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## ANALYZING THE PROBLEMS OF THE PRINCIPALS OF GOVERNMENT HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PROVINCE OF THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study aimed to explore the problems of government higher secondary schools' principals in the province of the Punjab. This was a survey type research. The total number of higher secondary schools all over the Province of Punjab were 676 among them 327 were mail and 349 were for female. Using multi-stage proportional stratified random sampling technique, 12 selected districts of the province of Punjab were opted for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as the instrument for this research. The data were collected from all the principals of higher secondary schools of public sector situated in twelve randomly selected districts of the province. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for the analysis of the collected data. There were found certain problems that were being faced by the principals of government higher secondary schools.*

**Keywords:** Principals, Problems, Government Higher Secondary Schools, the Punjab province.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is an agent for change. It is said to be the process of progress and development. Education has played the key and pivotal role in the development of nations. The developed nations are making progress as they have well-established structure of education. Moreover, they use their available resources appropriately and with the at most accuracy. The importance of education is much more realized now than in the past. Through education we have to meet the needs of humanity and find the solution of multi- dimensional problems confronting the humanity as a whole. For standard educational programs we need a group of highly trained teaching staff equipped with better teaching techniques and appropriate facilities. We also require essential learning resources; high standard assessment system based on cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains to achieve objectives of system of education. The principal of the school has to play a significant role in this regard. He is responsible for creating educational friendly atmosphere in the/his school. Such environment cannot be created if the principal lacks in desired characteristics (Ogola, 2012).

Secondary school level education is of the utmost importance. It is a pathway to the higher education. In Pakistan, education system at secondary level is facing multi-facet problems. It is considered low in rank in the world. The higher secondary schools are playing key role for this level of education. The management and administration of a higher secondary school ought to be capable and competent, so that, they may run their institutions smoothly. The principal of an institution is the leader of that institution. His impressive personality can ensure the achievements of the objectives and make the institution successful (Quick, Ferry and Cooper, 2007). It is necessary for a successful school head to have a deep rooted links with society, so that, he may win the confidence and trust of the parents and children. (Alkarni, 2014)

The principal is a focal personality of the institution. Whatever name is given to his/her post he/she is considered as a central pillar. He has to play his role as a bridge and to coordinate among different offices and departments. He has to deal with different people and institutions such as government, higher authorities, management, teachers, school staff, community, parents and their children etc. (Brenninkmeyer and Spillane, 2008).

The principal has to devote his time to see all circulars, reports, booklets, cash books, documents and registers etc. He maintains records and keeps it up to date. He ensures transparency and accuracy. The school can only be run smoothly if the school office runs effectively and efficiently. The job of the principal is very sensitive and painstaking. He has to consume maximum energy to accomplish his duties (Cranston, 2002).

The principals of government higher secondary schools have to deal with various issues and problems as they carry out their duties. Different studies show that principals confront challenges like political interferences, lack of human resource, shortage of budgetary allocations, shortage of physical infrastructure, delay in budgetary release, problem of accommodation, frequent transfers, lack of appropriately trained teachers, bureaucratic pressure, ever changing policies, issues of security, low motivation of staff and students, school politics, overcrowded classrooms and lot of other problems (Everard and Morris, 2009).

While performing duties principals has to face other problems like shortage of staff, lack of professionalism, insufficient and late release of budget, and lack of expertise to utilize the budget, unfair dealing of audit teams, shortage of physical faculties, interference of pressure groups, handling of security matters, inconsistencies in policies, absenteeism of students, irrelevant assignments by higher authorities and low retention of students (Goderya-Shaikh, Madden and Saad, 2006). So, the researcher designed this study to investigate the problems of the principals of government higher secondary schools in the Punjab province and their repercussions. Identification of difficulties and their bad impact among higher secondary schools is necessary to develop an insight into the factors and devise appropriate policies and strategies to overcome such difficulties.

## **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Higher Secondary school principals are confronted with a bunch of administrative challenges. General public and overall population is usually unaware of these challenges. Education system of Pakistan has numerous problems and despite passing quite a long time, they have not been recognized so far and reasons for the problems being faced by higher secondary school principals are yet to be found.



School principal serves as a leader who is supposed to have the ability to become a good and committed to the organizational vision and aim (Blankstein, 2004). Some challenges come from social change due to the new millennium of educating the youth. To face these challenges school leaders need to acquire innovative approaches and do away with traditional way of handling things (Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh and Al-Omari, 2008).

The problems most identified are: inequality of general and professional education, unclear educational standards, unavailability of suitable teaching material, lack of skilled human resources, low quality of education, ill-managed school curricula (Hashmi, 2000). In addition, lack of political will to improve the system, students' flow into different disciplines which do not suit them, lack of guidance and counseling, lack of parental attention to their children's education, lack of financial resources and wastage of existing resources are the major causes of the poor quality of education (Hashmi, 2000).

The 2% budget allocated to education sector in Pakistan is the lowest in South Asia, even the claim to allocate up to 7% of the budget to education till 2015 has not been seen yet. In the developed countries there is a policy to provide education to every citizen freely or at the lowest cost (Iqbal, 2012), even if school leaders develop strong and attractive visions for their schools, they are helpless without the necessary amount of money due to the poor budget allocation and thus they fail to materialize their vision into reality (Hashmi, 2000). Consequently, schools lack enough number of teachers, remain underpaid and demotivated, so, cannot commit to the cause of education. For quality education to be up to par with international standards needs the installation of modern technologies and infrastructure which also depends on resources. From these findings stated in the literature, one can easily understand the real financial problems of school administrators and principals (Shahzadi and Perveen, 2002; Zafar, 2003).

The social problems attached with financial aspects, have emerged because the education system is divided into different systems. The rich have a different education system while the poor have another. Principals are facing so many problems regarding educational standards due to this social aspect of school organization. Political interference is additional burden to bear in terms of teachers' appointments, transfers and promotions. In fact, educational institutions are forced to work for the political parties in rule, but not for the nation building (Saeed *et al.*, 2013).

Institutions also depend on the big picture of policy making because political influence cannot be minimized in the institutions that come on the top in the hierarchy of educational leadership. The instability of political system causes many problems for principals to implement the educational policies properly (Hameed-ur-Rehman, Begum and Sadruddin, 2013).

Head teachers in Pakistani schools remain under an uncertain situation due to the frequent transfers. The transfer decisions are made on other grounds than merit or need. Such malpractices also impact on the psychological health of school principals (Ahmad *et al.*, 2013). In addition, the head teachers transferred to new school also find it hard to adjust with the new environment that directly impacts on the students' academic achievement. Likewise, it has significant negative effects on the social life of such school heads because their families suffer and remain in state of uncertainty and instability (Hoy and Weinstein, 2006).



Teaching is a profession that demands a continuous improvement in one's knowledge, attitudes and skill. The principals lack in professional development opportunities face difficulties in managing changes and challenges in their milieu (Bush, 2008). Effective head teachers need to focus on their own learning. The professional development opportunities are not sufficient in Pakistani schools. It is owing to this lack of access to new knowledge and skills, the head teachers face problems. The teachers having pre-service training in Pakistani schools also have a poor background of education that only promotes memorized knowledge, the application of which is hard in contextualizing their understanding and applying it to solve their problems (Saeed et. al., 2013).

The school leaders also have to play the role of school managers. When new heads are appointed they face challenges in adjustment. There is no proper mechanism to help and support them, to understand the administrative issues and to grip over social milieu of the new environment. Some senior teachers exploit their situation and become problematic to the new heads. The already mentioned problems of internal politics become pressing issues for the new leaders that challenge his or her integrity. Few can stand and sustain the situation. To cope with such challenges, they need to have high level of competence and understanding of the culture and evolution of the school they are appointed in. In other words, the new heads' problems are also numerous, few of them have been identified and reported. These problems include curricular and co-curricular management, teacher management, student management, financial and other social and cultural issues (Suleman and Pakhtunkhwa, 2015).

This study endeavors to recognize the main problems of higher secondary school principals. Because of these problems the usefulness of schools, the method of instruction and learning, the performance of students and their results are adversely influenced. Most of the earlier studies however concentrate on the management of higher secondary schools, role of school principals in higher secondary schools, their initiatives, hardships in management of schools and the techniques adapted by them to resolve the problems. However, the study in hand will concentrate on the problems of principals.

#### ***Purpose of the Study***

The present study has multidimensional purposes such as:

- The facts revealed by the study may contribute to help the planners and administrators in taking steps, to enable the principals of higher secondary schools to combat and solve the problems they come across.
- Policy makers may be able to understand the problems faced by the principals of government higher secondary schools. Consequently, they can prepare a need based modified policy according to ground realities.
- The study may help educationists to comprehend the difficulties of principals at higher secondary schools. It may also make the educationists to realize and recognize the difficulties.
- The stake holders like community, parents and students can familiarity with genuine circumstances they can have the capacity to assume their role in practical and helpful way and demonstrate more positive and practical state of mind towards the school organization and develop their collaboration in like manner.



- This study may serve as a milestone for future researchers on similar problems of the administrators in educational institutions.

### *Research Questions*

The objectives of this study were to:

1. What are the academic problems faced by male and female principals of government higher secondary schools?
2. What are the financial problems faced by male and female principals of government higher secondary schools?
3. What are the administrative problems of male and female principals of government higher secondary schools?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This was a type of survey research in which mixed method was used to collect the data. The principals of all higher secondary schools of Punjab constituted population of the study. The total number of government higher secondary schools all over the Punjab is 676, among them 327 are male and 349 females whereas 194 are in urban areas and 482 are in rural areas. <https://open.punjab.gov.pk/schools/>

Multi stage sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. At first stage, twelve districts Rahimyar Khan, Layyah, Rajanpur, Narowal, Mandi Baha-Ud-Din, Sheikhpura, Khanewal, Kasur, Rawalpindi, Khushab, Faislabad and Pakpattan were selected randomly from 36 districts of the Punjab. At second stage, there were 243 Government Higher Secondary Schools principals in selected 12 districts of Punjab. Among them 169 were rural and 74 were urban principals whereas 120 were Male and 123 Female government higher secondary schools' principals.

### *Research Instrument*

A self-developed questionnaire was applied for the collection of data. The questionnaire was consisted of two parts. The first part was about demographic information of principals. The second part was comprised of possible academic, financial and administrative problems usually faced by the principals of government higher secondary schools of the Punjab province.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

For data collection, the principals were contacted through telephone and requested for time to fill up the questionnaire. Consequently, the researcher visited the target schools himself collected the data personally. The response rate, therefore, was 88%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (mean of the score, standard deviation and frequencies) and inferential statistical techniques (independent sample t-test) were applied to analyze the data.

## **RESULTS**

The following are the results relevant to the research questions.





**Research Question 1**

What are the academic problems faced by male and female Principals of government higher secondary schools?

**Table 1: Academic problems of male and female principals**

	Gender		Total	Male Mean	Female Mean	Difference	Std
	Male	Female					
SD	3	1	4	3.97	4.23	.26	1.008
D	10	8	18				
N	11	5	16				
A	53	40	93				
SA	37	47	84				
Total	114	101	215				

Table 1 showed that 177 principals faced the problem of shortage of teaching staff. Mean of male principals were .97; mean of female principals was 4.23. Mean of female principals was higher than male principals. Result showed that shortage of teaching staff in higher secondary schools was an academic problem and this problem was a little higher for female principals.

**Research Question 2**

What are the financial problems faced by male and female Principals of Government Higher Secondary Schools?

**Table 2: Financial problems of male and female principals**

	Gender		Total	Male Mean	Std	Female Mean	Std	Mean Difference
	Male	Female						
SD	1	2	3	4.12	.853	3.95	.887	.17
D	6	5	11					
N	11	15	26					
A	56	53	109					
SA	40	26	66					
Total	114	101	215					

Table 2 displayed that 175 principals faced the problem of Lack of appropriate training in area of preparing the annual budget in the school. Mean of male principals was 4.12; mean of female principals was 3.95. Mean of male principals was higher than female principals. Results showed that Lack of training for budgeting in higher secondary school was a financial problem and this problem was higher for male principals.

**Research Question 3**

What are the administrative problems of male and female principals of government higher secondary schools?

**Table 3: Administrative Problem of Male and Female Principals**

	Gender		Total	Male Mean	Std	Female Mean	Std	Mean Difference
	Male	Female						
SDA	1	0	1	4.02	.902	3.94	.810	.08

DA	9	9	18					
N	12	9	21					
A	57	62	119					
SA	35	21	56					
Total	114	101	215					

Table 3 showed that 175 principals faced the problem of low competency of supporting staff in the school. Mean of male principals was 4.02; mean of female principals was 3.94. Mean of male principals was higher than female principals. Result showed that low competency of supporting staff was an administrative problem and this problem was a little higher for male principals.

## DISCUSSION

This research pursued different research questions. In this section, research questions and how they were addressed by the researcher are discussed.

### *Research questions no 1:*

what are the academic problems faced by male and female principals of government higher secondary schools. Academic problems were; poor academic environment, less admission, increase absenteeism, bad fame of institution, mental stress, punishment, low retention of students de motivation which affects the overall performance of students and institutions in academics. Principals pointed out that institutions failed to achieve good results due to academic problems of different nature. If there was shortage of competent teachers, deficiency of functional labs, and demotivation among teachers then the academic results would not be up to the mark. Shortage of teaching staff in higher secondary school as an academic problem was found among male and female principals. Ratio of this problem was a little higher for female principals. These results were similar to the previous findings of Ndana (2011) and Riaz (2009) where it was found that male and female principals vary in their preferences of academic problems faced at the schools.

### *Research questions no2:*

What are the financial problems faced by the male and female principals of government higher secondary schools.

Lack of appropriate training in area of preparing the annual budget as a financial problem was found among male and female principals. Ratio of this problem was a little higher for male principals. The allocated budget was insufficient for the financial needs of school as a financial problem among male and female principal. Ratio of this problem was little higher for male principals. There was also a lack of expertise to utilize allocated budget as a financial problem among male and female principals. Ratio of this problem was little higher for male principals. There was also a problem of late release of budget as a financial problem among male and female principals. Ratio of this problem was little higher for male principals. Utilization of budget according to PPRA rules created problems in present ground realities as a financial problem among male and female principals. Principals need training for maintenance of financial record as a financial problem approximately was same among male and female



principals. The principals of schools either male or female had the same view of the financial problems, which were congruent with the findings of (Bredeson, 2003). This may be contextual finding other researchers also found varied answers to this Abdul-Rasheed and Salihu-Bello (2015) discussed in their paper that in Kenya the male principals did see some significant changes in their opinions about financial problems of schools as compared to females.

### ***Research questions no 3:***

What are the administrative problems of male and female principals of government higher secondary schools. Low competency of supporting staff was problematic. There was difficulty in the use English as an official language. The late response from senior officers created uncertainty in work, the less enrolment at school was frustrating, Low retention of students at school, and difficulties in discipline due to students grouping at school showed more mean score of male principals than females. A large number of students remained absent at higher secondary school level reported more of females as compared to males. However, the irrelevant assignments from higher authorities created hurdles in academic work, inability in the use of computer for official use; the most of school teachers were not punctual regarding their periods. There was a lack of enough authority (by rules) to take necessary administrative decisions, the political pressure created hurdles in official work, grouping among staff members was hurdle for the smooth running of school, Deficiency of supporting staff in school, and Shortage of physical facilities at school were showing almost similar responses from male and female principals. The gender of the principals showed slight difference of opinions in a few items of administrative problems of the schools. Olayiwola (2008) found that females had to face more administrative problems in the schools. Another research was recommended here by the researcher that could precisely focus on why the problems vary with the variation in the gender of the respondents. These were consistent results with (Olayiwola, 2008).

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