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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Professional Development of Secondary School Leadership: Experiences and Expectations</b>
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**Abstract:**

This study is an attempt to explore the formal and informal professional training experiences of principals. The study also explored the barriers faced by them in the pursuit of professional development programs/training. This qualitative research study was based on interpretive paradigm. The data was collected through in-depth interviews. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze data. The results revealed that the principals come across many negative and positive situations every day. Some of them were never given the opportunity for professional training. Others stated some professional and personal problems which generally create hurdles in the pursuit of professional development programs. They also emphasize the importance of teamwork. It was suggested that there should be a conduct of separate administrative trainings specifically designed for school principals/ heads and trainers/ resource persons should be highly qualified in the field of educational administration.

**Key words:** Secondary schools, Leadership, principal,

## **Introduction**

Education is the primary agent of transforming society into realities. Therefore, to provide quality education in school one must have good management, principals, teachers of high quality, and proper monitoring of the schools for necessary improvements to achieve quality parameters. Secondary education holds a fundamental position in the educational system of every country, for it is the terminal stage for most students and it also serves as a linkage stage between the elementary stage and higher education. Secondary Education is increasingly becoming an area of focus in developing countries, because Secondary Education acts as a bridge between primary and higher education.

Schools play important role in the development of individuals. The effective functioning of schools is also crucial to provide a conducive environment for learners.

## **Literature Review**

Principals play a central role in the overall development of schools and the teaching-learning process. Education is a process of bringing desirable changes in learners; education makes human beings a right thinker and a decision-maker. Education influences the individual and social development process as a whole. Education today shows its impact on each sector of society. The role of Secondary education is generally taken in two contexts. One is to establish a direct link with supplying manpower to the world of work, the other is to prepare inputs for higher education. If we want to be competitive in the future, we need to think about the quality of education that is being provided (Madu & Kuei, 1993). Good quality education means the involvement of many stakeholders with different perspectives on what quality is in education (Becket & Brookes, 2005; Scheerens, et al., 2011). However, since the overall responsibility for the effectiveness of a school is associated with the commitment and efficiency of the headteacher, its role in maintaining and raising the educational standard can therefore be affirmed.

School principals play multiple roles and have laborious tasks to perform. Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018) highlighted four key roles i.e. administrative role, academic role, problem solver, and community leader. Nasreen (2019) stated in her research that school principals' burdensome routines affect their mood. Consequently, changing moods and emotions affect their work environment. Their positivity brings positivity in the school environment. Their hostile attitudes become a reason for unhealthy, unfriendly, and non-cooperative school culture. A principal should be positive, enthusiastic, have his hand in the day-to-day activities of the school, and listen to what his constituents are saying. Therefore, school principals play a vital role in effective school functioning. According to Nasreen & Odhiambo (2018) the school principal position has become a multifaceted responsibility in a period of educational transformation and reform.

Many research studies confirmed the authenticity of the role of principals as instructional leaders in their schools but still, the gap exists in the theory and practice. It is recommended that the principals should have been provided a range of opportunities to practice instructional leadership during professional training courses by utilizing various means and resources. The advanced countries which had planned revolutionary change at school level and in the training of their school leader are exhibiting the best practices and ranked as number one in the world ranking (Liu & Liao, 2019). The main features of service training are; acquirement of skills (Postholm, 2019), cooperative action and an exceptional experience of the learning process itself (Raelin, 2000). Professional development is a form of mentoring which is aimed to develop attitudes and leadership style among emerging leaders (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019).

Day and Leithwood, (2007) had enlisted some important steps of professional development such as; identification of deficiency, establishing the readiness, individualistic instruction, the opportunity of equal participation and decision making and must be based on

mutual respect and be compatible with the learning styles and the outcomes of training should be improved confidence, self-awareness, and motivated attitude. In nutshell professional development program of the principals is a means to achieve the necessary wisdom to perform efficiently in the schools. The forms of training are; direct instruction, demonstration, conferences, single-session activities, short courses, formal meetings or seminars, etc.

### **Research Objectives**

The key objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the changing nature of the experiences of school principals.
2. Examine their views about their professional development activities.
3. Discover the hurdles or barriers they are facing in the pursuit of professional development programs/training
4. Obtain their suggestions for prospective teachers in the light of their experiences and expectations.

### **Research Questions:**

The in-depth interviews were conducted to gather information about their work lives and experience. Four initial prompts or questions were asked to each principal interviewed.

1. What is the nature of the experiences of school principals? How their experience and expectations as a principal has changed over the past few years?
2. What are their views about their professional development activities?
3. What are the hurdles or barriers they are facing in the pursuit of professional development programs/training?
4. What kind of experiences and expectations they suggest for prospective principals?

## Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research study based on a naturalistic perspective and interpretive understanding of human experience (Burns, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Silverman, 2005). The research came under the interpretivism paradigm because qualitative research is grounded in interpretivism (Greene, 2007). This research allowed the participants to express their experiences and related problems. It developed textual data which is why this research was appropriated to the qualitative research. The sample was selected through the purposive sampling technique from the principals participating in the training arranged by Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) Punjab. Only secondary school principals were selected for the sample. Nine school principals from nine different districts of the province of Punjab were the sample of the study. There were more than one participant principals from each district but for the purpose of this study only one principal from one district who volunteers to give interview was selected as a sample of the study. Their profiles are given below:

Table 1:

### *Teacher's profile*

Teacher's code	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification	Teaching Experience	Years of service in present school
P1	Male	42	Bachelor of Education	10 years	8 years
P2	Female	52	Bachelor of Arts	8 years	13 years
P3	Female	27	Bachelor of Science	2 years	7 years
P4	Male	45	Bachelor of Education	12 years	7 years
P5	Female	39	Bachelor of Physics	9 years	5 years
P6	Female	49	Master of Islamic Education	4 years	1 year
P7	Female	48	Masters of Economics	11 years	6 years
P8	Female	41	Master of Urdu	3 years	3 years
P9	Male	34	Master of Pol. Science	7 years	4 years

Given the numbers involved and the fact that they were based in nine different districts, the interview protocol was considered the most suitable tool to collect in-depth information about the phenomena of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2011) in-depth interviews ask questions that the respondents may answer as they like. The interviews were audio-recorded. During the listening time, memos were made about what was heard from the data, and cautious ideas were generated. Notes were also taken all through the interview process to have a better understanding of the concept. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze data. The researchers first read and re-read the transcription of interview data. Patterns across the data were identified and coded. These codes were then assembled into themes. Finally, the finding was reported under these themes.

Trustworthiness was obtained through a process of testing the data analysis findings and conclusions and obtaining how credible the data is (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). To ensure credibility, participants were asked to read their transcripts to verify the information was transcribed accurately. Further, the interviews were coded and analyzed and themes were developed to finalize the research findings.

### **Findings of the Study**

A rich body of research attests that school leaders influence the conditions needed to create a positive learning culture (Day and Leithwood, 2007; Day et al., 2010). To bring change in a school learning environment, continuous learning of school principal is also crucial. This study is also an attempt to explore the experiences of principals. Following are theme wise findings of this research study:

1. nature of experiences and expectations of school principals
  - 1.1 Negative experiences
  - 1.2 Positive experiences
2. Engagement of school staff in the professional development programs.

- 2.1 Formal and Informal activities arranged by school principals
- 2.2 Formal in-school Professional activities arranged by Government
- 3. hurdles or barriers faced by them in the pursuit of professional development programs/training.
- 4. expectations and suggestions for prospective principals.

### **1. Nature of experiences and expectations of school principals.**

Two types of experiences were described by the school principals:

- 1.1 Negative experiences
- 1.2 Positive experiences

The principals were of the opinion that they come across many negative and positive situations. A single day in school is full of new learning. The following responses are representative of these two categories of response:

Being principal is just like a driver. I cannot say that I know each and everything because on each turning there is a new learning. The driver can't say that he has command on brakes because at any moment any animal-like dog or cat can come on the road that needs an urgent pressing the lever of brake. I think a school principal is also like a driver. She/he should be extremely careful in managing the people working under his/her command. I believe in collaboration while managing my school affairs. (P2)

Many school principals confirm that their basic qualification help them but experience, in-depth knowledge about rules and regulations, application of these rules on routine school issues made them more comfortable to handle teachers, staff, and students with more expertise and with more confidence. A principal described the day in this way:

I start my day by checking the attendance of school teachers and other staff ...and after that, checking students' attendance registers is a time taking job. I check that peons, sweepers and gardeners are doing their duties or not. Lesson planning by the teachers is also checked...



...Urgent official correspondence through different ways also takes time. Some matters need urgent response and I try to solve as urgently as possible. Sending emails and responding to postal letters (official and other correspondence). I guide and advise clerical staff to do different things and assign them duties on various issues. There are many problems related to students, staff, parents, community, and school. Dealing with different types of parents is another hectic job. All these things last till the school closes down. (P1)

Almost all the principals described their learning through trial and error. They learned generally with different negative and positive experiences. Some illustrations are given below:

At the time of my joining I was not so experienced but now I have experience of many years. You should ask my subordinates about the change. From my school days, I was involved in co-curricular activities and those experiences were further polished by my father and teachers. (P2)

From the past few years, I attained maturity and learned more about the rules and regulations. With the passage of time I am in much better relationship with the office and know each other very well now. Everybody carries a reputation and I also carry a reputation people know that I am hardworking so they also give me respect and that is what I have earned through my career. (P6)

They further highlighted the importance of new techniques of communication:

Now our mode of communication has been very fast. In earlier days we wrote letters and it took a long time to convey to other people. But now new techniques have been introduced like Facebook, WhatsApp, email, etc. All these applications save our time to convey messages to other people. All these things were not in past few years. (P7)

One of the Principals stated the harsh fact that less people want to become teachers by their choice or want to work as a school staff. The reason may be the low earnings of school

personnel. Generally, those people who do not get any other job of their choice come to this profession. She reported in the following words:

Mostly all educationists come in this profession accidentally. We don't come by planning because most of the students take science subjects and want to become doctors and if they don't get admissions then they get the degrees of B.Sc. and M.Sc. When they don't get jobs then they apply for professional qualification to become teachers it's our luck through which we came here were different stages of the principalship. Head of primary school has a different status and head of high school has a different status. We are introduced as headmasters, not as a principal. when I started my job as a principal, I had no experience. I faced many problems but with the passage of time, I overcame these problems. (P8)

The principals were handling their problems with the help of their families, community support and students' family support. One of them said that "We are facing electricity problem and now we have purchased solar panels for school to solve this problem. This problem was solved with the help of the community living there". (P1)

## **2. Engagement of school staff in the professional development programs.**

All the school principals described two types of professional development programs:

2.1 Formal Professional activities arranged by Government

2.2 Formal and Informal activities arranged by school principals

These programs include in-school and out-of-school training. The training arranged by the government mostly takes place at Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED). These trainings include:

1. Induction training
2. Post induction trainings
3. Promotion linked trainings
4. Specialized training

##### 5. Training requests from others.

While all those training managed by principals include educational visits, workshops, and lectures at schools. Various assignments given to groups of teachers by the principals also included in the formal and informal activities arranged by the school. They said that they learn not only by these in-house activities but also by interaction with their staff and teachers on daily basis. The school principals highlighted the importance of professional development for school staff. The school heads were sensitive enough to understand the importance of updated knowledge for everyone at school. They not only try to plan their staff's professional training at school but also facilitate them in getting knowledge from any source. Some extracts of their interview responses are given below:

The most important is the international connecting classes. Only a few schools were chosen for this activity in Punjab and my school was one of them. It was a very hectic, very informative, and difficult task assigned to us. As far as the students are concerned it was a knowledgeable, activity-based learning process. I shared every detail of learning about this activity. They are happy to know. These are internationally connected classes. Computers are used for this purpose. Students and teachers of Srilanka, Singapore, etc. are directly linked and their teachers and our teachers, their students and our students are directly interlinked on Skype. This was a very healthy activity done at my school. DSD is also happy with this school level cultural activity..... (P2)

The following remarks are indicative of the range of responses:

In 2009 one of my friends was working in America as a trainer in mathematics I found that our teachers are weak in mathematics and I asked him to train my school teachers. He gave one-week training to our staff and teachers. Our teachers were fascinated by this..... We also encourage our teachers to learn religious knowledge, for example,

understanding the meaning of the holy Quran. And if teachers know about it then they can deliver this wisdom to students (P3)

Mostly principals were of the opinion that and the role of the head increases manifold because she has to perform multiple instructional and administrative works besides the continuous training. They also emphasize the importance of teamwork. Some comments are quoted here for reference:

I think this professional development activity is a very essential ingredient of our school. We arrange activities for continuous training in the school for our teacher and I take it very personally and consciously and I keep on indulging teachers and myself in a process where we continuously keep on learning and training interactively we are a team and always try to work cohesively (P6)

The following examples typify the further divergent replies:

I am lucky enough that before becoming principal, I had been a master trainer..... I have trained DDOs who are responsible for financial resources. I have also trained EST and SST. I have also done a management course. The biggest problem is mismanagement. There is so much pressure of work on teachers and institutions for example admission, timetable, classes, paper duties, officially assigned duties, students' results, daily duties, etc. people who work in the board office have no interest in the institution and some teachers perform their duty in the board office too. If teachers refuse to perform their duty then board office personnel said that they don't want to perform their duty of invigilation and checking papers. I mean to say that if we want that teachers should be trained and their students should learn at their best then we should not assign them other duties. Teachers get paid for these duties but school results suffer a lot and people blame the head of the school for this many heads have been hospitalized because of work pressures but I have strong nerves. There are also many

security issues which we have to deal with. Therefore, we learn by doing all these activities on daily basis. (P8)

When I learn anything from any professional development activity then I share it formally and informally with teachers. I developed a team and I shared my knowledge and skills with my teachers..... (P9)

### **3. Hurdles or barriers in the pursuit of professional development programs/training.**

There were diverse responses when they were asked about the hurdles and barriers they face in the pursuit of professional development programs. Some of the principals were of the opinion that mostly such training are designed by the government and when they are nominated then they cannot refuse without having serious problems. Some of them said that they were never given any such opportunity for training. Others stated some professional and personal problems which create hurdles in the pursuit of professional development programs. One of them said that “There are no hurdles as we have to attend all the training courses in which we are nominated by the Government. This is something mandatory.....” (P2). Another responded in these words:

“Usually, we have to follow the orders and whenever they [Authorities] call for a meeting, we have to go at every cost in the meeting. Many problems come but I think we should be self-efficacious as principals otherwise, we would not be able to handle the situation” (P8)

One of the principals was of the opinion that professional training is never been conducted according to the needs of school administrators. The training should be conducted separately for school principals and trainers should be highly qualified in the field of educational administration. He stated:

I don't believe that the teachers and head teachers are learning from the professional development programs designed by our government. Continuous feedback should be taken

from the teachers and principals. Head teachers should be asked about weak areas and subjects. Generally, the professional development programs are arranged when funding from some national and international source came. The training content is decided by administrators and no one consult with school personnel. Furthermore, Head teachers and teachers got the same training. In my opinion, separate trainings for school heads and principals should be conducted by the authorities. This training should be conducted by the teacher education institutions because they have skilled and highly qualified staff. In these universities/ institutions research should be linked to exploring our school needs, problems, and prospects. (P3)

Another principal reported that there are hurdles but she is personally enthusiastic to overcome these barriers and she try to professionally develop her by attending paid training programs organized by public and private organizations. She was of the view that such training helps her a lot in understanding her duties as a school leader. She further suggested training new head teachers under the mentorship of experienced head teachers. She reflected in these words. Barriers and hurdles are always there. I did not only rely on the department to give me the training. I take part in many training programs because of my own interest in public and private institutions. I have attended a one-month training program from Karachi for which I gave 40,000 rupees hurdles are there because the department doesn't motivate and encourage you to attend such programs. They do not provide opportunities to enhance the knowledge and skills of school administrators. This is what I have done on my own because of my personal interest. I think the department should consciously remove the barriers and arrange such trainings which is not only related to your job experience or rules and regulations but apart from this, there should be some trainings or some courses where you can increase your knowledge and where you can indulge yourself in activities and learn through interaction and communication. Before inducting a teacher as principal, he/ she should be

sent to any other school for training under the mentorship of a reputed and senior head teacher/ principal. In this way new principals can learn practically and effectively. (P6)

#### **4. Expectations and Suggestions for prospective principals**

The school principals also shared their expectations and suggestions for the prospective principals. They were in favor of using modern technology in schools. The following examples illustrate the range of responses:

It should be mandatory to attend training programs before starting their job as principal because it is necessary to learn different aspects of educational administration. As a manager one should be physically, mentally, and psychologically strong to handle many types of situations in school. They should be aware of using a computer and the internet to enhance their capabilities. It would have been helpful in many ways....they should interact with successful principals for gaining excellence in their field. (P1)

I think that the latest knowledge and skills should be taught to future principals like the use of information technology and managerial skills. Principals should use internet resources for their professional development. I think that the techniques which we use today if these were available 5 years before then Pakistan would have been very successful. We should keep on learning at every stage of life. (P7)

Their learning process should be according to the new techniques. Only the university and college teachers and administrators go abroad for training but I would suggest that school personnel should be sent abroad for training.... I feel today's technological advancements made things better for everyone..... (P5)

Some principals expressed their views on the induction of fresh candidates as principals. They opined that such inductees should have spent some time in learning management skills and should also consult with experienced school principals. Their views are given below:

An experienced and knowledgeable person would be a suitable person to design training programs for the principals before training school principals; they should have feedback and suggestions from them to design need-based training. The weak areas should be identified, for example, the new principal is generally unaware of his/ her authority and the training content should be according to the suggestions of principals there are so many modules available online. They can learn from those modules..... (P3)

We should be very careful in handing over schools to inexperienced heads/ principals. If the leader will be going in the right direction, the whole school will follow him/her. If he/she does not know what to do then whole the school will be messed up the government should select new principals with the condition that they should spend at least six months with experienced principals and should learn from their experiences. The principal should be a good learner and researcher who could work cooperatively. I think heads should be given a short course on how to conduct the research to analyze and explore various problems at schools. They should be able to know their weaknesses and good points and keep on shifting and removing the weaknesses both formal and informal programs could be arranged for this purpose. The heads should informally and formally collaborate and this is possible through meetings, training, short courses, seminars, etc. (P6)

They further illustrated that the principal should be a good human being. They should be sincere with their job. One of the principals responded that “you can see my record I did not avail too many vacations I always try be regular. In my opinion, if we do our work sincerely then we have no fears.” (P9). Another said that “they should be dedicated and true professionals with passion and commitment. The training should be activity-based. The future principals should be personality maker, mentally and physically enriched with good



citizenship behavior. There should be networking among schools to learn from mutual experiences.” (P2)

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Many research studies suggest that school leaders generally control the conditions needed to create a positive learning culture (Day and Leithwood, 2007; Day et al. 2010). They are considered to be responsible for maintaining the whole school discipline. The school manager’s role is to train, inspire, direct and synchronize group and individuals to reach designated tasks and organizational goals (Dawson, 1993:117). The school principals are trained with educators and sometimes got an opportunity to attend exclusive training which is being designed to train them but what is the effectiveness and relevance of this endeavor is an important question.

Generally, principals are acting as facilitators and trying hard to create a conducive learning environment within the schools. This study confirms that school principals want to change existing practices to bring positive change in schools.

The principals reported that they come across many negative and positive situations every day. A single day in school is full of new learning. Many school principals confirm that their basic qualifications help them but experience, in-depth knowledge about rules and regulations, application of these rules on routine school issues made them more comfortable to handle teachers, staff, and students with more expertise and with more confidence. Almost all the principals described their learning through trial and error. They learned generally with different negative and positive experiences. One of the Principals stated the harsh fact that fewer people want to become teachers by their choice or want to work as school staff. The reason may be the low earnings of school personnel. Generally, those people who do not get any other job of their choice come to this profession. However, they learn many important lessons from their experience. Their training programs are equipping them to use modern

technology in the workplace to be efficient. The professional development program should have been planned after need analysis to enhance the validity of the training. According to Nasreen, Naz, and Fatima (2018) school principals want to bring positive change in the schools by efficiently equipping training programs with modern technology. They further suggested conducting a thorough need analysis to enhance the validity of the training programs.

All the school principals described two types of professional development programs i.e. Formal Professional activities arranged by Government, and Formal and Informal activities arranged by school principals. These programs include in-school and out-of-school training. The training arranged by the government mostly takes place at Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED). These training include; induction training, post induction trainings, promotion linked trainings, specialized training, and training on requests from others. While all those training managed by principals include educational visits, workshops, and lectures at schools. Higgs & Higgs (1994) also described three kinds of professional training i.e. pre-service, in-service, and occasional academic learning opportunities e.g. seminars, lectures, workshops, and conferences, etc. They also emphasize the importance of teamwork. Werner (2002:373) opined that group consistency and teamwork greatly contribute to work performance. It is well-known that effective principals give power to teams working under their leadership by delegating to them as much authority as possible. It appears that a variety of activities should be managed to augment the effectiveness of the school's staff in job performance (Mabale, 2004).

Diverse responses were provided about the hurdles and barriers they face in the pursuit of professional development programs. The principals opined that mostly in such training arranged by the government they are nominated by the department and cannot refuse without having a serious reason. Some of them were never given the opportunity for

professional training. Others stated some professional and personal problems which generally create hurdles in the pursuit of professional development programs.

There were some serious concerns on the quality of the training program, its content, and trainers/ resource persons. It was revealed that professional training is never been conducted according to the needs of school administrators. It was suggested that the training should be conducted separately for school principals and trainers should be highly qualified in the field of educational administration. It was further suggested that such training should be arranged by the teacher training institutions of universities who have a well-qualified staff. Furthermore, one of the principals reported that there are hurdles but she is personally enthusiastic to overcome these barriers and she try to professionally develop her by attending paid training programs organized by public and private organizations. She suggested training new head teachers under the mentorship of experienced head teachers. The importance of networks of teachers and head teachers/ principals was also recognized. Pernell and Firestone (1996:47) also stated that networks effectively engage educators to get learners more actively involved in learning, while Lieberman and Grolnick (1996:8) found networks to have positive effects on educators' professional development.

### **Recommendations:**

Following are the recommendations of this study:

1. There should be separate administrative training specifically designed for school principals/ heads and trainers/ resource persons should be highly qualified in the field of educational administration.
2. Networking of school principals can have positive effects therefore, Formals and informal networks of principals should be encouraged by the government and school principals should also be engaged in workshops continuously.

3. Latest knowledge and skills should be taught to future principals like the use of information technology and managerial skills. Principals should use internet resources for their professional development. They should also be able to guide their teachers to use internet resources to learn new knowledge and skills.

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