
School Principal: Role, Responsibilities and Challenges

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Abstract

Schools are essential institutions for learning; they are managed with the help of teaching and non-teaching staff headed by the principal. School principals primarily have administrative responsibilities, at the same time he/she also expected to enhance and optimise academic and learning environment of institutions. He/she is expected to provide feedback and pep-talks to the subordinates to encourage them perform well and draw out their best possible abilities for the development of the students.

This article will provide an outline regarding roles of school principals i.e. academic as well as administrative which includes personnel management, student management, financial management, curriculum management, school logistics etc. and address the challenges faced in managing the school.

Keywords: School Principal, Academic role, Administrative role.

Introduction

Leadership is ultimate quality of a person which is essential to succeed in each and every aspect of life. Ramsden (1998) said that “When I refer to leadership I imply.....a practical and everyday process of supporting, managing, developing and inspiring academic colleagues....” Leader should have the qualities to take initiative, inspire and influence people around him/her to work and achieve the goals laid down by them. A leader simply come forward, took initiative, collaborate with her/his team and perform what is best for his institution or organisation. It is a very famous saying that ‘a captain is as good as his team’, it shows that a leader is recognised by the efforts of his team and it is her/his duty to motivate and encourage her/his team to do well whatever they are doing. Chris Hadfield once said that “Ultimately, leadership is not about glorious crowning acts. It's about

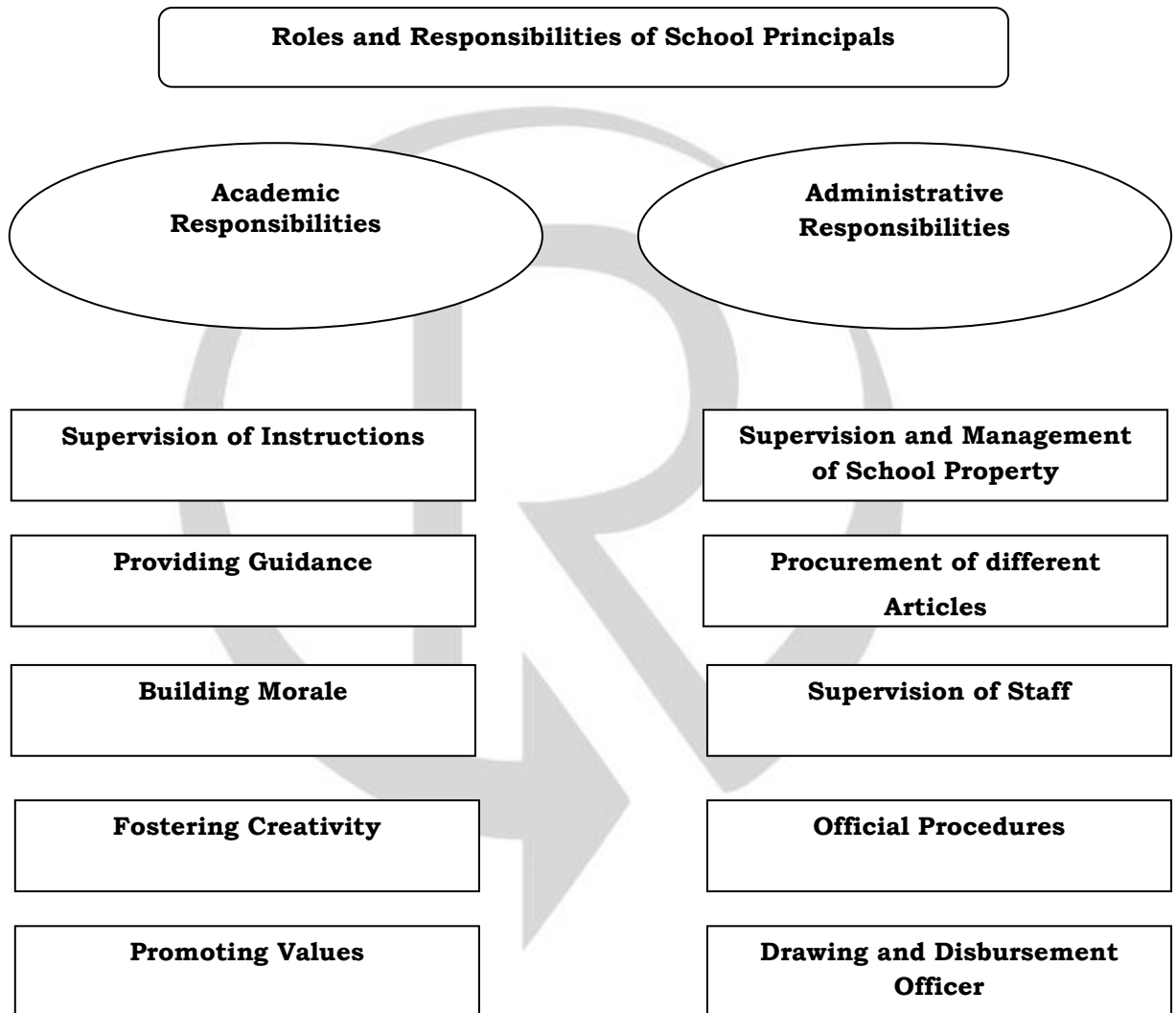
keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it, especially when the stakes are high and the consequences really matter. It is about laying the groundwork for others' success, and then standing back and letting them shine.”

Leadership is an essential aspect for the success of an institution whether school or college or university. We are living in an era that has several mode of transformation of knowledge, still, we believe in schools and colleges when it comes to education and learning. It is necessary for an academic leader to have a vision; she/he should lay down objectives for the institution as well as learner to provide not only education but quality education. Leader should have the quality to convey his vision to all the stakeholders and encourage them to realise the laid down objectives. She/he should have the ability to motivate, convince and draw a picture of the future that is believed as advantageous to everyone. Besides vision and articulation, she/he should be a role model, a team player take her/his team to the very end and should lead her/his team by example. Rosalynn Carter said that “A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.”

Schools have been led by the principals and they are considered as the head of the institutions. Historically, school principals are responsible for the functionalities such as administration, finances, planning, students' welfare and academic excellence etc. to enhance quality learning. They carry out day to day operational matters, functioning of units and focuses on in hand and current problems to ensure that school run efficiently and effectively. Leithwood et al. (2006: 14) argue that school leadership plays a vital role in the effectiveness of educational institutions. A school principal is effective when he/she helps others believe in themselves, see and use their own potential and jointly develop a vision and strategy for action (Mazurkiewicz, 2011:88).

Schools have the responsibility to provide education to individuals, academic as well as administrative leadership is essential to achieve the educational goals successfully. Role of a leader (principal) is very critical for the functioning of the school, he has dual responsibilities on his shoulders on the one hand he has to manage all the school machinery i.e. administrative duties; and on the other hand s/he should act like a bridge between the teachers, the students and the community, supervise and

motivate teachers and support personnel to make every effort for better performance and provide best opportunities for learning and overall development of the students i.e. academic duties. Foremost roles and responsibilities of school principals are shown in the following figure.



Administrative Responsibilities

Primarily principals have to perform following administrative responsibilities.

Supervision and Management of School Property

In general, entire school complex i.e. school building, toilets, labs, playground, auditorium and other appurtenances are managed and supervised by the school principal. S/he has the responsibility to keep the entire complex neat, clean, functional and safe. Besides this they have to carry out “physical verification of school property and stock at least once a year and ensure the maintenance of stock registers neatly and accurately.” (CBSE, 2018)

Procurement of different Articles

School requires different articles and materials time to time. The purchases and payment has to be made by the principal in accordance with the rules laid down by the government and maintain stock registers for the purchases.

Supervision of Staff

Principal has the responsibility to supervise the academic as well as non-academic staff. They have to arrive at school earlier before the regular commencement of school and remain there till end for proper supervision of activities of teaching, non-teaching staff, students and other stakeholders. S/he has to maintain attendance and leave records of the staff, delegate and supervise the work of his/her subordinates and keep school records available and up to date for ready reference and reporting. According to CBSE bylaws (2018) principal will “Be responsible for the proper maintenance of accounts of the school, school records, service books of teachers, and such other registers, returns and statistics as may be specified by the Society/Board.

Drawing and Disbursement Officer

Principal acts as the drawing and disbursing officer for the employees of the school. All the financial matters related to employee salaries, medical reimbursement bills, child education reimbursement bill etc. are dealt by the principal.

Official Procedures

S/he has the responsibility to manage and pursue all official correspondence in respect of school, teachers, administrative staff and

students and furnish all the files and other information as and when required by the higher officials, education department and the government.

Academic Responsibilities

In most of the cases a principal have the following academic responsibilities as the leader of the school.

Supervision of Instructions

Pedagogical practices and transactional strategies adopted by the teachers are most essential component that is needed to be supervised by the school principal on regular basis. He should adopt different tools and techniques to observe and supervise each and every teacher during their interaction with the students and record the challenges and difficulties faced by the teachers during classroom interaction.

Providing Guidance

Principal then must talk to his subordinate teachers as well as students regarding their performances in classrooms and on the basis of supervision report he should provide guidance to teachers and students on improving the instructional as well as learning process so that quality of teaching and more importantly quality of students learning can be enhanced.

Building Morale

Supervision of classrooms and instructional process must be carried out to enhance the quality of teaching learning process; it should not be coercive to harass the teachers. Teacher's morale should be boosted by providing them feedback regarding their practices in the classrooms, pros and cons of their teaching should be shared with them with advices of improvement to make teachers more adaptive and secure.

Fostering Creativity

Every school has teachers who love to do things in a creative manner and wants support from the administration especially from the principals. Fostering their creativity and creative attitude is equally important as setting a curriculum for the students. So, providing them ample support and encouragement is an essential task for the principal of the school.

Promoting Values

Promotion of right set of values in school system is also an important aspect a principal must look out for. Professional ethics among staff whether

academic or administrative must be practiced and promoted. It may be time punctuality, behaviour with students, classroom and transactional practices etc.

Challenges Faced By Principals

As a head of the school, principal faces so many challenges. They faces challenges in almost every dimension, it started right from entering school and sometimes they carry them to their homes and try to resolve them after the school hours.

Excessive paperwork is one of the biggest challenges for school principals. They have to maintain so many records in the form of stock registers, cash books, personal files, service books, applications for admissions and other works, short attendance intimation letters, RTI responses, parliamentary question related responses etc.

Lack of sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff is another challenge. It is observed that most of the schools are managed with insufficient numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff. Insufficient teaching staffs led to poor academic performance of the students and defame the school as well as principal and entire teaching staff.

Excessive workload on teachers can be considered another challenge for the principal. It is an extension effect of the insufficient teaching staff, principals have no choice but to over burden their teachers in the absence of required teachers, and teachers are assigned extra periods and extra non-teaching works if the numbers of teachers are insufficient. Ogola (2010) recognized that “the teachers have heavy workload, that is, they handle many lessons and many pupils. It is difficult for teachers to give personalized attention to all the learners, give adequate assignments to test what has been taught and take full control of their classes”

Teacher absenteeism and overcrowded classrooms are the challenges that give real headache to the school principals. Agustin (2016) said that “results are consistent with the view that teacher absenteeism is either a cause or a symptom of significant problems related to student achievement in the education sector”. Teachers’ absenteeism led to low academic performance of the students and demotivates students to learn and it becomes difficult for principals to make alternate arrangement periods and manage such overcrowded classes in the absence of teachers. It becomes even more

difficult in case of unavailability of sufficient teachers. Mwirigi and Muthaa (2015) contended that “the increased pupils' enrolment affected quality of learning as classes were overcrowded contributing to noise-making, poor class control, teachers overwhelmed by work and sharing of textbooks amongst the pupils”.

Government readiness to invest in the educational institution is a real challenge before the school principals. All the resources in government schools are provided by the government, if political will is not there to strengthen the institution head of the schools may have to face real hard time. Tshabangu and Msafiri (2013) also indicated that “if there is a lack of political will to engage stakeholders in a purposeful, trustworthy environment thereby threatening healthy links between education and other national socio-economic goals. This kind of management challenges had been affecting pupils and teachers in school environments due to lack of link between school administrators and other educational stakeholders in school works.”

There are some other challenges before principals as well such as attendance, discipline, scheduling of teachers, teachers evaluation, unexpected students outcome, technological interventions etc. Principal have to overcome the challenges to perform their roles and manage school effectively.

Conclusion

School principals have various responsibilities and have to play different roles to effectively manage the school. They have to play the role of a DDO, supervisor, motivator, evaluator, care taker etc., academic as well as administrative success of the school is completely depends on the managerial skills of the principal.

Leading a school is a gruelling task and leader of the school needs to be prompt, hardworking, self-motivated and mentally tough person. There may be many occasions on daily basis where s/he required showing multifaceted skills and character to deal with the challenges encountered to manage the school.

Success of an educational institute may be depends on the approach and attitude of the principal. It can be on his/her attitude that he is taking challenges as a problem or as an opportunity. How s/he is dealing with

challenges and what kind of innovative and improvised steps he is taking to overcome the challenges coming before her/him. There are many ways to overcome the challenges such as excessive paper work may be eliminated by moving to online forms and applications, parental and other stakeholder involvement may be an answer to deal with the management of classroom, absenteeism of teachers, overcrowded classes etc.

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