organization involved and committed. Consequently, the power and authority help the teachers to adopt useful teaching-learning techniques and strategies for the academic achievement of students. Therefore, it was found that democratic leadership style of the principal influences on students' academic achievement and it also increases the performance level of the teachers. In this regard, the private secondary school principals were found more concerned about the academic achievement of students. They put great emphasis on their students' grades and percentages in the board examinations which ensure more enrolments in those schools. Moreover, they empowered teachers to take part in the decision making process, such as designing the curriculum, syllabus and organizing other academic events.

In addition, it was found that the role of professionally trained principals was considerable in students' academic achievement. Their recruitment criteria were mainly subjected to high qualification and experiences. Trained principals frequently conducted training workshops for the professional growth of teachers and personality development of students. It was found that trained principals appreciate the latest methods of teaching and facilitate the teachers to use audio visual aids to make their lectures more attractive for the learners. In addition, trained principals had the ability to provide direction toward the attainment of the selected objectives. In other words that principals who were trained literally get high marks from teachers for creating a strong climate for instruction in their schools also receive higher marks than other principals for spurring leadership in the faculty, according to the views of many respondents.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the principals/headmasters of secondary schools should be appointed on merit based system. Their leadership skills should be checked through proper evaluation. Appointment on the bases of politics should be banned both in government and private secondary schools of Karachi. Unfortunately, training programs are not frequently organized for principals. Most of principals here learn through trial and error and through practice. Therefore, the government of Pakistan should establish proper training institutions, where the principals/headmasters will be trained. Moreover, trained principals work relentlessly to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction. They help define and promote high expectations; they attack teacher isolation and fragmented effort; and they connect directly with teachers and the classroom. Secondly, the government and the owners of private secondary schools should send principals/headmasters abroad for training purposes.

In addition, the position holder students and their concerned teachers should be encouraged. These students should be given scholarship, awards and other incentives. Similarly, the academic achievement level of students will ultimately increase.

### References

- Bass, B. M. (2008). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, & managerial applications* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.
- Bollen, R. (1996). School effectiveness and school improvement: The intellectual and policy context. In R. David, R. Bollen, B. Creemers, D. Hopkins, L. Stoll & N. Lagerweij (Eds.), *Making Good Schools: Linking school effectiveness and school improvement* (pp. 1-20). London: Routledge.
- Callahan, C. (1999). Classrooms for learners, not winners and losers. High School
- Chawla, S. & Renesch, J. eds. (1995). *Learning Organizations: Developing Culture for Tomorrow's Workplace*. Portland, OR: Productivity Press.
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D. (1979). *Equality of educational opportunity*. New York: Arno Press.
- Corcoran, T., & Wilson, B. (1989). *Successful Secondary Schools*. Lewes, UK: Falmer Press.
- Dufour, R. (2002). The learning principal. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 12-15.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1984). *A place called school*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hall, T. (2004). Differentiate destruction. [Online]. Available: <http://www.cast.org/ncac/index.cfm?l=2876>
- Heck, R. (1992). Principal's instructional leadership and school performance: Implications for policy development. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 14 (2). 21-34.
- Kaplan, L.S., & Owings, W.A., (2004). Introduction to special issue: *Teacher effectiveness*. *NASSP Bulletin*, 88(638), 1-4.
- Koeze, A.P. (2007). *Differentiated Instruction: The Effect on Student Achievement in an Elementary School*. Eastern Michigan University.
- Lezotte, L.W. & Levine, D.U. (1990). *Usually effective schools: A review and analysis of research and practice*. Madison, WI: National centre for Effective Schools Research and Development.
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Millett, A. (1998). Address by TTA Chief Executive, Corporate Plan Conference, London.
- Mkhize, S.T. (2005). An evaluative study of the influence of the principal's leadership on learner academic performance. University of Zululand (Durban).
- Potier, D. and Powell, G. (1992). *Managing a Better School*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Reeves, B.D. (2002). *The Daily Disciplines of Leadership. How to improve student achievement, staff motivation and personal organization*. Published by Jossey-Bass. Printed in the USA. ISBN No-7879-6403-4 page No. 155-57.
- Robinson, J.V. (2006). *Putting Education Back into Educational Leadership* Faculty of Education, the University of Auckland. *Leading and Managing*, Vol. 12, No.1, pp. 62-75.

Shimada, K. (2010). Student achievement and social stratification: A case of primary education in Kenya. *Africa Educational Research Journal*, 1, 92-109.

Tomlinson, C. (2000). Reconcilable differences? Standards-based teaching and differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, 58 (1), 1-7.

Received: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Revisions Received: March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016