The Principal as a leader: View of self and the staff

■ PREETIKA BADGUJAR **AND** PRITI JOSHI

See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :
PREETIKA BADGUJAR
Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology UDAIPUR (RAJASTHAN) INDIA
Email: pree.badgujar@gmail.com

■ **ABSTRACT :** School comprises one of the most important institutions in a country. It is a formal organization with certain rules and roles that people in the system are expected to follow. There is a pattern or one can rather say a hierarchy on which the functioning of each individual is governed. For example, a teacher is the authority in the classroom setting while principal is the authority in academic administration and overall school functioning. Teachers are responsible for classroom teaching and principal is responsible for exercising expertise in managing the school affairs. The present study was conducted in five schools selected from different regions of Delhi to explore the principal's view of self as a leader and the view of staff regarding the principal. Five schools, the principals and teachers were part of the study. The total number of principals interviewed were five and the numbers of teachers included were twenty. The tools selected for data collection were interview (for principals and teachers) and an observation guide. Data were descriptive and were subjected to content analysis. The responses of the interview and observations were categorized into sub-areas.

■ **KEY WORDS :** Principal, Leader, Leadership

The leadership behaviour exhibited by the principal while managing a school plays an important role as it may help establish ethos and a climate that contains a high level of staff and student trust or distrust or disrespect (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980). Principal influences achievement by creating situations which help in improving the process of teaching and learning. Apart from the routine functions that he/she performs, he/she has also to part additional efforts to get effective cooperation of their group members in order to usher smooth functioning of the school. In all the organizational activities, the value patterns possessed by group members and those by the principals certainly play an important role. It is very obvious that whenever the value patterns of a person or a group collides, it certainly hampers the normal functioning of the school. He/she has to resort to certain patterns which show progressive trends like even group members need precise direction for the fulfillment of certain aspirations and objectives framed for the school. In such a system, the values of school principals are of particular importance in shaping the culture of the system and goals, directions and priorities of the school organization (Dunford *et al.* 2000). Leadership is defined as the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. It is a matter of aligning people towards common goals and empowering them to take actions needed to reach them. Thus, effect of leadership goals on schools are indirect as well as direct. Leadership is a function, more than a role. The principal is the key person in a school setting. She sets the pace for many activities in which members of the faculty and the students participate. She is responsible for the *esprit de corps* that exists among all those who are associated with the school, as well as for the friendliness of relations that exist between the school and the community (Crow and Crow 1954). Principal plays a predominant role in making of a school. It is a common experience that social climate and ethos of school is mainly affected by leadership behaviour of its principal. So, all this depends upon the principal, how she makes people under her work properly and effectively (Davis and Ellison, 1997).

■ **RESEARCH METHODS**

The present study was conducted in five schools

selected from different regions of Delhi to explore the principal's view of self as a leader and the view of staff regarding the principal. Five schools, the principals and teachers were part of the study. The total number of principals interviewed were five and the numbers of teachers included were twenty. Data were descriptive and were subjected to content analysis. The responses of the interview and observations were categorized into sub-areas.

Table A: Profile of schools and participants			
Sr. No.	Type of school	Principal	Teachers
1.	Public schools (2)	2	8
2.	Government schools (2)	2	8
3.	Aided school (1)	1	4
Total	5	5	20

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The experimental findings obtained from the present study have been discussed in following heads:

Principal's view of self as a leader :
Changes in self over a period of time :

Each principal who was a part of the study acknowledged the changes that had taken place in their own selves. Principals shared that they had became more organized, responsible and sensitive towards teachers and children and shared that with years passing on they had developed a "problem solving in approach". One of the principals (School E) said, "Its like, experiencing more and learning more." While another principal (School C) stated, "After completion of each academic session I feel more competent and motivated for the next session."

Self as a leader :

All five principals were reluctant in talking about themselves as leaders initially. They highlighted that one important quality was transparency and collaboration with staff and students. Now it was important for them (the principals) to keep things open for the staff and students and makes sure that their view must be taken into account.

Talking about leadership patterns, it came up that all effective leaders used a range of styles on regular basis, seeking to fit each of them to the purpose. Three out of five principals said that there was no fixed style of leadership which has been followed by a principal but it was the situation according to which the principal reacted in a flexible manner. They also had to be autocratic at times and at other times ask for staff's opinion.

The principal of School D refused to share her views about herself as a leader. She said that the researcher should approach teachers to get more. In School A, the principal first tried to pass the question but then started talking "I don't

have any personal interest here and I am not that kind who is just sitting and relaxing, I am not that kind. I stay back, I don't take decisions in a hurry but once taken, no way to change it. I am so firm in that. I am dedicated and sincere and that is why I am here. I am able and capable; I don't care if others recognize my work. I know I am good."

While the principal of School C said, "I don't use my powers unnecessarily, I try to keep everything open, give others enough breathing space. If you ask me percentage wise I am doing 85 per cent of my leadership job." And in School E, the response was "I am satisfied with what I am." So the general view of the principals was that as a principal and as a leader, it was important to have an outlook inclusive of views of others with an emphasis on school's achievement.

Changes seen in the system :

Principals being the organization head are responsible for various activities taking place in the school. All principals viewed themselves as potential and deserving candidates for the post of principalship. Out of five, three principals responded that under their headship the school had become more disciplined and the staff was more punctual and responsive. They said that results have improved under their headship and the participation of students had also increased. The principal of School A said, "Discipline has improved, not with punishment but with rules that are easy to follow". She also communicated that changes were introduced in the system from time to time. She gave an example where the school was no longer in the process of permitting half day leaves on days of a test as children left school after a test and classes could not take place in the afternoon. While the principal of School C reported that under her headship the school had started participating in sports also. She said that being a girl's school, emphasis was not on sports activity but with her support and encouragement students not only participated but also reached zonal and state level competitions and got medals and fame to school. Teachers in school B said that they had never seen a principal like her in their life time with so much of knowledge and concern for everybody's development and well being. The teachers from School B stated that their principal was a visionary and year after year, the school was doing better, be it results, selection in IITs, medical, interschool competitions or other areas. The principal herself was happy with the staff- student performance and performance of the school as a whole. While the principal of School E communicated that when there was vast improvement in building, students, and academics and very few parents came with complaints.

In all these schools, the teachers supported the principal and felt that the school was in a better position and was doing well because of their principals.

View of staff regarding the principal :

Principal as a person :

All participant teachers said that a principal should acknowledge work of teachers and should respond to their problems. They stated that a principal should be co-operative and should maintain a good relationship with staff. One of the teacher said that a principal should be democratic, co-operative and should have humanitarian attitude. She further added, "It's no more a danda method." Another teacher gave her comments over the desirable qualities of a principal and said that principal as a person should be enthusiastic and should have a devotion and dedication to work for students, teachers and community. Also one of the teacher said that as a person, a principal should be approachable. She said, "Bias on any account should not be there. A principal should be neither very bossy, nor too lenient but firm."

The qualities of a principal as described by teachers included a range of characteristics of which good communication skills, commonsense, sound judgment, patience, calmness, courtesy, recognition of good and hard work, resourcefulness, creativity and imagination were mentioned more often.

Organizational skills of the principal: governance and socio-academic developmen :

No specific arrangements or strategies were observed during the course of study in any of the schools. There was supervision for keeping a check over the teaching and non teaching staff. In case of efforts made by the school so as to collaborate with parents, all teachers talked about the PTAs. Only School B and School E, talked about the cultural festivals and rallies organized by the schools for social cause. Besides that, School E arranged social meets. A social meet was organized for the staff to interact over a meal. In all other schools the teachers and principal did not get to meet each other socially except on occasions.

Regarding teacher development, only one school, School B arranged workshops for teachers on counselling, teaching method, pedagogy, new education bill etc. the principal of the school believed that the teacher may be doing the best, but there was a necessity to understand the process of handling and responding to children so as to make them learn actively. Also, one of the teachers in School B shared that the principal had to be an educationist who could lead a team of teachers and help them grow and their principal had these qualities.

Principal in position of highest authority :

In all schools, a similar kind of emphasis was given to monitoring and supervision. For both teachers and students, the supervision was based on reviewing of the performance as evaluated by teachers in case of students and by the principal in case of teachers. Then the principals also observed classrooms to monitor the functioning.

Conclusion :

Teachers were made important members in decision making. So cordial relations with the staff were maintained in all five schools but issues of favouritism and sycophants' also came up. The findings revealed that the duties delegated to different teachers and other members of staff depended on their experience and seniority of an individual. Principals actively decided and selected people from the staff on the basis of their talents to give advice and use their skills for fulfillment of a responsibility and completion of a task. Each principal who was a part of the study acknowledged changes in themselves but were they able to see changes in the system? Though all the principals in the study talked about the changes they had introduced and the reforms which had come under their supervision but all the changes mentioned were limited to academics, results and building. Thus, criteria considered to be of importance for development and success of a school seemed to have had a shifted base.

Authors' affiliations:
PRITI JOSHI, Department of Human Development and Childhood Studies, Lady Irwin College, DU (DELHI) INDIA

■ **REFERENCES**

Blumberg, A. and Greenfield, W. (1980). *The effective principal: Perspectives on school leadership.* Allyn and Bacon, BOSTON, U.S.A.

Crow, L.D. and Crow, A. (1954). *Introduction to education: Fundamental principles and modern practices.* American Book Company, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

Davis, B. and Ellison, L. (1997). *School leadership for the 21st century: A competency and knowledge approach,* Routledge, LONDON, UNIDED KINGDOM.

Dunford, J., Fawcett, R. and Bennett, D. (2000). *School leadership: National and international perspectives.* Kogan Page Limited, LONDON, UNIDED KINGDOM.

8th Year
★★★★★ of Excellence ★★★★★