

7. THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL IN A SCHOOL SET UP

Principal is the most important person in a school. He/She should be a person of a wide range of qualities and competencies. He/she should be a person of sound educational background and philosophy, sound academics, adequate professional training, proficient in human relations, physical and mental health and stamina, optimistic attitude, emotional stability, integrity and scientific temper. In addition to the above, he/she should have administrative abilities, leadership qualities, progressive views and sound judgment. Above all, he should be a person who is sensitive to the needs of the society as well as to all round development of children.

The success and image of a school depends, to a great extent, on the personality of the principal. As the pilot is to the aeroplane the principal is to the school. A pilot through his reckless flying can bring the plane to wreck and the passengers in it lose their lives and property. Similarly, a principal through hit or miss or casual ways of running his organization can cause loss of image.

The principal should, therefore, be a person of wide conceptual, human and technical skills. Only such a person will be in a position to have the right type of vision as to what his school should be and do these by proper planning, organizing, efficient leading and effective controlling of the various programs and activities. He/she is responsible for procuring and supplying requisite resources and ensuring that they are put to optimum use. He/she is again responsible for building up an organizational climate and culture that is conducive to teaching as well as learning and thus through gradual approximation and by constant vigilance and timely action, translate his/her vision into a reality.

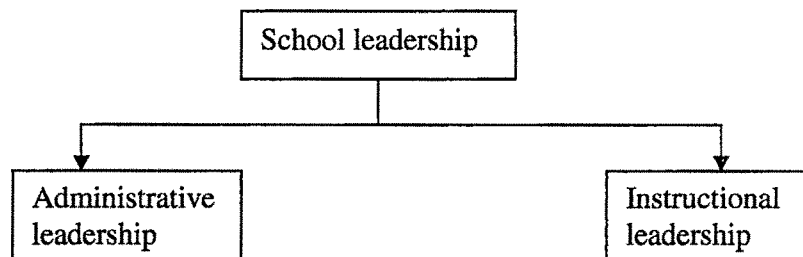
7.1 PRINCIPAL AS A LEADER

7.1.1 Concept of leadership

The concept of leadership can be best understood if the importance of a leader is realized in any organization. Normally in an organization, a set of people are involved at different positions, working for the attainment of pre-defined goals. At times, people in the organization, require support, guidance, direction and motivation in carrying out their task. Sometimes disagreements may also arise in a group regarding the opinion, working style, skills and competencies. This kind of situation hampers the progress and the realization of goals. So there is a need of an individual who can control the system, guide personnel, plan, organize and lead the system towards a sustainable development. Such an individual can be called a leader and the quality he possesses is leadership. Thus the leadership meets the needs and preferences of group members, utilizes what is known and elicits the maximum contribution from each member in the group. In a way leadership is the process of helping others to discover themselves and their potentials for achieving objectives which an organization has set for itself.

7.1.2 Nature of School Leadership

School is an institution for learning and it has a formal set up. Thus leadership is important in planning, organizing, directing, supervising and evaluating the school programs.



Administrative leadership requires the utilization of available human and material resources through the adoption of sound management techniques for the progress of the school. Instructional leadership could be viewed as providing assistance to staff members of a school in identifying and formulating learning objectives and for planning strategies to attain the goals.

7.1.3 Leadership at GPS and government school

In Gujarat public school, the leadership is consensual in nature as the principal encourages group discussion on the issues and then make a decision that reflects the general agreement i.e. consensus of group members. Thus the principal delegates more authority to the group. The principal dons the role of friend, philosopher and guide emphasizing more on participative and shared experiences. The principal encourages out of the box thinking of the teachers and evolve something new and creative. In Gujarat public school, the maxim is things can always be done differently. That is the reason why the suggestions from every member of the school family are accepted by the principal. And the principal believes that a healthy debate on any issue leads to a different, creative and a better solution. Thus for the principal of Gujarat public school, brainstorming session is an established norm for all the issues, questions and problems. Though the style leads to a considerable delay in decision making because every member has to give his or her consent but the solution that emerges is definitely better accepted by all the members. However, the minor day to day decisions are taken by the principal.

In government school, since the principal is required to follow all the directives of the government, principal has a job in hand. As the number of teachers in the government school is very less, it becomes easy for the principal to get the work done easily from the teachers. However, even if the teachers are not willing to accept a particular decision, they have to abide by it. Thus the final authority lies with the principal.

7.2 PRINCIPAL AS A MOTIVATOR

7.2.1 Concept of motivation

In any organization, management tries to coordinate various factors of production in such a way that each factor contributes to its maximum efficiency to achieve organizational goals. So far as non-human factors i.e. materials, machines, etc., are concerned, their efficiency depends largely upon the type of technology being followed by the performance level of human factors that handle and control these non-human factors. Thus to make total factors efficient and effective, one has to improve the performance level of human beings in the organization. This performance is determined by two factors i.e. level of ability to do certain work, and level of motivation. Thus:

$$\text{Performance} = \text{Ability} * \text{Motivation}$$

From this, it is clear that performance level would be high if both these are high. If a worker is very capable of doing certain things but he is otherwise not willing to do the work, his performance level would not be high. While ability to do is governed by education and training, willingness to do can be effected by the factors governing human behaviour in the organization.

Motivation has come from motives which are the expression of human needs by a human being. In fact, the activities of human beings are caused, and behind every action there is particular motive or need. The need can be defined as feeling of lackness for something and human being tries to get this lackness removed. While needs are more comprehensive and include desires-physiological or psychological, wants are expressed in narrow sense and include only those desires for which a person has money and also the desire to spend money for satisfying the wants. There are many psychological needs, e.g. to get status in the organization, which do not come under the category of wants. Thus human behaviour is caused by motives or needs, and motivation is the process of inducing persons to experience needs for certain desired behaviour so that organizational efficiency is achieved. Thus motivation means a process of stimulating people to action in order to accomplish desired goals.

7.2.2 The importance of motivation in schools

Motivation is one of the most important factors determining the efficiency of any organization and it is no exception for schools. There is an old saying that you can take the horse to water but you cannot force it to drink unless it is thirsty, so with the people. A person can excel only when he can do it on his own or otherwise motivated to do it through external stimulus. The major objective of the school is the betterment of the students. This can be achieved by motivating the students as well as the teachers.

7.2.3 Motivation at GPS and the government school

Gujarat public school in order to achieve its goal, adopts a two prong strategy, i.e. motivation of students and motivation of staff.

To motivate the students, the skills of the students are recognized, explored and consistently sharpened. In the next step, the students are continuously motivated to take part in different activities, events and academics. Lastly in the final step the students are given positive reinforcement in terms of awards, certificates, recognition in front of other students. There is also an appropriately devised credit system which recognizes the talents of the student's transfers the credit to each grade till the student studies in the school. In the continuous and comprehensive evaluation system also, the student's talents and his participation in activities are reflected in the grade card of the students.

Similarly, in case of teachers, as the principal's functioning style is consensual, the teachers get a lot of scope to communicate their ideas without any hesitation and the fact that they are listened to very patiently, gives a positive reinforcement to the teachers. In addition to this, there are means and ways to reward a teacher. In case of creditable performance, teacher is appreciated; best teacher's award is given during the teacher's day. Monetarily also, teachers work is acknowledged by giving him/her due increments.

In government school, the approach is laid back approach as there is not much of push given to the students in the academic and non-academic areas. The students are only appreciated or rewarded once in a year by giving them certificates and medals during the annual function. As there is a lack of cut throat competition amongst the schools and they are not much bothered about as they don't consider themselves as the part of the race. They don't take any extra effort from their side to assure the students achievement. When the spirit of competition lacks, the motivation automatically dips down. Similarly, as the overall goal is not very keenly established, the teachers also are very sure about their job security. They also know about their monetary returns. So the competitive edge is little blunted. Thus the teacher hardly thinks beyond the routine job and is not motivated to accept the new challenges.

7.3 PRINCIPAL AS A COMMUNICATOR

7.3.1 Concept of communication

Communication is one of the most important elements for any organization. Communication means sharing messages, ideas, or attitudes that produce a degree of understanding between a sender and the receiver. In everyday usage, "communication" implies an attempt to share meaning by transmitting messages among people. Thus, communication involves at least two people – a sender and a receiver. Effective communication depends on the ability to listen as well as to speak. The end result of communication is understanding and to elicit a response.

7.3.2 The importance of communication in schools

Communication plays a vital role in all aspects of school life. Principal, teachers, administrators and students all engage themselves in a wide variety of communication processes to achieve the goals of school. An understanding of communication process is, therefore, central to the study of school organization because it offers an additional insight for examining a school as a social system. Moreover, communication is the key to a healthy interpersonal interaction in school life, which in turn leads to an effective organized school life.

Communication is necessary for effective decision-making. It is the vehicle by which information relevant to decision is transferred. Communication, whether written, oral, formal or informal, is goal directed in organization. At all levels, communication is intended to achieve performance that results in the implementation of decisions and organizational goals.

7.3.3 Communication process at GPS and the government school

In Gujarat public school, there is a system of communication, operational through various channels. For communicating with the student's parents, school almanac, printed circulars, report cards happens to be the written channel of communication. Intermittent parents' teachers meeting give a scope to two way detailed interaction between the parents and the principal. Principal also takes the orientation meeting of the newly admitted students in order to brief the new students about the culture and ethos of the school. Apart from that any parent can freely come and interact in person with the principal in the scheduled meeting hour with prior permission. Principal in order to communicate with the various departments namely academics and administrative, uses inter office memo and circulars. Verbal communication channel includes meetings and discussion in person.

In the government school, the communication process is more or less same with the slight difference in terms of accessibility. They too rely on school almanac, printed circulars and report cards to communicate with parents, however, there are hardly any parents teachers meetings leaving no room for open discussion with the principal. School no.17 being a small school with no bifurcation of departments, instead of inter office memos, a common circular is issued.

7.4 PRINCIPAL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS, PARENTS, GOVERNMENT, OTHER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY.

7.4.1 Principal and students

In Gujarat public school, the principal makes herself available for the students during the open house sessions. In order to motivate the bright students further, the principal herself gives away the report cards of the rankers and meet the parents personally on the report reading day. In the same manner, the principal herself interacts with the weak students and their parents and suggests means and ways to improve their academics. Principal takes 13 periods a week and keeps the communication channels open with the students for properly gauging and analyzing the student's performance.

In the government school, the principal takes the academics periods out of compulsion, due to the dearth of teachers. Thus the principal is most of the time engaged with one class leaving less room for interacts with other students of the school. Again the competitive edge is less sharper in government schools, not much keen interest is ken by the principal to further improve the academic performance of the students.

7.4.2 Principal and parents

Principal in Gujarat public school is accessible to the parents. Principal has a fixed hour of meeting with the parents to discuss their problems. In addition to the scheduled interaction, principal addresses the parent teacher's meetings and orientation sessions.

In government schools, the principal's accessibility is little less as there are less number of scheduled meetings and no orientation sessions.

7.4.3 Principal and government

Gujarat public school being a non-granted school, liasoning with the government is less for the principal of Gujarat public school as many rules and regulations mandatory for the granted and government schools are not applicable for the non-government schools. But there are some scheduled meetings, workshops and seminars which the principal has to attend compulsorily.

The liasoning of the principal of government school with the government is more frequently with pre-determined objectives. The principal in the government school is actually expected to carry out the directives laid by the government. Thus through various communication channels, the principal is in consistent and continuous touch with the education office.

7.4.4 Principal and other schools

Principal of Gujarat public school is consistently in touch with the principals of other schools. There are various channels of communication. During the common meeting of the zone and unit, all the principals meet and discuss the relevant issues with the education authorities. The principal also invites the principals and teaching fraternity during the function and celebrations and similarly attends the functions and events of other schools. There are various inter school competitions, where the principal meets the students of other schools.

Principals of the government school though attends the meetings, seminars and workshops and interacts with the principals of other schools, due to the paucity of fund, is not able to conduct inter school competitions or workshops and seminars. Thus the scope to meet the students of other schools gets narrowed down.

7.4.5 Principal and community

Principal at Gujarat public school remains actively in touch with the community as the principal considers school as an effective platform to bring in positive

changes in the community. Through seminars, talks, workshops, meets, exchange programs principal interacts with community at large.

However, for the principal of the government school, to participate in the community is compulsory. The principal of the government school does take part in the programs involving the community at large.

7.5 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PRINCIPAL

- He plans and organizes school activities
- Allocates duties to staff and non-teaching staff
- Maintains relationship with parents, community, other schools and government
- Develops networking with other schools
- Acquaints himself with recent trends in technology and information
- Organizes social activities
- Procures infrastructure and material resources
- Mobilizes available resources for the development of the school
- Visualizes future of the school in the society
- Coordinates different school activities
- Appraises performance of the teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students
- Organizes staff meetings on various aspects for decision-making
- Recognizes teaching and learning as the main business of a school
- Communicates the school's mission clearly and consistently to staff members, parents, and students
- Fosters standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable
- Provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them
- Spends time in classrooms and listening to teachers

7.6 POSITION OF A PRINCIPAL IN A SCHOOL

- **Principal and decision making.**

As principal becomes the vital person to take the decision with respect to administrative and instructional affairs, Gujarat public school being a self finance school, the major long term decisions are taken in consultation with the members of management. But there is no time lag between putting up a proposal and taking a decision because of the physical proximity between the management and the principal. However, the day to day decisions which are very much crucial towards attainment of goals are taken by the principal with mutual consensus of the co-coordinators and teachers. The reason being the functional style of the principal in GPS is totally based on the maxim of shared experiences and not autocratic.

In government school, despite of having an official board of members, for major decisions, the principal has to rely upon the state board directives. However the procedure for seeking permission for any requirement is very much complicated and long. A formal requisition has to be given to the board officials as per the format prescribed by the board and the sanction also depends upon the stringent rules and regulations of the board. So the entire process becomes very much formal, time consuming and complicated because of the physical distance between the ultimate decision makers and the abiders.

- **Freedom of expressions**

Principal in a school is just like a spring in the watch and an engine in the steam ship. As he is the organizer, leader and guide, it is very much imperative that the principal gets a free hand to co-ordinate the school programs. The principal in GPS gets enough space and freedom to take decisions and to implement the same. Moreover, the principal in Gujarat public school can very easily embrace the ideology that is change is

permanent. This is the reason why the creative wings of the principal get easily fluttered. The innovative ideas get approval by the management and the time taken is also very less to execute the same. In addition to this, the technical difficulties if at all arise, while giving the final shapes to the ideas; can be ironed out very easily between the management and the principal.

As against this, the principal of the government school, does not get enough space and freehand with respect to decision making because he is tied down by the rules and regulations of the governing education board. It becomes all the more suffocating for a very creative principal to work in such type of a system as he wants to introduce change frequently. And for every single change, he has to look up to the education board. In addition to that there are many formalities, which have to be carried out to communicate the proposals to the board pertaining to the changes the principal wishes to foresee. Then there is a time lag between forwarding the proposal and the final pronouncement of the decision which many a times is unacceptable to the principal of government school.