

## ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN PROMOTION OF SCHOOL HOME RELATIONSHIP: CASE OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

Principal is the bridge between community and school. However, principal' role in parental participation in education is negligible in Pakistan. This has affected the quality of education in the country. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of principal in parental participation in education at secondary level in district Chitral, Pakistan. This study investigated the perceptions of 100 government secondary school principals. Questionnaire was used to collect data. The collected data was interpreted and presented in simple percentage and diagrams. Results of the study showed that in Pakistan school principals do not play an active role in promoting parental participation. According to principals parental participation means sending their children to schools only. Hence, parents are not encouraged to participate in the education process of their children. School principals at secondary level do not know the ways and means of involving parents in the education process. They lack motivating and management skills to engage parents in education process. The study further discovered that principals consider parental involvement in education as interference in school affairs. Ironically, the principals accept that parental participation is essential for education. However, the study explored that principals consider parents ill-equipped in terms of knowledge and skills to understand the process of education. According to the principals parental involvement in education will create more management issues for schools rather than solutions. On the basis of this study it recommended that principals should be provided comprehensive training on the concept of parental participation in education. For this purpose strong parent teacher associations should be formed and actively monitored. Schools teachers could be trained in keeping close relationship with parents whose children are in the school. Parents could be invited to schools through conferences, meetings and other national and international events. This will strengthen the relationship between school and home and improve the quality of education as well.

**Key Words:** Parental participation, role of principal, secondary school, quality of education.

### INTRODUCTION

Parental participation in education has positive effects upon quality of education. It also leads to students' better academic achievements and overall success of school. Parental involvement in education not only improves the academic performance of students but also motivates schools to show better results which increases trust and confidence of parents in schools. School principal is a leader of a school. The role of principal is foremost in the development of positive school home relationship (Van Velsor and Orozco, 2006). In Pakistan the overall process of parental participation in education is negligible. There are many factors responsible for this issue. Amongst which poor role of school principal is an important factor. Principals can

play a crucial in the promotion of school parent relationship. The role of school principal is that of a bridge that connects school and home. This is crucial both for students' development and success of schools (Payne, 2006). Since the inception of Pakistan the process of education has been neglected. In government schooling, due to bureaucratic culture the parental involvement in the education process could be promoted. Parents think that their role is confined to sending children to schools. The rest of the responsibility was put on the shoulders of teachers and school. This tradition badly affected the relationship between school and home. Resultantly, school principals considered parental role in education as a useless activity. Parents were sidelined by considering them illiterate and uneducated. It was believed by the principals and teachers that parent's role was only to send their children to schools. Thus an important aspect of education was overlooked which resulted in mistrust, misunderstanding and narrow perceptions between parents and schools. This practice has also affected the role of school principals. Principals do not know the ways and means to involve parents in the process of education.

There has been consistent dearth of training of principals in parental engagement in schools. As a consequence, principals think that their role is only to manage the process of teaching and learning in schools. They have nothing to do regarding involvement of parents in schooling of their children.

#### **Statement of problem**

Education is an activity in collaboration. It is not an activity in isolation. Parental participation has a positive impact upon quality of education. There is a close relationship between parents, teachers and students (Sirvani, 2007). Literature says that parental involvement in education has positive impact on academic achievements of students on one hand and overall success of schools on another (Cohen, 1988). In Pakistan the process of parental participation generally and role of school principal in improving and strengthening participation involvement particularly has been very poor. School principal has not been able to play his/her role effectively in engaging parents in the process of education. Therefore, this study explores the perceptions of school principals about their roles in promotion of parental participation in education.

#### **Objectives of the study**

Following are main objectives of this research study.

1. To explore government secondary school principals' perception of parental participation in education.
2. To identify government secondary principals' perception of their roles in parental participation in education.
3. To analyze issues faced by government school principals to engage parents in the process of education.
4. To present recommendations on the basis of this study for improvement of the role of government secondary school principals for promotion of parental participation in education.

#### **Delimitation of the study**

Due to lack of resources and time this study is delimited to the role of school principals in government secondary schools in Chitral, a remote district in the extreme north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

#### **Significance of the study**

This study is important for the following reasons.

1. The study will clarify the concept of secondary school principals' parental participation in education.
2. The study will explore some of the issues which create barriers to the role of school principals in improving parental participation in education.
3. The study will improve the knowledge of school principals about the importance of parental participation in education.
4. The study will provide good knowledge to policy makers, planners and experts in the field of education to make policies and plans in the light of the needs and developments of the society and state.

5. The study will explore deeper literature regarding the important role of school principals in parental participation in education.
6. The study will contribute to the pool of research knowledge in the field of education.
7. The study will inform parents and teachers the role of school principals in the promotion parental participation in education.

#### Research questions

This study was directed by the following questions.

1. What are the government secondary school principals' perceptions of parental participation in education?
2. What are the government school principals' perceptions of their roles in parental participation in education?
3. What are the different issues faced by government secondary school principals to engage parents in the process of education?
4. What recommendations could be presented on the basis of this study for improvement of the role of government secondary school principals in the promotion of parental participation in education?

#### Review of Literature

Parental participation in education has close relationship with success of schools and development of students. Successful schools have close ties with parents and communities. Education is a three tier process where parents, teachers and students work together. Parents are strong stakeholders in the process of education. Role of school principal is that of a bridge and connector. Effective schools have principals who keep close ties with parents (Epstein and Jansorn, 2004). Principals can play an effective role in the promotion of school family ties. Principals and parents need to know that parental involvement is essential for social, emotional and intellectual development of children (Anderson and Minke, 2007). When parents value education and show it through encouraging their children and support the school, children also realize the importance of schooling and learning. In this way a strong sense of ownership develops among parents, students and the community which is essential for a successful educational process. Some people think that parental participation in education is that parents should give time to school through participation in meetings, events and some of the activities. In reality this is not parental participation. It is more than that. It is at all levels (MacNeil and Patin, 2007). Principals can promote parental involvement in schools in various ways such as allowing parents to volunteers. Children like their parents to be in the school which increases their confidence and self-esteem. The range of participation is very broad. It is not confined to only participation in meetings or seminars. Rather, it starts from school conference and events to meetings, committees, tutoring of children and helping children at home with home work assignments (Christie, 2005). Parents can help their children in the completion of the school assignments. For this purpose they provide supportive home environment and ensure that children observe regularity in school attendance. School principals can provide clear instructions to parents about how to help the children at home with their school assignments or home work (Dessoff, 2009). Principals may look closely at the relationship between teachers, parents and students. In this regard principals may keep high expectations for the parents and principals so that students grow under the guidance and support of parents and teachers alike. This will help in instilling feelings of collaboration between parents and teachers (Wherry, 2005).

Principals may create and share the goals of education with parents. This will help develop sense of ownership of the teaching and learning among the parents. They in turn will provide supportive environment for their children at home (Goldring and Sims, 2005). This will also develop a relationship of trust among parents, administrators and teachers. Establishment of goals, keeping expectations and determination of common values promote bonds among these stakeholders (Machen, Wilson and Notar, 2005). There are different barriers to parental participation in education. Many parents simply cannot participate in the education process due to job, remoteness from school, transportation, ignorance, indifferent attitude of school staff, lack of awareness, illiteracy and so on (Gordon and Seashore-louis, 2009). Principals can provide solutions by

encouraging parents, providing them social facilities such as accommodation in school premises, advising teachers to keep constant contacts with parents, inviting them on special events, days, meetings and conferences. This will increase their confidence and self-esteem. Studies show that many parents do not attend school activities simply because they are not liked by the school staff. This barrier could be effectively removed by the school administration which will ultimately lead towards development of understanding and mutual respect and trust between school and home (Pattnaik and Sriam, 2010). Principal may improve the process of parental participation in education through by improving the teacher parent relationship. Teachers are considered the primary connections between home and school. Their relationship is vital for the success of students in the process of education. For this purpose principals may provide relevant training to their teachers so that they could communicate with parents effectively on issues of children in the process of education (Million, 2003).

Establishing close relationship with parents at the start of the year may pave the way for development understanding on all issues in a better way. Principals may play a proactive role in this regard. It will provide strong foundation for future relationship between parent and school (Wong and Hughes, 2006). Providing a nonthreatening environment to parents in school will make the parents feel that they are an integral part of the education process as well. The parents will provide their services voluntarily without any condition. This will help in the promotion of relation of trust between home and school (Barth, 1990). Principals may identify some of the parents who are more active, aware, and enthusiastic and committed about education. Such parents can easily provide their services as volunteers. In this way parents can be recruited and their services can be acknowledged to encourage them. For this purpose principals may take parents as members of school committees and boards (Stelmach and Preston, 2008). This will provide parents wider opportunities to work for the development of school and their children. Principals must remain in close communication and contact with these parents and coordinate their services in the school and their contributions must be acknowledged. This step of the school administration will stabilize the school home relationship on sustainable grounds (Hasley, 2003). Principals may create a climate of trust and collaboration between school and home through effective planning throughout the year and its implementation by involving parents. In this regard parents need to be ensured that their participation is critical for the success of school and their children education (Gorvine, 2010). Each school has different culture, work environment and goals which must be shared with parents so that parents are aware of the needs, ways and procedures of the activities to be performed in school (Howard, 2007). Principals must share with parents the values, norms and climate of the school. In this way parents will be aware of the school goals and will play their role clearly and strongly. This will also remove some of the misperceptions and misconceptions that may arise during the process of participation (Matsuzney, Banda and Coleman, 2007).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This is a descriptive study which explores the perceptions of government secondary schools principals about their roles in the promotion of parental participation in education. The population of the study consists of all the government male and female secondary schools in district Chitral. Due to constraints of time and finance the study was delimited to only 100 government secondary schools in district Chitral in the extreme north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Due to cultural reasons female schools could not be sampled.

### **Instrumentation**

The nature of the study is descriptive. Therefore, for data collection a close ended questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was designed on Five Point Likert Scale. This provides respondents with wider options to give their responses. For this purpose the questionnaire provides the following degrees such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SDA).

### Sampling

The subjects of this study were selected randomly sampled. For this purpose 100 government secondary school principals were selected from 100 schools in six Tehsils of district Chitral.

### Pilot study

Before distributing the questionnaire among the sample, the study was piloted in three government secondary schools in the main town of district Chitral. On the basis of the results of the pilot study, the questionnaire was further refined and its items were revised for assurance of reliability and content validity. Besides, the questionnaire was also shown to three experts in the field of educational research. Finally, the questionnaires were revised and distributed among the entire sample. After a week the researchers collected the sample and the rate of return was 100 % as all the questionnaires were returned by the respondents.

### Analysis of data

For the purpose of data analysis, the collected data is tabulated and presented in simple percentage below. For more clarification, the results are also shown on diagrams. This helps in deeper explanation of the data.

### Areas of investigation

For the purpose of deeper analysis the present study investigated into the following five key areas (aspects) only regarding the role of the school principals in promotion of parental participation in education in government secondary schools. Since the concept of parental participation is very broad, therefore, these five areas or aspects were identified as a result of extensive and critical analysis of literature for the present study only.

1. Concept of parental participation in education
2. Level of parental participation in education
3. Types of parental participation in education
4. Benefits of parental participation in education
5. Challenges for parental participation in education

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in the below tables. Each table provides different statements (items) concerning the various aspects of the role of principals in promotion of parental participation in education.

Table 1: Concept of parental participation in education

S.#	Parental participation in education means that:	SA 100%	A 100%	U 100%	DA 100%	SDA 100%
1	parents are customers in the process of education	60%	30%	00%	10%	00%
2	parents are stakeholders in the process of education	25%	15%	02%	48%	10%
3	parents need to only send their children to schools	55%	15%	05%	15%	10%

Table 1 indicates that out the total respondents, 60% strongly agree that parents are only customers in the process of education. Similarly, 48% disagree that parents are stakeholders in the process of education. Whereas, 55% of the respondents strongly agree that parents need to only send their children to schools.

Table 2: Level of parental participation in education

S.#	School principals must indemnify that:	SA 100%	A 100%	U 100%	DA 100%	SDA 100%
1	parents are engaged at primary level of education	45%	25%	00%	14%	16%
2	parents are engaged at secondary level of education	40%	42%	08%	07%	03%
3	parents are engaged at all levels of education	10%	10%	40%	20%	20%

Table 2 indicates that 45% of the respondents strongly agree that parents are engaged at primary of education level only. At the same time, 40% strongly agree that parents are engaged at secondary level of education only. Whereas, interestingly, majority of the respondents that is 40% do not know that parents are engaged at all levels in the process of education.

Table 3: Types of parental participation in education

S.#	School principal must ensure that:	SA 100%	A 100%	U 100%	DA 100%	SDA 100%
1	parents attend only school meetings	53%	20%	07%	15%	05%
2	parents attend only school conferences	40%	10%	10%	17%	23%
3	parents attend all activities in schools actively	33%	12%	37%	10%	08%

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents that is 53% strongly agree that parents should attend only school meetings actively. Whereas, 40% strongly agree that parents should attend only school conferences. Ironically, 37% of the respondents do not know that parents attend all activities in schools actively.

Table 4: Benefits of parental participation in education

S.#	Parental involvement in education:	SA 100%	A 100%	U 100%	DA 100%	SDA 100%
1	enhances students' academic achievements	20%	15%	40%	15%	10%
2	needs encouragement of parents to participate	10%	20%	09%	40%	21%
3	need principals to use various ways to engage parents	23%	20%	00%	45%	12%

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents, that is, 40% do not know that parental involvement in education enhances students' academic achievements. Ironically, 40% disagree that parental involvement needs encouragement from principals to participate in the process of education. Similarly, 45% disagree that parental involvement in education need school principals to use various ways of parental engagement.

Table 5: Challenges for parental participation in education

S.#	Parental engagement in education:	SA 100%	A 100%	U 100%	DA 100%	SDA 100%
1	is an unnecessary interference in school affairs	50%	30%	05%	09%	06%
2	is essential but it creates more problems for schools	35%	30%	10%	15%	10%
3	is difficult as parents are ill-equipped to participate	60%	30%	00%	07%	03%

Table 5 indicates that a great majority of the respondents that is, 50% strongly agree that parental engagement is an unnecessary interference in school affairs. At the same time, 35% strongly agree that parental participation in education is essential but it creates more problems for schools. Similarly, 60% strongly agree that parental participation in education is difficult as parents are ill-equipped to participate in the process of education.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that principals have a very narrow understanding of the concept of parental involvement in education. They do not consider parents as stakeholders in the process of education. Rather, according to majority of the principals parents should only send their children to schools. In their view this is parental participation in education. On the other hand literature does not support this view. Research says that parents are strong stakeholders in the process of education. For example, Epstein and Jansorn (2004) argue education is a three tier process in which parents, schools and students are equally important. Parents are strong stakeholders in the process of education.

The study further explores that principals are not fully aware of the process of parental participation in education. According to majority of them parents should participate only at primary or secondary levels. The principals do not know that parents should participate at all levels of education, that is, primary, secondary and even at higher level. In view of MacNeil and Patin (2007) parental participation in education is that parents should give time to school through participation in meetings, events and some of the activities. In reality this is not parental participation. It is more than that. It is at all levels.

The study also discovered that the school principals have weak understanding of the types of parental participation in education. They do not know that how parents should take part in the process of education. Majority of them think that parents should only attend school meetings and conferences. This would be enough. A large majority remains ignorant that parents should participate in all activities of the school. According to Christie (2005) the range of participation is very broad. It is not confined to only participation in meetings or seminars. Rather, it starts from school conference and events to meetings, committees, tutoring of children and helping children at home with home work assignments.

The study shows that the school principals do not know that parental participation enhances students' academic achievements. At the same time majority of them also opine that there is no need to encourage parents to participate in the process of education. They also think that there is no need for school principals to use various ways and means to engage parents in the process of education. All this shows that the school principals have a very narrow concept of parental involvement in education and its benefits. Literature says that it has unlimited benefits both for school, parents, teachers, principals and students. Parental involvement in education not only improves the academic performance of students but also motivates schools to show better results which increases trust and confidence of parents in schools. School principal is a leader of a school. The role of principal is foremost in the development of positive school home relationship (Van Velsor and Orozco, 2006). The study shows that principals consider involvement in education as an unnecessary interference in school affairs. According to majority of them, parental involvement creates more problems rather than solutions for schools. According to them parents are ill-equipped in terms of knowledge and skills to participate in education effectively. Research negates this theory. For example, Dessoff (2009) concludes that parents can help their children in the completion of the school assignments. For this purpose they can provide supportive home environment and ensure that children observe regularity in school attendance. School principals can provide clear instructions to parents about how to help the children at home with their school assignments or home work.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this research descriptive study the following conclusions are drawn. The study concluded that in Pakistan school principals do not play an active role in promoting parental participation.



The study also found that according to the school principals, parental participation means sending their children to schools only. Hence, parents are not encouraged to participate in the education process of their children.

The study further concluded that school principals at secondary level do not know the ways and means of involving parents in the education process. They lack motivating and management skills to engage parents in education process.

The study also discovered that principals consider parental involvement in education as interference in school affairs.

Ironically, the study found that the school principals accept that parental participation is essential for education. However, they consider parents ill-equipped in terms of knowledge and skills to understand the process of education.

The study also explored that according to the school principals parental involvement in education will create more management issues for schools rather than solutions.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this research study the following recommendations are presented.

1. The school principals should be provided comprehensive training on the concept of parental participation in education.
2. Strong parent teacher associations should be formed and actively monitored at different secondary school levels.
3. Principals may ensure that schools teachers could be trained to keeping close relationship with parents whose children are in the school.
4. Parents could be invited to schools through conferences, meetings and other national and international events. This will strengthen the relationship between school and home and improve the quality of education as well.
5. Parents could be encouraged to participate in school activities at different levels, such as meetings, seminars, events, conferences, committees and so on. This will enhance their confidence and build up feelings of trust and care. As a result parents will own the school which is the first step toward quality in education.
6. Principals may ensure that teachers keep close relationship with parents. This will pave the way for development of feeling of togetherness between home and school.
7. Principals may invite some of the active parents individually to volunteer their services for school. These parents could be used as change agents in the community to get support of other members of the community.
8. Principals may improve the image of the school in the wider community by acknowledging the service provided by parents in different levels of school life. This will set precedents for other parents and wider community that the school belongs to them.
9. Modern concept of schooling is that it school is a community in miniature. The principal may share with parents the aims and goals of the school. This will deeply strengthen the bonds of coordination and cooperation between school and parents.



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