Instructional Leadership of Female Principals from the Perspectives of Teachers in Government Higher School in Dir Lower

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Abstract

The study examined the instructional leadership of female principals from the observer point of view in Dir lower Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The objectives of the research were to find out the instructional leadership practices of female principals in secondary and higher secondary school, examine difference in the self- reported and observed instructional behaviors and give applicable suggestions for the improvement of instructional leadership practices.Data were collected through Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1983) measuring framing the schools goals, communicating the schools' goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning. Five dimensions were added by the researchers. Percentages of responses were used to analyze the responses. Data showed that majority of the principals frame goals and communicate goals, supervise and evaluate instruction and so on but there were many principals who either sometimes follow the essential instructional leadership responsibilities or never did so. The study recommends training on the essential dimensions included in PIMRS and sensitizing the principals about their essential role as academic leaders.

Keywords: Instructional leadership; Secondary schools, Principals; difference in the observed and self- reported instructional behaviors

Introduction

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The role of leadership is important for solving organizational issues and effecting change (McColl-Kennedy&Anderson, 2002).Effective school leadership must work more than teacher evaluators, setting schedules, budgeting and facilitation. They should be involved in curricular and instructional activities. (Cotton,2003).According to Hoy and Miskel (2008) instructional leadership (IL) emerges when the school leaders focus on teaching and learning for the improvement of academic activities. Its purpose is to enable the students to achieve basic skills and knowledge. Lunenburg and Irby (2006) opine that principals as leaders play multi-dimensional roles in the school, for instance, managerial role, disciplinarian, evaluator, organizer and instructional leader. They change the focus of instruction from teachers to student and they develop such structures which can enable faculty to work together for the improvement of instruction. Such leaders ensure continuous professional development and target the school goals for better achievements. They also try to form learning community

School principals can carry out these roles by (1) emphasizing on learning, (2) developing collaboration, (3) using data to improve learning, (4) providing support, and (5) matching curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Fullan, 2010; Lunenburg, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2010).

There is positive and significant influence of instructional leadership on the improvement of schools (Tatlah, Iqbal, Amin, Quraishi, 2014;Alexson,2008).They have suggested measures for the improvement of teaching learning process. A few studies have investigated the behavior of instructional leaders in Pakistan and especially at secondary school level in government girls' higher schools in a far-flung area of district Dir lower. Therefore, the current study investigated the level of the instructional leadership of female principals from the perspectives of observers (teachers). This study analyzed the level of the instructional leadership behaviors of principals at secondary and higher secondary school in Dir Lower and found the difference between the observed instructional leadership behavior and self-reported instructional behaviors of the principals. The objectives of the study were to: investigate the instructional leadership behavior of principals at government girls high/higher secondary schools from the perspectives of observers; find out the difference in the observed and self-reported instructional leadership behavior; give implementable suggestions for improving the instructional role of principals in government girls secondary schools

Literature Review

Leadership is essential in every field of life and education is no exception. Educational leadership is a process through which a leader impacts the students' performance (Davies, Hides and Casey (2001); Northouse, 2010). Thomson (2009) posits that "getting the job done through people". Yukl (1994) posits that leadership influences "interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or organization, the organization of work activities accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork, and getting   support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization".

Just like other organization, schools also need leadership and that leadership is provided by the school principals. They have multifarious roles to play.The concept of instructional leadership involves those actions that a principal himself initiates, or ask others to do in order to promote growth in students' and learning (DeBevoise, 1984). Ogawa and Scribner (2002) explained academic leadership as "a wide, diverse, and a growing set of stakeholders which are known as leaders, and they are largely responsible for school performance".

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1984) synthesized data on the effective principals perform tasks in five specific instructional areas: gives a clear vision of the school, establishes a safe and orderly environment, maintains curriculum goals and priorities, knows quality instruction and works to improve instruction and monitors school wide performance. Edmonds (1979) posits that effective school principals 1) give due attention to the quality of instruction, 2) provide conducive environment for teaching and learning; 4) works on teachers' behavior and uses students' achievements as yard for program success. McCurdy (1983) School effectiveness is related with students performance. The differences in the performances of students are traced to the actions of the principal.

Instructional leadership has influence upon the achievements of students. Bailly (1989) found the   effects of leadership practices on student achievement and formed a model "a balanced leadership framework." This framework describes knowledge, skills, strategies, resources and tools educational leaders need to improve students' achievement. The framework shows that educational leaders need to know and do more than why, how and when to do something.

Academic principals have "high   expectations and they have clear goals for students' and teachers' performance, monitor and provide feedback related to teaching and learning of schools, takes care of professional growth

for all staff members, and tries to build and sustain a school climate of high academic quality" (Hallinger, Leithwood, 1994). Hoy & Hoy (2003) explained that "the principal must communicate a clear vision on instructional excellence and continuous professional development which is in consonance with the goal of the improvement of teaching and learning". The instructional leader develops different types of strategies through which the set goals can be achieved easily. This process involves collaborative planning between instructional leader, students and teachers. Sharing responsibilities with staff, keeps staff informed of policy changes. Provide opportunities to staff for sharing of ideas and implement innovative coaching arrangements (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994).

Supervision and Evaluation

Teachers' supervision and evaluation is the main task of principals. The principals must have knowledge about curriculum. The principals should know what they have to observe and when they do it, they should help teachers to remove their weaknesses. They should do consistent evaluation so that problems are identified and they are solved. Classroom observations are used to see what is actually taking place in the classroom. And when they do observation, they meet teachers in order to discuss the observation, performance of the teachers and the performance of students (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994). One of the basic tasks of the principals is to asses and revisit the instructional programs in school. And the principals have to review to what extent the goals of school are achieved and what should be done for further higher achievements.

Principal as Instructional Leader

Principals are considered as instructional and curriculum expert who is capable of providing guidance to the teachers on instructional and curricular matters (Mitchell & Castle, 2005). Leithwood (1994) also posits that the principal possesses behaviors which influence curriculum, teacher instruction, supervision, and staff development. Principals have to play the role of a teacher. They need to understand the problems of teachers and psyche of teachers in order to solve their problems guide them and motivate them in classroom activities. Therefore, they need continuous professional development (Sparks &Hirsh, 1997). According Trail (2000) a principal is a philosopher, managercheer leader and mentor in order to make a school successful. A principal plays the role of a philosopher, he has to conceive ideas and then put them to practice. Principals has to, strengthen and make clear useful values, beliefs, and cultural elements that can add value to school. A principal has to take care of the physical structure of the school. He has to do

every sort of work which can keep the school running. Principal has to take care of the school physical facilities because they have direct bearing on the students' academic achievements. School principals can promote learning and success of all students when they give attention to learning, encouraging collaboration, use data to improve learning, providing support, and aligning curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Tatlah, Iqbal, Amin, & Quraishi (2014) investigated the effect of leadership behavior on students' academic achievement at 10th grade students from private and public schools and they found that there was significant positive effect of the principals' behavior on the academic achievements of students. They also found that there was significant difference in the perceptions of principals and their observers.

Gaziel (2007) investigated the effect of the school principal's instructional/educational leadership behavior on students' achievement in secondary schools. He found that beside other factors, the school leadership also influences the achievement of students. He also included the class size, teachers' qualification and experience. Oluremt (2008) while investigating the effect of school leadership on the learning culture of schools found that the school principal has a significant efefct on the achievement and learning culture of students. They recommend that the school principals should regularly attend leadership workshop for upgrading their knowledge on leadership qualities. Alexson (2008) looked into the effect of leadership on the school culture. He investigated the school personnel, observed school operation, studied school documents, boards and the behavior of principals. His findings supported the effect of principals on schools. He found that principals play vital role in keeping the schools on the right track, their behavior makes a lot of difference in schools.

Hardman (2011) noted that transactional leadership have inverse relationship while transformational and passive-avoidance behaviors had positive relationship with students' achievement. Donnelly (2012) studied that how school leadership behaviors and organizational routines influence the high achievement of students and how relational trust helps in achieving high achievement. It was multi -case study investigated the role played by principal leadership behaviors and organizational routines. Data were collected through, focus group discussions, observation of building principals, document collection, and administration of quantitative questionnaires on transformational leadership and collective teacher efficacy. The results showed that principal leadership behaviors of transformational leadership and relational trust had positive impact on students' achievements.There is

significant relationship between mathematics marks, and attendance with the experience of principal (Clark, Martorell&Rockoff,2009).

Research Methodology

The current study used descriptive research paradigm. The study focused on exploring the instructional leadership behavior of principals at government girls' secondary and higher secondary schools in district Dir lower Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. The population of the current research consisted of all the schools principals (53), teachers (785) in government girls' high and higher secondary schools of district Dir Lower, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In this study the researchers randomly selected 30 schools from the total 53 government girls' high and higher secondary schools in district Dir lower, KP. Thus there were 30 schools principals in the sample of the study. It was very difficult to collect data from all the teachers. Therefore the researcher selected six teachers from each school randomly. Thus there were total 180 teachers constituted the sample size of the study.

Research instruments

Data were collected through Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1983). There are total 10 dimensions which measure different behaviors of principals. These dimensions are further divided into 10 instructional leadership functions. Each one has different items. These 10 instructional functions consists of: framing the schools goals, communicating the schools' goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning. The survey consisted of 50 Likert type questions ranging from one to five. For school principals and teachers, a Five-point Rating scale was used. The scale consists of 10 subscales. The reliability for these 10 subscales was 0.80 using Cronbach's test which measures internal consistency of items. The subscale of the PIMRS instruments is scored by calculating the mean for the items that composed each subscale. There were total 50 items in the original scale. However, it was felt that some of the dimensions were missing in the questionnaire.

Therefore, dimensions related with problem solving skills, community involvement skills, collegiality skills and relations with higher authorities were included. Thus the total number of items went to 66 items. Thus, the survey consisted of 66 items, not including demographic. The teachers gave their own responses about the instructional leadership of principals. The questionnaire of the current research was shown to experts in the field, they gave valuable suggestions for the portion which was developed by the researcher. The

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questionnaire was pretested and it came to know that there were difficulties in understanding the questionnaire, hence it was translated into Urdu. The translation was shown to experts in English and Urdu language, they made necessary corrections. The translated questionnaire was then pre-tested. After that it was piloted, Cronbach Alpha was calculated for questionnaires and was found 0. 80
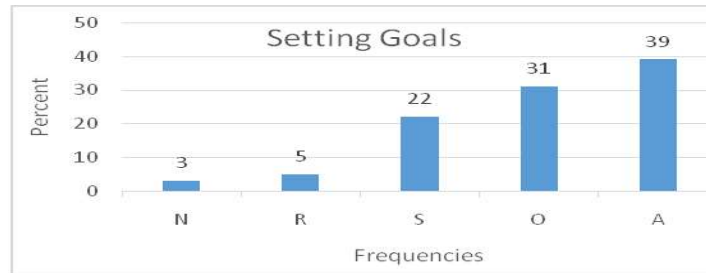
Results

Figure1. Framing the School Goals

Key: N: Never   R: Rarely   S: Sometimes O: Often A: Always

Figure 1 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "developing the school goals by the principals" from the perspectives of teachers. There were total 162 respondents, out of which 47% opined that the principals always "develop annual school wide goals", 30 % often, 16 % sometimes and 4% rarely and 2 % said that principals never develop school wide goals.
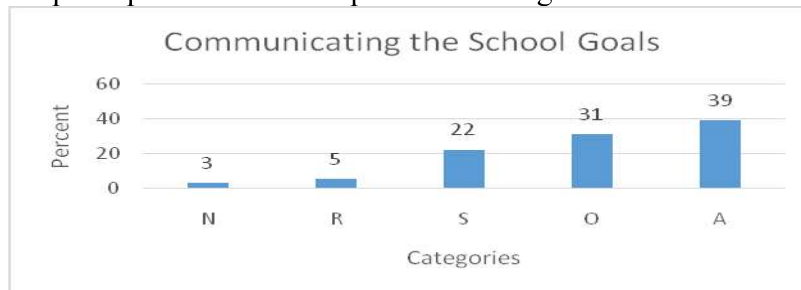

Figure2 Communicating the School Goals

Figure 2 shows the percentage regarding "Communicating school goals" from the perspectives of teachers. There 44% opined that the principals always "communicate", 23 % often, 20 % sometimes and 5 % rarely and 4 % said that principals never communicate school gals to teachers and others.

Figure 3 Supervising & Evaluating Instruction

Figure 3 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "supervision and evaluation of instruction" from the perspectives of teachers. There were total 162 respondents, out of which 40% opined that the principals always "develop annual school wide goals", 28 % 'often'21 % sometimes and 7% rarely and 3 % said that principals supervise and evaluate instruction.
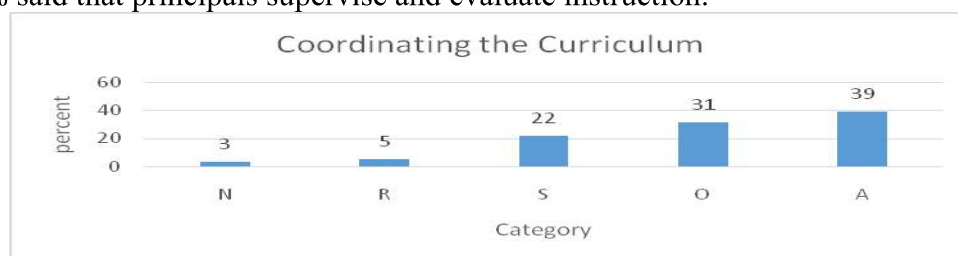

Figure 4 Coordinating the Curriculum

Figure 4 shows percentage regarding "coordinating the curriculum by the principals" from the perspectives of teachers. There were total 162 respondents, out of which 42% noted that the principals always "make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels", 30 % often, 18 % sometimes,5 % rarely do it and 4% never do it.

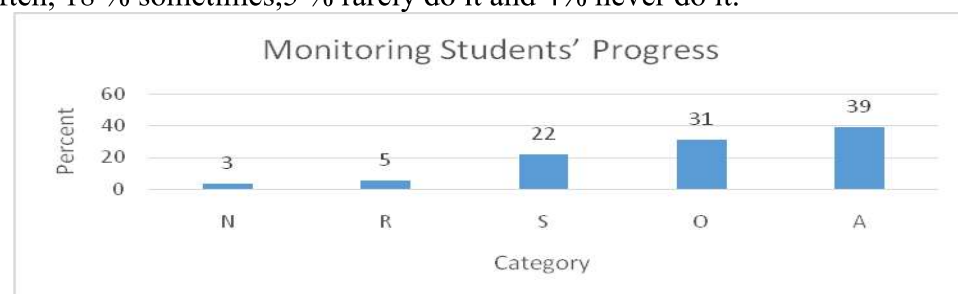

Figure 5Monitoring Students' Progress

Figure 5 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "monitoring student progress by the principals from the perspectives of teachers". There were total 162 persons responded, 39% expressed their opinion that the principals always "meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress", 24% often, 26 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 4% never do it
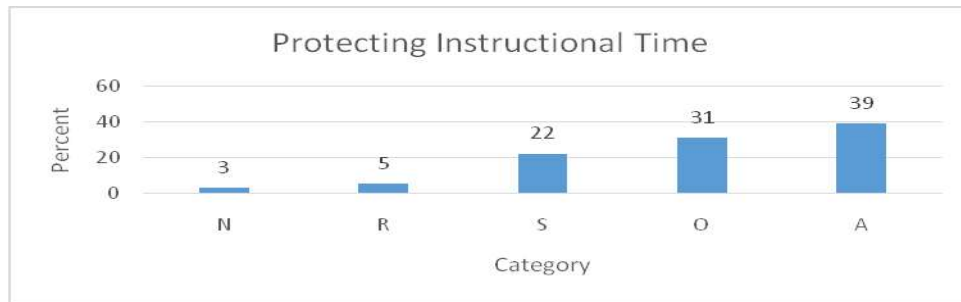
Figure 6 Protecting Instructional Time

Figure 6 shows percentage regarding ''Protecting instructional time''' by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. As a whole 38% recorded that the principals always "limit interruptions of instructional time by public address announcement", 28 % often, 26 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 4% never do it.
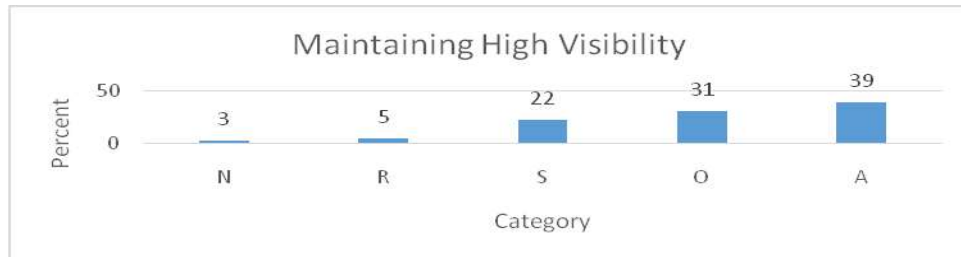

Figure 7Maintaining High Visibility

Figure #7 shows the percentage regarding "maintaining high visibility" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. Total 39% opined that the principals always "talk informally with students and teachers during recess and breaks", 31 % often frame, 22 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 3% never do it.

Figure 8 Providing Incentives for Teachers

Figure # 8 shows the percentage of teachers' regarding providing incentives for teachers by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. Out of 162 teachers 39% noted that the principals always strengthen superior performance

by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters 31 % often, 22 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 3% never do it.

Figure 9 Promoting Professional Development

Figure # 9 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "Promoting Professional Development" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. Of 162 teachers 39% expressed their opinion that the principals always "make sure that in service activities attended by staff are in line with the school's goals", 31% often, 22 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 3% posit that they never do it.

Figure 10   Providing Incentives for Learning

 Figure# 10 shows the percentage regarding "providing incentives for learning by the principals from the perspectives of teachers".   There were 162 respondents, out of which % recorded that the principals always recognize students who do "excellent work with formal rewards such as an honor.roll or mention in the principal's newsletter", 31% often,16 % sometimes, 6% rarely do it and 5% never do it.
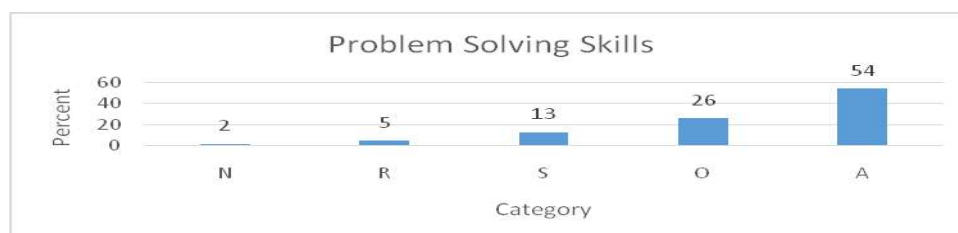

Figure 11 Problem Solving Skills

Figure11 shows the percentage of teachers' responses regarding "Problem Solving skills" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers.   Of 162

teachers 58% opined that the principals always resolves issues peacefully, 26 % often, 13 % sometimes and 3 % rarely do it.
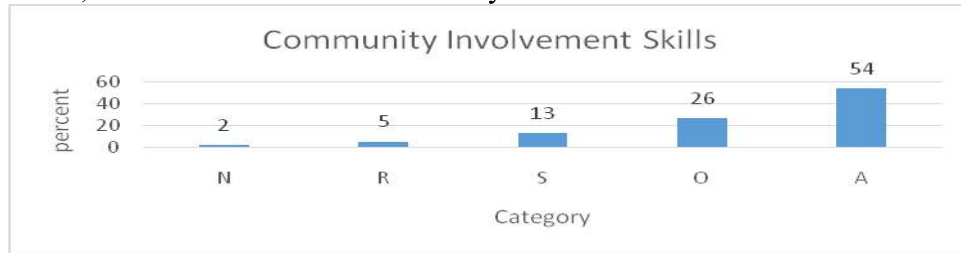

Figure 12 Community Involvement Skills

Figure 12 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "Community Involvement Skills" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. Out of 162 teachers 42% opined that the principals always provided opportunities to the community to contribute to the school, 28 % often, 16 % sometimes,7% rarely do it and 9% never do it.
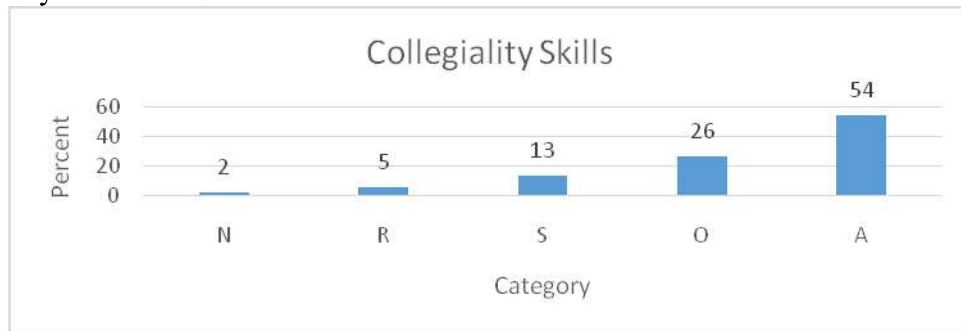

Figure 13 Collegiality Skills

Figure # 13 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "Collegiality Skills" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. There were total 162 respondents, out of which 54% opined that the principals always tries to bring together all the staff members, 26 % often, 13 % sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and .2% never do it.

Figure 14 Relations with Higher Authorities

Figure# 14 shows the frequency and percentage regarding "Relations with Higher Authorities" by the principals from the perspectives of teachers. Total 162 persons responded, 46% noted that the principals always try to maintain good relations with authorities, 27 % often, 17% sometimes, 5 % rarely do it and 5 never do it.

Conclusions

1. Goals are extremely important for the school, all the principals did not develop school wide goals and according to the teachers' point of view, principals did not get input from the teachers.

2. About half of the principals communicated the school goals to the members of the school community which was not encouraging. The principals must communicate the school goals to all concerned.

3. Majority of the principals did not supervise and evaluated instruction of teachers.

4. Again majority of the principals keeps good relations with the staff members but again there are many teacher who did not bother that much about the relation with the staff members.

5. Majority of the principals maintain good relations with the authorities but still there are many principals who did notmaintain good relations or they sometimes did it.

6. Majority of the teachers posited that principals develop the school goals but there are still many principals who did not so and similarly there are many principals who did not communicate the school goals to the faculty members.

7. Majority of the teachers said that the principals always supervise and evaluate instruction. Nonetheless, there are many teachers who did not agree that principals supervise instruction.

8. Majority of teachers agreed that principals monitor students' progress by meeting individual teachers but again there are many teachers who posited that they did it sometime or never did it.

9. Many teachers did not agree that principals limit interruptions.

10. Majority of the teachers agreed that principals maintain high visibility. And there are many who said they do it sometimes and others said that they never did it.

11. There were many teachers who did not agree that principals strengthen teachers by giving them various incentives.

Recommendations

1. Goals are extremely important for the school, all the principals may develop school wide goals, take teachers' point of view on goals development and

communicate the school goals to the members of the school community so that they work for the achievement of the goals.

2. It is recommended that principals may supervise and evaluate instruction of teachers, consider the school result when coordinating the curriculum.

3. Principals need to monitor students' progress in schools, encourage teachers for giving more time to learning instructional skills.

4. Principals should maintain high visibility in schools, they may provide professional development opportunities for teachers and they may provide incentives for learning of the students and for teachers' recognition in the schools.

5. Principals should use the community involvement skills in the school for the improvement of the schools, resolve issues amicably, maintain good relations with higher authorities for the improvement of the school.

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