

What Makes Principals More Effective in Pakistan, Training or Organizational Culture?

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Whether schools are located in public or private sectors, offering job-related training is not a common phenomenon in the educational landscape of Pakistan; still, a very small number of head teachers are exposed to such kinds of interventions. This study was about four secondary school principals (two public and two private) who received multiple training opportunities related to their positions. The study particularly examined whether the training helped the four principals, located in two different educational systems, to transform the organizational cultures in terms of teaching and learning, or if the organizational cultures shaped their practices. While using comparative case study methods, the study exclusively documented the supervisory roles of four principals in terms of their engagement in visiting classes, observing teaching methodologies, and providing feedback. The study noted wide variations between the practices of the four principals.

Introduction

Organizational culture is considered as a strong determinant of the school improvement processes (Lindahl, 2006) because it shapes the perspectives of principals and teachers and influences their beliefs, assumptions, decisions, and actions (Kaplan, 2013). Since multiple educational systems, including public, private, and religious systems, cater to the educational needs of 40 million school-going children in Pakistan, different organizational cultures shape the practices of principals and teachers with a varying degree of effects on students' learning. However, research explicitly reported that compared to the public school children, the private school children are doing well in their test scores in Pakistan (Das, Pandey, & Zajonc, 2006). Multiple factors, such as inadequate teachers' preparation program, outdated curriculum, ineffective accountability

mechanism, etc. are attributed to the low performance of public schools in Pakistan. However, both the principals' preparation program and their contribution towards the improvement of teaching and learning have secured limited attention while examining the overall quality of education in Pakistan (Khan, 2010). One of the implications of this situation is that there is no such mechanism that could link the appointment of principals to a training program or a formal academic qualification. In this regard, Khan (2004) stated the following: "There are some training programs, which provide in-service training to head teachers [of public schools], but this happens rarely and benefits only a very limited number [of educators]." (p.100). There have been no studies conducted that investigate how these programs help the principals to play a proactive role in the instructional development of their schools or how the

organizational culture holds them accountable after attending a particular intervention.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the supervisory roles of four trained principals selected from two public and two private schools. Therefore, the key question guiding this study was: What are the multiple institutional factors that influence the performance (in terms of teaching and learning) of school principals in Pakistan?. Therefore, the study exclusively examined how the training, as well as their organizational cultures, helped them to improve their practices related to teaching and learning; the study exclusively focused on their supervisory roles, such as observing teaching practices, providing feedback, and visiting classes.

Methodology

It has been suggested that, for analyzing data, getting in-depth data from two or more cases will be more powerful than a single case (Yin, 2009); therefore, the study used comparative case study methods for generating data. According to Goodrick (2014), comparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal (p. 1). He further added that comparative case studies are particularly useful for understanding and explaining how context influences the success of an intervention. Because the study examined the supervisory roles of school principals, through a purposive sampling strategy a total of four trained school principals - two from public schools and two from the private sector - were selected.

Purposive sampling considered a useful strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in

order to provide important information that cannot be gotten as well from other sources (Maxwell, 1996. p.70). Since the samples received multiple training opportunities, purposive sampling strategy considered suitable for this study. Additionally, a total of eight teachers - two from each school - were also selected as a sample of the study. Besides observation and document reviews, interviews were also a tool for data collection because it allowed the researchers to seek the opinions of samples about the multiple factors that either facilitate or hinder the performance of different stakeholders in terms of their supervisory roles. Research suggests that “The ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilizing their value and belief frameworks, is virtually impossible

without face-to-face and verbal interaction with them” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p.155). Two different interview protocols each for principals and teachers prepared in which the focus was on such activities as the principals’ involvement in visiting classes, providing feedback, and observing teaching methodologies. The duration of each interview, which was transcribed and recorded, varied from 35 to 45 minutes. Themes were developed for the analysis of data.

Literature Review

Leadership is regarded as the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions such as schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Markley, 1996). Moreover, both in the context of developed and less-developed countries, it has been recognized that job-related training for principals is one of the essential elements of quality instruction (Bush, 2008; Grauwe, 2004; Herriot et al., 2002; Bajnud, 2000). However, aligning quality education with trained principals has

not been given enough attention in Pakistan, whether or not the schools are public or private. In most of the cases, length of service or academic qualification (not relevant to leadership) makes an individual eligible for the position of a principal. As a result, the head teachers seem to be less proactive and more interested in maintaining the status quo (Memon, Ali, Simkins & Garrett, 2000). Concepts such as instructional leaders and pedagogical leaders are commonly used in the western context when redefining the role of school principals because of the instruction-oriented nature of the two concepts. "Instructional leader makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and attempts to bring that vision to realization" (Jenkins, 2009 a,b, p. 35). There is consensus among the researchers that instructional leaders make the students' learning their primary goal by specifically focusing on such activities as supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, developing academic standards, monitoring students' learning, monitoring lessons, maintaining better human relations and securing community support, and visiting classes (Lashway, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Bossert et al., 1982). However, a critical review of practices of Pakistani school principals suggests that such activities are either limited or missing. Instead, the following observations have been noted about the Pakistani school principals: "With no clear definition of who they are and what they are supposed to do, schools heads are adrift in the educational system ...they were not trained to be leaders, did not see themselves as leaders, and did not act like leaders" (Warwick & Reimers, 1995. p. 101).

Researchers also attributed the limited role of Pakistani principals, particularly government principals, to the centralized system of education that makes

the school principal less proactive regarding their jobs. For instance, they have no role in the hiring and firing of teachers (Khan, 2004). One of the implications of the said situation is that school principals are more concerned about rules and regulations instead of introducing innovation and change in their schools (Simkin et al. 1998). School principals work in isolation without the help and support of their district-level officials. It is expected from the district-level educational officials that they would maintain a working relationship with the principals working under their jurisdiction. However, studies reported a questionable efficiency of these district-level educational officials (Komatsu, 2008). It has been reported that "Over 80% of the Education Department's officers and administrative staff have no formal training in educational administration or in education. Crucial areas, such as supervision of instruction, program development and teachers' welfare, often receive only the partial or superficial attention of the top principals. This situation seriously limits the provision of effective education (Nwankwo, 1983, pp. 2-3).

It has been reported that compared to government school principals, the private principals are more instrumental in maintaining a good quality of education in their schools (Andrabi, Das, & Khawaja, 2008; Khan, 2005). One of the reasons for private principals' good performance is that they enjoy much more freedom as compared to their government counterparts, which makes them able to play an effective role (Memon, Ali, Simkin, & Garret, 2000). This freedom lets them be more vigorously involved in supervisory and instructional processes. While comparing the public and private school principals, Khan (2012) noted that a lack of motivation made the government schools principals less effective, despite the fact they had better salaries and

protracted teaching experience. He further commented that gaps in the selection processes make the government principals less effective: “The typical behaviour of the government school principal also reflects the recruitment and selection processes of Pakistani government schools, which is based on length of service rather than personal disposition and willingness of individuals. The government sector expects that its principals will succeed due to their extended teaching experience.”

Rizvi (2008) has suggested that training opportunities can better help administrators in Pakistan to understand the concept of improvement of teaching and learning processes. Unfortunately, a very small number of school principals are exposed to these kinds of professional development opportunities. Therefore, concerted efforts are required to introduce a mechanism in which these principals are developed in such a manner that they become mindful of their instructional role: “Some of the measures, such as the provisions of job description, school vision, and orientation about the appraisal system at the time of the appointment of the teachers, can play an instrumental role not only in maintaining a high quality of learning, but also in providing clarity to the principal and teachers about their responsibilities” (Khan, 2012).

Major Findings

Private Schools The Private Secondary School A (PSSA), which caters to the educational needs of some 600 male and female students, is part of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The NGO has a central role in developing policies and monitoring the overall instructional development of the school besides involving in hiring processes of teachers and head teachers. Additionally, a

Board of Management and Community Based Education System Committee plays an important role in school improvement programs. There are 30 teachers in PSSA with B.Ed. M.A. and M.Ed. degrees. Education is not free in private school. The principal of PSSA, who has a science background, has extensive experience in running private schools. During his service, he was provided with multiple capacity-building opportunities related to his position, such as obtaining an MA degree in Educational Leadership and Management, an Advance Diploma in Education Leadership and Management (ADELM) and a diploma in Educational Planning and Management (EPM).

Private Secondary School B (PSSB) is also affiliated with an NGO, in which a total of 500 female students were enrolled at the time of data collection. There was a total of 22 teachers with B.Ed. and MA/MSC degrees. Students have to pay tuition fees in order to attend the school. A School Management Committee oversees such activities as assessment processes, attendance policies, admission policies, etc. of PSSB. Before assuming the charge of principalship of PSSB, the principal was affiliated with a private organization as a teacher educator. The NGO also provided him with the opportunity to earn a degree in M.A Leadership and Management that helped him to grow personally and professionally, according to the principal of PSSB.

Supervision It was noticed that both the principals of PSSA and PSSB made the instructional development of their respective schools a top priority and they had a very good understanding about their supervisory role, which was evident from their involvement in activities related to the supervision. The principal of PSSA

acknowledged the contribution of the training opportunities she attended, “My instructional and managerial practices are largely guided by the training opportunities I attended, I see myself as a change agent ready to bring improvement in the overall academic milieu of my school”. She asserted that a principal should be instrumental in introducing the culture of learning communities by providing opportunities to their teachers and encouraging them to explore opportunities for their own learning. The principal of PSSB believed that a principal’ motivation is reflected from his/her passion and love for teaching and this passion motivates them to utilize their potential and energies to accomplish the overall instructional goals of their schools. Both of the private schools had a well-defined vision that was explicit regarding the holistic development of their students, by furnishing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. Both the principals acknowledged that the clarity of their vision not only help them to adopt strategies that focused on students’ learning but also motivated their teachers to include in their teaching practices the elements of innovation and creation.

From the review of various documents and personal observation, the researchers noted that both the principals played a variety of supervisory roles, such as acting as a regular and substitute teacher, visiting classes, monitoring/observing teaching practices, providing feedback, helping teachers with their lesson plans, seeking feedback from the students about their learning and teaching methodologies of their teachers, and arranging daily and weekly meetings with their teaching staff. The head teacher of PSSA believed that teaching regular classes provided him with a sense of the students’ learning and the teaching culture of his school. He asserted

that for leaders it is essential to maintain a close liaison with the teaching staff, “To me, leadership means to work with the students, teachers, parents, and communities... for the instructional development of my school, I always emphasize on working together with the people who are related to the school”. The principal of PSSB stated that to maintain a robust learning environment, he tries to become a role model by involving himself in teaching practices. The teachers of PSSB acknowledged that their principals’ involvement in teaching practices has largely contributed to their understanding about the best practices of modern day classrooms, and as one of the teachers stated about his principal, “He supports us in whatever ideas we have and he helps us with our teaching and learning... based on his feedback, we make written plans for improving the teaching practices; we figure out the resources needed and the head teacher tries his best to provide those resources”. Likewise, the teachers of PSSA called their principal a great motivator in terms of facilitating the teaching processes.

It was noted that both the principals endorsed the idea that in their system, observing classes or assessing teaching methodologies have multiple purposes. They mentioned that on one hand these activities help to improve the teaching practices, and on the other hand the activities determine the promotion and financial benefits of their teachers. The principal of PSSB mentioned that their class visits cover a variety of activities: “The observation includes classroom teaching, lesson plans, reflections of lessons and relation of the teacher with students... There is a tool of grading system to determine the teacher’s performance, for example, outstanding, excellent, good, and not satisfactory or needs improvement. The teachers get their increments and promotions on the basis of their good performance and

when their performance is not satisfactory they will be entertained accordingly”. The principal of the PSSA reported that he has developed a calendar for classroom observation. “We have scheduled observations as well as random observations. We conduct our scheduled observations in June, November, and in December. During the said observation, I just go to the classrooms and observe their teaching practices and check their lesson plans if a teacher needs assistance, I provide them with the necessary support whether it relates to their teaching methodologies or lesson plans”. Not only were the principals involved in observing classes and assessing teachers, but the NGO also had a role in overseeing classroom practices. And, on the basis of their observations, they suggest remedial measures in the shape of workshops and training for the teachers. Likewise, at the beginning of the academic year, the NGO’s staff sits with the principals and teachers to develop their annual calendar of activities.

Teachers of both of the private schools acknowledged the importance and contribution of class observations and assessment by their principals; one of the teachers of PSSB stated, “Assessment is essential for the success of any educational intervention...our principal uses both the formative and summative assessment to determine the learning of students and the teaching methodologies for the sake of bringing improvement”. The teachers of PSSA acknowledged that the “leading by example” attitude of their principal is a primary motivation that makes them passionate about their jobs. Some of the examples they shared to support the notion of leading by example were their principals’ involvement in teaching, arranging in-school Professional Development programs, and helping teachers with their lesson plans. The

principal would help his teachers to develop their lesson plans because developing lesson was an integral component of teaching practices at PSSA. The researchers noticed on multiple occasions that teachers would work with their head teachers to develop their lesson plans. It was also noticed that during their class visits, the principals would take notes about the teaching practices and check the content knowledge of a particular teacher. The principal of the PSSA pointed out that while observing classes he ensures that teachers make their lessons interesting by enriching the curriculum. The school has internet connectivity, and the researcher noticed on multiple occasions that teachers would download different material for making their lesson plans and enriching their curriculums.

Besides regular observations, every day the principal of PSSB would start his day with a visit to the classes, where he would briefly chat with the students and teachers. The intention was to convey the message that the teachers are being supported and cared for, according to the principal. The principal of PSSB had introduced various measures to monitor the overall teaching culture of his school. For instance, the teachers would properly maintain the academic record of their students which they would share with their parents and with the principal. Likewise, it was obligatory for the teachers, both in PSSA and PSSB, to develop their teaching portfolios that contained their teaching perceptions, personal interests, details of teacher-parent meetings, students’ test records, etc. Both the principals would regularly check the teachers’ portfolio and give suggestions for improvement. A weekly meeting was another opportunity where teachers would share with their principal their classroom successes and problems. The principal of PSSA reflected on the

importance of collectively meeting in these words: “We sit together once in a week where teachers share their views about the whole week and reflect on their activities and students’ performance...they come up with the solutions to solve their problems”

Major Findings

Government Schools The Government Secondary School A (GSSA) offers free education to 700 female students, from first through tenth grade. There are a total of 30 teachers with B.Ed, M.Ed. and MA degrees. Before assuming the charge of GSSA, the principal was affiliated with a teacher education college as an instructor. The government provided her with multiple training opportunities such as School Management, Educational Development and Improvement Program (EDIP), and Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP). Government Secondary School B (GSSB) caters to the educational needs of 450 female students; a total of 22 teachers with B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees are involved in teaching and learning processes. The principal of GSSB had extensive experience in both teaching and headship. Like her counterpart, she also attended many pieces of training related to headship, for instance, Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP), Educational Leadership and Management (ELM), and Advance Diploma in Educational Development and Management (ADELM). Both the schools were fully equipped with all the required human and physical resources, including playgrounds, computer labs, and scientific laboratories. A six-member School Management Committee also existed in both the government schools.

Supervision The principals of government schools acknowledged the contributions of training towards their

understanding of school improvement plans and students’ learning. In this regard, the principal of GSSA admitted that she had a very limited understanding of the concept of school management, but the training broadened her understanding of the management of her school. She further added that training makes an individual better understand the academic and technical aspect of schooling. There was an agreement between the two principals that trained principals are different from untrained principals in terms of their understanding of the effectiveness of teaching practices and the head teachers’ roles. This acknowledgement led them to involve in some measures which they thought could be instrumental in shaping the practices of their teaching staff. For instance, both the principals arranged in-school professional development sessions for their staff, with the collaboration of a local professional development centre, where the focus was on the development of effective lesson planning. The principal of GSSB constituted multiple teams, such as curricular and co-curricular activity teams and classroom management teams, to oversee the overall teaching culture of her school.

However, it seemed that there was a limited effect of the said activities on the learning environment of schools, which was observed by the researchers and endorsed by the teachers of two government schools. One of the major reasons for no discernible change was the principals’ limited involvement in the supervisory processes. For instance, although both the principals were instrumental in arranging the in-school PD sessions, they did not know if the teachers applied whatever they learned from these PD sessions in their classrooms. In this regard, the teachers of the two schools pointed out that the role of their principals

regarding these sessions is limited only to the arrangement of the sessions; what happens in these sessions is not the concern of their principal, according to a teacher of GSSA. Teachers of both the schools were candid in saying that there is no such mechanism that could force the teachers to reshape their practices according to the training they attended, as one of the teachers of GSSB stated, “We have received training about the lesson planning, but we only make lesson plans when we expect a visit from the organization who provided us with training otherwise, we go to the class without any lesson plan and we use the traditional way of teaching. Our lesson plans are never checked by our principal and we never get any feedback from the principal on a lesson...” However, the principal of the said school claimed that developing lesson plans was an integral component of teaching practices in her school, though this was not noticed during the observation period. Not on a single occasion did the two principals visit a class, observe teaching, or provide feedback on the teaching methodology of any teacher.

When the researchers drew the attention of the two principals to the researchers’ observations about the teacher’s concerns regarding their non-involvement in the supervisory process, the principals had various justifications for their lack of action. The principal of GSSB blamed the organizational culture of the government school system that prevented her from getting involved in the supervisory processes. She mentioned that “Although I am a strong believer of supervising the teaching practices, I have no motivation to involve in such kind of practices because the said activities have no or limited influence on the overall quality of education”. She further stated, “If the government wants to

improve the education system in their schools, then they should make the evaluation of teachers an integral component of teaching practices... unfortunately, we don’t have such a system in place... regardless of their [teachers] good or bad performance, they get financial and other benefits”.

However, it was noted that the principal of GSSB was more concerned about the presence of teachers in the morning assembly and their timely arrival because she believed that maintaining discipline is a prerequisite for ensuring a positive learning environment: “In government school system, teachers know that there are no checks and balances, they are not interested in doing their jobs. This is the reason I am more concerned about maintaining discipline”. Although the principal was successful in maintaining a disciplined organizational culture, which was evident from the presence of teachers in the assembly and their punctuality, it seems that this situation has limited effects on the overall academic environment of the school. The teachers of GSSB confirmed the point of view of their principal by saying that except ensuring the presence of teachers in morning assembly, their principal has a very limited or no role in teaching and learning practices, as one of the teachers of GSSB stated, “Our principal reaches school on time and attends assembly every morning and she expects us to be present during assembly..., if a teacher can’t be able to reach the school on time, she is asked for an explanation”. Teachers also mentioned that morning assembly is the only occasion where they interact with their principal; otherwise, she preferred to spend most of her time in her office.

The principal of GSSA presented the justification that her managerial responsibilities prevent her from engaging in supervisory processes and therefore, she deputed teachers for observing classes and providing feedback. Although the teachers endorsed their principal's claim regarding her preoccupation with administrative matters, they did not endorse the claim of their principal regarding assigning the job of supervision to other teachers. The teachers of GSSA asserted that their principal has more than 20 years of teaching experience, but her contribution towards the improvement of classroom practices was limited, as one of the teachers said, "Principal should always be there when we face any problem. Her support should be an important factor in the improvement of our performance. But, due to official work, she cannot fully support us in teaching-learning". A glimpse of the said situation was noticed during the observation of the principals' communication with her teaching and non-teaching staff, where she was not explicit in discussing the instructional matters of school; instead, administrative matters were the focus of their discussions, such as the school budget, timetables, etc. It was also noticed that the principal had the support of a second principal, who would help her with administrative matters, but she was not involved in teaching and learning processes. On one occasion, the principal of GSSA mentioned that since she is about to retire, she wants to spend the remaining days at her school peacefully. Similar opinions came from the teachers of GSSA, who said that their principal's prolonged experience and training has minimal contribution, as one of the teachers stated, "No doubt, our principal is well trained and hard-working, but I always think that her talent is not for others because she never shares her knowledge with other teachers. She has

attended many pieces of training, but we never get a chance to benefit from her expertise".

It was noticed that both the principals were confident that their schools are maintaining a certain standard of quality education and teachers were doing well in their classes. However, except for helping the teachers in developing timetables and arranging substitute teachers, the two principals had no role in terms of teaching and learning. The teachers of the two schools mentioned that their principals' only concern was the completion of syllabi, as one of the teachers of GSSA stated, "Our principal only needs to know whether or not the teachers have completed the syllabus of their respective subjects... those teachers who do not cover the syllabus in a timely manner need to explain why they failed to do so." The principal of GSSA admitted that she makes sense of students' academic achievements through the results of an annual examination. She was candid in saying that "I do not make any efforts to involve the parents in the school or the academic affairs of students... I only contact parents when students come with disciplinary issues". It was noticed that both the principals and teachers had either limited or no information about the vision and mission of their schools. When asked the principal of GSSA to elaborate the vision of their school, she said that vision is making the students good citizens.

Discussion

A school's organizational culture can be defined as a commonly held belief of teachers, students and principals that is directed to the creation of an effective learning environment (Stephen, 1994). It has been largely acknowledged that there is a

profound impact on the organizational culture of a school on the overall academic achievements of students, whether or not the schools are located in developed or developing countries. The provision of physical resources alone is not enough to nurture a culture that could contribute to the learning of students and that maintains a certain standard of education; instead, the passion for change that is coming from the people, including principals, teachers, and community members, is considered a necessary ingredient. Most importantly, a catalyst and reinforcing element in this regard is the principals of schools, who are considered a driving force in shaping the culture of organizations, as the study noted (North Leadership Academy, 2007).

Through a comparative case study method, the supervisory or instructional roles of four highly-trained school principals located in two government and two private schools were examined. All four principals acknowledged that the training acquainted them with the meaning of effective principals. However, there was noted to be wide variations between the practices of the four principals in terms of setting values and beliefs for the creation of an effective learning environment. It was noted that compared to government principals, their counterparts in private schools were more instruction oriented. There were several reasons that led to variations in the practices of principals of two different systems, including the mechanisms of accountability, community and parental roles, the contribution of out of the school entities (NGO), and the level of motivation of principals and teachers.

It seems that one of the most important factors that pushed the principals and teachers in private schools to create a meaningful learning environment through

the involvement of students, teachers, parents, and communities was the element of accountability; there were several layers of accountability measures that made them vigilant regarding their responsibilities. For example, salary increase, promotion, and other benefits were linked to their performances; it was mandatory for the principals to oversee the teaching practices. Not only the principals involved in the supervision but also a representative from the NGO would come to observe the classes and the teaching practices. The positive aspect of these activities was that, based on these practices, remedial measures were recommended in the shape training and refresher courses both for the teachers and principals. It was mandatory for the teachers and principals in the private sector to apply in their schools and classrooms whatever skills they have learned from a particular intervention.

However, such a level of accountability was missing from government schools, where both the teachers and their principals were complaining about each other and about the system that does not make them efficient. One can argue that being a female head teacher meant they might have limitations in acting proactively; however, evidence from developing countries suggests that sound educational backgrounds paved the way for female school principals to become effective leaders despite numerous challenges (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015). Additionally, not on a single occasion did the sample principals complain about their experience of gender biases. Therefore, further research in the context of Pakistan is needed to analyze how gender issues immunize the productivity of female principals. One of the principals of a government school admitted that since in the public sector there are no checks and balances, they are less motivated

to show efficacy. Likewise, the system did not make them accountable to apply whatever they have learned from various training opportunities, which was evident from missing numerous classroom activities. As noted, one of the government principals equated accountability to the presence of teachers in the assembly and their punctuality, which had nothing to do with the learning environment of schools. Although it has been acknowledged that effectiveness of the instructional program of schools depends upon the motivational level of principals (Peterson, 1987), accountability is a powerful tool that generates a required level of motivation (Stipek, 2013). The level of motivation and the efficiency that was noted in the case of private principals can be attributed to a robust accountability mechanism which kept them energized.

Another factor that made the private principals more active regarding their teaching and learning related responsibilities was the involvement of out of school actors and entities, such as parents, communities and the NGO. As mentioned earlier, the NGO officials who were experts in different components of education would help the principals and teachers to develop their school vision, hiring processes, and annual calendars. Likewise, communities and parents would help the school with their enrollments, generation of resources, and the identification of potential teachers who were willing to serve as volunteer teachers. Documents showed that private schools maintained proper records of information regarding school activities, which they would share with the community and parents. Likewise, teachers would develop portfolios of students and their achievements that would help the principals to make a sense of students' learning.

Unlike the private schools, the government school principals were not enjoying the support of parents and communities; they were reluctant to engage them in the schools' affairs. One of the government principals mentioned that she only engages parents when children have disciplinary issues, despite the fact School Management committees existed in government schools; their presence was symbolic. A sustained partnership between schools and communities has largely been acknowledged for students' academic success (Donoghue, 2014). However, the absence of such a partnership further made the teaching and learning processes questionable in government schools, where neither the principals were ready to involve the parents in affairs of schools, nor did the system make them accountable for such kinds of initiatives. Unlike the private schools where the presence of an NGO was significant, in the government schools there was no explicit involvement of a directorate of education in the instructional affairs of schools. It seems that these circumstances made the government schools less vigilant particularly about the teaching and learning processes. The government principals' role was only limited to taking care of administrative responsibilities, with the assumption that teaching was the sole responsibilities of teachers.

It seemed that both the principals and teachers in the government schools were working in isolation. Government teachers particularly had many concerns about the limited involvement of their principals in classroom practices. It is pertinent to mention here that, in addition to attending several training opportunities, these principals remained affiliated with teaching colleges as teacher educators. However, their contributions were minimal for the

provision of guidance to teachers and in monitoring the academic successes and learning of their students. As teachers mentioned, their principals' concern was only limited to the completion of syllabi within a given time period. Their disengagements from the class practices had many implications as teachers mentioned, for instance, the principal did not know whether or not teachers developed lesson plans since they were provided training to do so.

Future Directions

Although equally trained, the four principals, who came from two different systems, had varying influences on the overall academic environment of their respective schools. Based on the findings of this study, it could be assumed that training alone cannot serve the purpose; a system needs to be in place that will make every individual accountable. A measure of accountability, devoid of negative connotation and that could motivate people, should be developed. Research strongly suggests that school improvement occurs when multiple elements are in place, including strong school leadership, student-centred instruction, links to parents and the community (Kaplan, 2013) and accountability.

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