



RESEARCH PAPER

The Effect of Gender, Professional Qualification, and Experience on Teachers' Perceptions Regarding their Role as a Curriculum Leader

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to explore the role of teachers as Curriculum leaders in educational settings at secondary level. Through this study, researcher tried to evaluate the leadership responsibilities of teachers. After the pilot study, a final questionnaire was developed and administered to one hundred and twenty teachers of different universities of Lahore. The data in general, revealed that the teachers were doing their leadership responsibilities on their own but administration was not properly arranging activities for their leadership development. They were in fact concerned only with the completion of the job. Teachers were therefore just a tool for the implementation of the orders and policies. On the other hand teachers were given freedom in arranging different classroom activities according to the requirement of the lesson. In general, the administrative environment was not collaborative, interactive and knowledge sharing but teachers was personally trying to maintain collaboration. The research noted an interesting phenomenon that majority of staff believed that most of teachers did not concentrate on their role as a curricular activities leader due to the provision of tailor made curriculum

Introduction

Today, in the era of competition where every educationist is talking about the quality education has become inevitable for every institution, to motivate their teaching staff to take on leadership responsibilities and to equip themselves with the tools kit of effective teaching and leadership traits.

The entire educational system comes into existence to give students a proper shape, to make students autonomous learners, as well as autonomous in practical life. Administration, teaching, methodology, curriculum and so on, work to make students autonomous learners.

In Pakistan, government is trying to make access to education possible for every child and for this they are trying to reform the education. Researcher has observed, during his visits of different schools that the role of teacher as curriculum leader in Pakistan is very limited, which is against the tone of latest educational reforms. Frost and Durrant (2003) have highlighted some guideline for the principal to promote teacher curriculum leadership; they suggest that head teachers and managers who are senior have an important part in promoting and sustaining teacher curriculum leadership by:

- Managing multiple initiatives so that they complement each other and do not overload Teachers
- Choosing initiatives that have maximum benefit for all in relation to the effort put in by Teacher
- Protecting teachers from the potential conflicts that can arise from multiple initiatives
- Mentoring teachers who are prepared to take on a leadership role
- Learning can flourish

According to the authors, teacher leadership is best nurtured when:

- Evidence and the management of a collaborative process of changes
- Colleagues work collaboratively and learning is support.

A general recommendation from Frost and Durrant (2003) is to enter into partnership with universities and other agencies to provide external support for teacher curriculum leadership.

According to the researcher's conceptual understanding, there are some main qualities of an effective teacher as leader: facilitator, friendly, assistant, role model, problem shooter, good teaching skills, encourage, motivator, collaborative, collegial, helper, objectives, mild and polite natured. Eggen, and Kauchak, D. (1999) argue about effective teaching as under:

"Teaching is a combination of large number of decisions, most of which can't be reduced to simple rules. An important thing required is that the teachers should adopt a habit of critically thinking. This simple, yet powerful notion is termed as reflective teaching. Which simply means think about what you are doing?"

The notion of reflective practitioner is very comprehensive and valuable to discuss. Farrel, (1998) discusses two main concepts of reflective practice. One is reflection-on-action and second is reflection-in-action. First dealing with the reflection is usually practiced by almost all teacher they think when they are doing something or when it is done. But second concept tells us how to reflect during the process or task. And this is quite difficult than the first concept and necessary for having leadership potentials for teacher leaders. Because usually people don't understand what they are doing and if they have to face any spontaneous situation, they are unable to handle it. That's why reflection in action is very important in the teaching procession for teacher leadership because every day teacher face many type of students as well as principals and other related people having different kinds of personality traits. As Paul Eggen and Don Kauchak (1999) said, "Reflective teacher are deep, realistic, even criticize their own teaching. They have made techniques to analyze and critique even themselves afterward."

It is hoped that this research may be useful source of research findings and discussions in the field concerned with the leadership in teaching; and those who are interested in understanding more about the role of teachers as leaders in educational reforms, such as in share discussion making in teamwork and in community building and so on and who are expected to be able to apply such knowledge and ideas in this field.

Louis and Kruse (1995) have shown the important role of school-level curriculum leadership in the development of a professional community. Teacher morale, efficacy, conditions of work, and professional autonomy have all been shown to be crucial to the emotional lives of teachers. (Hargreaves, 2000) "There is no doubt that teachers themselves prefer principals who are honest, communicative, participatory, and collegial informal, supportive and demanding and reasonable in their expectations with a clear vision for the school - principals who work 'with' rather than 'through'." (Day et al, 2000,)

Spencer (2000) argued teacher leadership in curriculum develops greater participation by interested teachers which leads to ownership and commitment to the established school goals.

By allowing teacher leaders the power of shared decision making, they become committed to decisions that emerge. Teachers collaborate and develop professional networks with others they enjoy ownership in their special projects, thus motivating them intrinsically (Muijs& Harris, 2006).

Harris and Muijs (2002) state, "One of the main barriers to teacher leadership in curriculum concern the 'top-down' leadership model that still dominates in many schools."

One of the most congruent findings from studies of effective leadership in schools is that authority to lead need not be located in the person of the leader but

can be dispersed within the school in between and among people. (MacBeath 1998; Day et al, 2000) To illustrate, a recent study in USA by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) that examined principals' effects on teachers' community, instructional practices, and careers found no instances of leaders who created extraordinary contexts for teaching by virtue of their own unique visions; they found various ways to support teachers in getting the job done. "The leadership of these principals was not superhuman; rather, it grew from a strong and simple commitment to make schools work for their students and to build teachers' determination and capacity to pursue this collective goal." (Copland, 2001.)

Material and Methods

Research Approach and Design

Descriptive research method was used for this study. Quantitative research can be defined as a formal way of research. It is an objective and systematic way to describe variables. It is a descriptive, explanatory and exploratory research.

Population and Sampling

Teachers teaching at secondary level in the schools of Lahore city were the population of this study. Sample was selected in two phases. Lahore city is administratively divided in different towns. One town was randomly selected. At phase two convenient sampling techniques was used to select the sample and 200 teachers were selected from public and private secondary schools situated in the selected town. .

Instrumentation

After the review of related literature, questionnaire was developed by the researcher. It employed 5-points Likert scale, which measured responses. Respondents are instructed to mark the statement according to their level of agreement.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data was collected from the field personally by the researcher. The researcher visited all the sample schools and distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaire was filled by the teachers in the presence of researcher to avoid any ambiguity.

Reliability

To check the reliability of instrument pilot study was conducted and data was collected from 50 participants at this phase. Chroncach alpha test was applied to test the reliability. Result of reliability test is presented below:

Table 1

No. of Items	No. Participants	Chronbach's alpha
23	50	.782

It can be observed from the value that instrument is reliable because the alpha value is .782

Results and Discussion

Table 2

T test to find out the difference in opinion on scale by gender

Gender	N	M	SD	T	Sig.	Difference
Male	80	99.38	9.55	1.16	0.01*	F>M
Female	120	101.19	9.34			

*(p<.05)

Table 2 shows that there is statistically significant difference at the p<.05 level between male and female perceptions regarding teachers' role as a curriculum leader. For Male (M =99.38, SD = 9.55) and Female (M =101.19, SD = 9.34), t (1.16), and the p = .001

Table 3

T test to find out the difference in opinion on scale by experience

Experience	N	M	SD	T	Sig.	Difference
1-5 years	124	104.88	7.42	0.89	0.04*	M>L
More than 5 years	76	87.22	7.49			

*(p<.05)

It can be derived from the table 3 that statistically significant difference is found on the basis of experience on teachers' role as a leader as the p value is p<.05 (M =102.88, SD =8.14) and (M =99.22, SD = 8.94); t (0.89), p = .04.

Table 4

T test to find out the difference in opinion on scale on the basis of Professional qualification

Professional Qualification	N	M	SD	T	Sig.	Difference
B. Ed.	111	102.67	8.23	1.27	0.06	-----
M.Ed.	89	99.52	8.57			

*P=professional, N=non-professional

*(p<.05)

Independent sample t test was applied to find out the difference in opinion on the basis of professional qualification and the table shows the significance value is greater than .05 The results report that no statistically significant differences was found between groups on the role of teachers as a curriculum leaders.

Major Findings

1. The major findings of the study are:

2. The final results reveal that male and female teachers possess different perceptions regarding teachers' role as leaders. There is significant difference in their perception regarding the topic.
3. There is a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers on scale on the basis of experience
4. No significant difference exists in the views/perception of teachers on the basis of professional qualification regarding the role of teachers as leaders at secondary level; both can perform as leaders.

Conclusion

The study identifies that the participants have positive perception regarding teachers as leaders and that they consider leadership as an inborn ability which is mainly related to the skills of a person as well as his capabilities and influence. Leadership can be learnt, observed and teachable set of skills.

It is clear from our research which was conducted on teachers that participants' response toward leadership was positive and they considered a leadership role of any influential figure in any field especially in curriculum as a good omen.

Majority of the teacher agreed that the personal development of a teacher plays a vital role in effective teaching and curriculum instructions. When a teacher is given necessary opportunities where he can learn and grow, and have useful experiences which will groom a teacher to an extent where he has got all the needed information and practice to teach and develop curricular activities for his students in an effective way.

The concept, teacher leadership in the perspective of curriculum and instructions is a bit difficult to explain in a few words. Teachers' leadership demands multidimensional role of a teacher in the classroom. The knowledge and skills should be injected in pre-service teachers, to work for educational transformation. Lieberman & Miller (2004), conducted a research and find out that there was a significant difference among the male and female perceptions regarding their role as a curriculum leader. It is clear that both male and female accepted and liked the idea of teacher playing a leadership role in educational field to reform the system but there was quite a visible difference lies in the perception of both genders was there regarding the preferred role of teachers as leaders in educational reforms at secondary level.

Through proper training and guidance, teachers can carry out their responsibilities as curriculum leaders. The term leadership is taken as huge responsibilities by the simple teachers. This phenomenon must be discouraged that leadership is only for those who are extra ordinary in their profession. Anyone can perform as leader, as through proper leadership can be learnt. Kouzes and Posner (1995) research shows that experience is another variable which shows significant difference. Highly experienced show less initiative as compared to less

experienced teachers about the leadership role of teachers. It is thought that teachers have the most concern for a better future and educational system so they should be given a little more of authority than they already have. The result of the third variable which is qualification, has no significant difference, teachers with having professional degree or not both share a common view, a similar perception about the role of teachers as leaders at secondary, it is considered to be a vital step in the educational field for the development of institutions and teaching norms to be better and more refined.

R. Dean Gerdeman (2001) said that "Our country's need for qualified teacher is not meeting its requirements. And the students seeking teacher training don't do well enough to meet projected demands".

As teacher leadership is one of the most discussable topics in education, so every educationist keep on trying to think and analyze more about it. Robert Holland (2001) states in a research article about how we can make effective teachers that to have the most effective transform of teacher licensing and hiring can be achieved with a combination of the mentoring and approach that adds more value of it".

Weissglass (1990) argued that "One component in nurturing leadership among per-service teachers is to empower them, help them cope with the power to leader, as well as respond to change". Collaborations and collegiality is given very importance by the educationist for teacher leadership, Rosenholtz (1987) suggests that "Teacher collegiality and collaboration are a means of generating positive change in schools",

Teacher leadership contributes to teacher's effectiveness, as; a dull and ineffective teacher cannot take on leadership responsibilities. An effective teacher can make his student better learner, can help administration in creating a collegial environment; can voluntarily involves in other matters of the school and so on. Leithwood and Jantzi (1998) who conclude that "Teacher as a leader has a way bigger impact on student learning than anything else. And for better influence and effectiveness for student progress, schools should encourage leadership activities for teachers."

Kelly (1999) says that mentoring happens when a more experienced and mature organization member becomes a guiding role with lesser experienced protégé. Graduate students are being taught the technical proportions of their profession, and they collaborate on research, and helps them with job placement networking, and professional development, in addition, and combine work with mentors is linked with productive in prior and after attaining the doctoral degree.

Kelly's (1999) view towards mentoring makes us clear that through proper support guidance, and collaboration, less-experienced teachers can enhance their professional motivation about their job. Discussion about the job and professional

development by the senior teacher can turn a simple teacher to a teacher leader. In other world we can say that a teacher leader is also a mentor who interact with new teachers and help them to take on leadership responsibilities. Now here are some arguments on the need of effective teachers as leaders. The main and upper most duty of a teacher is teaching and effective teaching cannot be possible without an effective teacher. Inverse Research Associate, 1999 argues that:

“Leadership is a collaborative effort, to understand effective teaching one needs to get together and understand the methods of teaching in such effective ways to create difference in classroom, or in the school.”

Hence private schools are not more open to teachers as leaders in educational system as compared to public schools that do not have proper check and balance on them nor are they allowed to go out of the book.

Recommendations

1. Teachers lose the zeal to demonstrate change. They should be given a more free hand.
2. It is recommended that administrations should guide and share their professional experiences; arrange for them teachers’ training programs, encourage them and help to put all that in practice what they have learned.
3. It is recommended both administration and teachers as well that they all should educate each other what they don’t know through discussion, by sharing knowledge, by sharing experiences, proper guidance and so on. So this activity of educating each other in a collegial and friendly environment will be very effective as it will make the teachers who are not experienced more professional and experienced.

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