



Short Communication

## A Descriptive Study on the Challenges faced by a School Principals

Badgujar Preetika<sup>1</sup> and Joshi Priti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Human Development and Family Studies, College of H. Sc., MPUAT, Udaipur, INDIA

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Human Development and Childhood Studies, Lady Irwin College, DU, Delhi, INDIA

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### Abstract

The present study aimed to explore the kind of challenges a principal faces and how she goes about meeting them. To understand the challenges of leadership in different schools, three types of schools were selected. The sample comprised five schools out of which two were government, two were private and one was an aided school. The total numbers of principals interviewed were five. An interview schedule was formulated and used for interviewing principal. Various issues like qualities of a principal, kind of challenges a principal faces, strategies a principal uses to resolve problems, administration, the balancing act etc were investigated.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Principal.

### Introduction

‘Principal’ also means ‘headmaster’ which includes both ‘he’ and ‘she’. The principal manages the whole school system. The success of the school depends upon the ability of the head, who is responsible for academic as well as administrative functioning of the school<sup>1</sup>. The Indian schools are prone to many constraints and lack adequate facilities in majority, at that time it is the school principal who has to function effectively especially in the absence of facilities along with a number of other constraints. The efficiency of a school principal in managing schools in such situation effectively exposes the capacity of a skilled school manager. In addition to the duties of a head, she has also to deal with pupil, parents and staff on one hand and on the other hand has to work for the school supervision, inspection and fulfill the responsibilities assigned from time to time<sup>2</sup>. Talking about India, a lot of head teachers still retain some teaching responsibility besides their managerial and pastoral duties.

A school principal is expected to be visible all the time, meeting students, parents and teachers, solving and dealing with various situations personally and representing the school. A principal is not only responsible for facilitating the interaction with parents but is also responsible for issues such as discipline among the students, academic performance and so on<sup>3</sup>. A principal is held accountable not only for achievement of student but also for staff achievement<sup>4</sup>. Principal influences achievement by creating situations which help in improving the process of teaching and learning. So the challenges a principal faces while managing a school is multifold and often remains unnoticed, though the lacunae of an effective leader in a school setting lies in how a principal goes about meeting those challenges.

### Methodology

In view of the above discussion, the present study aimed to explore the kind of challenges a principal faces and how she goes about meeting them. To understand the challenges of leadership in different schools, three types of schools were selected. The sample comprised five schools out of which two were government, two were private and one was an aided school. Studying different types of schools helped to distinguish issues ranging from school leadership to challenges faced that were unique to these different settings. The total number of principals interviewed were five.

**Table-1**  
**Profile of schools and participants**

S. No.	Type of school	School	Principal
1.	Public schools (2)	A, B	2
2.	Government schools (2)	C, D	2
3.	Aided school (1)	E	1
	Total		5

An interview schedule was formulated and used for interviewing principal. Various issues like qualities of a principal, kind of challenges a principal faces, strategies a principal uses to resolve problems, administration, the balancing act etc were investigated.

### Results and Discussion

**Problems relating to students:** The kinds of problems raised by the principals varied from those relating to disciplining, morals, respect to academic output. Principals from different schools had different view over it. For some principals one of the main concerns was holding and keeping the students in

school as absenteeism and bunking was common. While for others, a major concern was to discipline the students and inculcate an element of respect for all as well as view selves positively. All five principals in the study stated that the safety and security of the students was a big challenge. Principals of all girls' school shared that in case of girls this responsibility increases. Principal of School C said, "In a girls school there is lot of truancy, children will just run away. Biggest challenge is to keep students in school during school hours. Children miss school; parents don't even think once about keeping the child at home, for them work at home is more important." She drew distinction between government schools and private schools and said that in government schools there was no support from parents while in public schools the parents had a concern for the child. Similarly the principal of School E talked about lack of parental concern for the child and felt that the school had to take care about developing a sense of right and wrong. Parents were not keeping a check if their child was attending school. The principal said that the parents became worried only when students do not reach home at time or stole money from home.

Student absenteeism and lack of support from parents and family was found to be more prominent in government and aided schools.

#### **Dealing with legacy, practice and style of the previous head:**

In the study another issue that came up was frequent change of principals. It was the newly appointed principal who dealt with the previous model of functioning and had to carry forward the work. Change in also lead to disruption in the functioning of the system. Many a time, principals got transferred from one school to another. She had to carry on with the practices from the earlier school head and at the same time had to implement her own innovations gradually. In the study, in two (School A and C) out of five schools every two years the principal had changed and it was reported that since heads had changed frequently, there was no consistency intact. The new head marred the previous one. A difficulty was felt for them to adjust to the system.

#### **Dealing with ineffective staff / problems relating to teachers:**

One of the major tasks for a principal was to get work done by the staff especially difficult in the government schools as a secure job made them indifferent. The principal of School C said, "90% of people come for salary not for work." They (the principals) further said that it was only at the end of the year when teachers began to work when ACRs i.e. Annual

Confidential Report were being prepared and they worried about being poorly evaluated.

#### **Maintaining a balance between personal and professional life:**

Maintaining a balance between personal needs and professional responsibilities was problematic for many educational leaders. All the principals said that they had clear priorities and three out of five principals shared that now with experience this was no more an issue. They said that in the initial years of their career, it was difficult to manage work particularly with young children at home. Principal of school A also managed the work of vice principal as the post was vacant, she stayed beyond working hours and managed the additional work load.

#### **Conclusion**

In the study, the kinds of problems / challenges faced by principals varied from those relating to disciplining of students to academic output to getting work done by the staff, especially in government schools. The study also revealed that in schools with frequently changing principals, it was the new principal who had to deal with the previous model of functioning and also iron out inherited difficulties and problems. The findings also delineated that parental involvement was considered important by all principals but how they could help was perhaps not realized and that was the reason why collaborations between parents and schools were limited to parent teacher meetings only.

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