

Prospects of Principal Leadership in Schools and Colleges in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Though a concept latest in the world perspective, principal leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh has got no recognition. Even the educationists in Bangladesh advocate principals as managers. The objective of this study was to identify the prospects of principal leadership practices in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. The study made use of a qualitative approach in the form of a content analysis to meet up the objective of this study. It was carried out on the related issues like an Overview of Principal Leadership, School Culture and discourse like Principals as Leaders or Managers. The top-down system of the educational administration in Bangladesh does not allow principals to exercise their leadership. The existing attitude harbours the notion that principals are meant for looking after the management of the educational institutions. The idea of school as being a social centre and principal as a leader are almost absent in the practices of schools and colleges in Bangladesh. Bureaucracy has developed in the educational administration in such a way that it fettered principals to play the role of a manager only. This study will help through the analysis of national and international literature to establish the prospect of principal leadership in Bangladeshi context.

Keywords

Principal Leadership, Principals, Managers, Educational Administration, Schools and Colleges in Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Principal leadership is of paramount importance to educational processes. It is tied to student academic achievement. Principals have an indirect effect on school effectiveness and student performance. Superintendents and school dis-

tricts provide policy guidance, but principal leadership at the school level affects performance. Principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers to be good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively, emphasize facilitation, and support empowerment (Hauserman & Stick, 2013) [1].

An understanding of principal leadership is directly correlated with the leadership style the principal takes. In schools and colleges in Bangladesh, principal leadership practices are beset with numerous challenges. First of all, the educational administration in Bangladesh holds the idea that principals are managers which is opposite to the modern concept of educational leadership. Still, as the heads of the school organizations, other than very few, principals in schools and colleges in Bangladesh practice some sort of traditional leadership which is mostly related to either autocratic or democratic style of leadership (Ali, 2011) [2]. There is less scope for the principals to avail leadership training. Whatever training they receive from Government and Non-Government Teachers' Training Colleges (TTC) and from National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) is biased to management (Hossain & Mozumder, 2019) [3]. So, in every way, principal leadership is challenged in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. As a result, the full-fledged progress of education in schools and colleges is being suspended due to the absence of principal leadership.

2. Methodology

The study made use of both qualitative and quantitative approach to explore and study the prospects of principal leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. To meet up the objective of this study, a content analysis was carried out on the related issues extracted from the secondary sources, like national and international published books, research papers, articles, periodicals, newspapers, etc. Some related areas, like an Overview of Principal Leadership, School Culture and Principals as Leaders or Managers in schools and colleges in Bangladesh were taken into consideration for a content analysis.

The findings of this study on principal leadership were accelerated as the second author of this study carried out his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on principal leadership styles in schools and colleges in Bangladesh under the supervision of the first author. In the study, the researcher carried out a survey on forty combined schools and colleges selected purposefully from eight Divisional Districts of Bangladesh. So, out of 1226 combined schools and colleges, 445 as located in Divisional Districts were taken into consideration on the basis of the academic performance of last eight years Secondary and Higher Secondary School Certificate examinations.

To make a division-wise merit list of combined schools and colleges, a total of 100 points to both SSC and HSC having 50 points each were allotted on three factors. Points on three factors having 20, 15 and 15 respectively in SSC and HSC separately were calculated in Microsoft Excel. Details of the factors are given:

- 1) Factor-1: Number of total students passed in 2009-2016 in each combined

$$\text{School and College} = \frac{\text{Total Passed}}{\text{Total Appeared}} \times 20.$$

2) Factor-2: Number of total students achieved GPA-5 in 2009-2016 in each combined School and College = $\frac{\text{Total GPA-5}}{\text{Total Appeared}} \times 15.$

3) Factor 3: Number of total students appeared in 2009-2016 in each combined School and College: 15.

Number of Students	Point Obtained
1 - 500	0.5
501 - 1000	1
1001 - 1500	1.5
1501 - 2000	2
2001 - 2500	2.5
2501 - 3000	3
3001 - 3500	3.5
3501 - 4000	4
4001 - 4500	4.5
4501 - 5000	5
5001 - 5500	5.5
5501 - 6000	6
6001 - 6500	6.5
6501 - 7000	7
7001 - 7500	7.5
7501 - 8000	8
8001 - 8500	8.5
8501 - 9000	9
9001 - 9500	9.5
9501 - 10,000	10
10,001 - 10,500	10.5
10,501 - 11,000	11
11,001 - 11,500	11.5
11,501 - 12,000	12
12,001 - 12,500	12.5
12,501 - 13,000	13
13,001 - 13,500	13.5
13,501 - 14,000	14
14,001 - 14,500	14.5
14,501 - above	15

In the survey, the principal leadership style was explored on an instrument named Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) Measure. For each combined school and college, ten students, ten parents and ten teachers were selected purposefully as respondents. So, the sample size became students $10 \times 40 = 400$, parents $10 \times 40 = 400$ and teachers $10 \times 40 = 400$, in total, $400 + 400 + 400 = 1200$.

The principal leadership style was explored on an instrument named Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) Measure. Only eighteen bipolar adjectives set on a Likert scale were taken to describe and measure leadership styles on the transformational leadership model by the respondents. A frequency test on SPSS Statistics v 20 was conducted to measure principal leadership styles. The result was summarized and it was found that the lowest score given by the respondents was 36 and the highest score was 134. To categorize them, the lowest score was subtracted from the highest score and the interval of the three groups was obtained as 32. Applying the class interval three groups were identified e.g.- Laissez-faire Leadership (36 - 68), Transactional Leadership (69 - 101) and Transformational Leadership (102 - 134).

So, a triangulation method gave an insight into the gamut leadership of a principal in schools and colleges in Bangladesh context. Moreover, the second author's personal experience as a serving principal for the last seven years in two renowned public schools and colleges in Bangladesh contributed a lot to figure out the findings of this study.

3. Findings and Discussions

It was found that almost 39 percent of the respondent believed that their principal had a Laissez-faire Leadership; just about 46 percent of the respondent assumed that their principal was practicing Transactional Leadership. Only 15 percent of the respondent opined that their principal was a Transformational leader (as shown in **Table 1**). So, the result reiterated that transformational leadership model which contains three styles of leadership—transformational, transactional and Laissez-faire- best fit in schools and colleges in Bangladesh and transactional leadership style was the mostly practiced one.

Among many leadership styles, transformational leadership model which is consisted of three leaderships styles—transformational, transactional and laissez-faire—defines principal leadership squarely (Bass, 1998) [4]. Better student learning and more committed teachers are associated with school principals demonstrating transformational leadership. Many aspects of transformational leadership positively correlated with improved student achievement. Hoy and Smith (2007) [5] argued that transformational leadership by a principal increase teacher efficacy. The relationship between transformational leadership and motivation concluded that leadership style is a significant factor in the motivation of teachers. It would be important for the upcoming generation of school administrators, especially school principals, to fully understand transformational leadership (Hauserman & Stick, 2013) [1].

Table 1. Principal leadership styles from LPC survey.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Laissez-faire Leadership (36 - 68)	467	38.88
Transactional Leadership (69 - 101)	557	46.44
Transformational Leadership (102 - 134)	176	14.66
Total	1200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18.

Leadership of a principal is the single most important factor that influences the school effectiveness. It is his or her leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of teacher professionalism and morale, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become (Zame *et al.*, 2008) [6]. As the leader, the principal must understand the complexities of the school culture and be able to establish support which will work toward student achievement. In most of the schools in Bangladesh, leadership is seen as positional leadership; the leadership style is based on the authority and power given by the position of principal. Principals are accountable to the authorities and to school communities by virtue of their position (Salahuddin, 2010) [7].

The concept of principal leadership is embryonic in the field of education in Bangladesh. This is truer in schools and colleges in Bangladesh where the job of a principal is thought to be managerial. The general notion about principal goes like that principals are administrators or managers than leaders. Even the educationists in Bangladesh are yet to acknowledge principal leadership. Management is a priority subject in the curriculum of the training for principals in Teachers' Training Colleges (TTC) and National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) in Bangladesh.

Principals in schools and colleges in Bangladesh face lots of challenges. These challenges are dimensional. Some challenges they face are internal. And, some are external. The internal challenges come from the students, parents, teachers, budget, teachers' recruitment, curriculum, teaching technique, administration, etc. The external challenges principals face are mostly from the Governing Body and then from the concerned ministry and their field offices as a policy matter. The external challenges beget internal challenges. The nature of external challenges is such in Bangladeshi context that slender principal leadership.

Understanding principal leadership is a major leap forward of education in a country. In schools and colleges in Bangladesh, principals oscillate between leadership and management. As the head of the institution, they feel their position within the parameters of a leader. On the other hand, the attitudes and practices of the educational administration in Bangladesh make principals feel their position within the parameters of a manager. Even the Governing Body (GB) as a local and immediate superior authority fetters principals in a way that they feel they are put to shackles. And because of these, only 15% principals were found to be practicing transformational leadership. Whereas, a large number of prin-

cipals (46%) were adopted to transactional leadership. And to the worse, 39% principals were found to have non-leadership. In Bangladeshi context, this has happened over the years because of the focus given to management and bureaucracy in the form of top-down authoritarian administration has developed in a way that did not allow principals to practice leadership.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership. Today's school is seen as a learning environment and as well as a family unit. Schools not only teach children, but they also raise them. The modern concept regards schools and colleges as a social center where principals play the role of leaders who shape the vision and learning processes of the schools. As leaders of social centers, principals absorb the very psyche of the society and translate the needs and aspirations of the society into creating a positive learning culture. It is the transformational principals who shape the vision and the learning processes of the school.

The study has got some limitations. First of all, the schools and colleges selected were the high performing while the low performing schools and colleges were not included in the study which limit the current study to some extent. Though it did not affect the findings of the current study as a representative one. A serious setback in terms of its availability was found on principal leadership in Bangladesh while reviewing the existing literature which created a barrier for understanding the nature and movement of principal leadership. Moreover, the prime respondents were the teachers who were requested to opine against their principals. Though they were assured confidentiality still they provided biased judgement in favor of their principals.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Principals are the appropriate and competent body to bring quality changes in education in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. Even the Governing Body should see the school through the eyes of the principal. They should know that their job is of a facilitator. To establish principal leadership and get the maximum benefit out of it in Bangladeshi context, the whole educational administration has to be changed from top-down to bottom-up. Whoever is sitting on top of the principal should know that he is a facilitator. The real change maker is the principal. And, the prospects of principal leadership lie into that realization.

It should be the attitude that principals are more leaders than administrators. To ensure quality education in schools and colleges in Bangladesh, principal leadership should be acknowledged. To do so, the top-down educational administration should be changed into bottom-up. At the policy level, school should be made a center of education in which principals should enjoy freedom so that they can practice their leadership. Governing Body should act as a facilitator to the principal. It should not dictate and confine the principal to any administrative limit. Principals should be given enough space to practice their leadership. The Governing Body and other administrative authorities should not engage the principals in bureaucracy.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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