

Features of an Admirable Schools

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Abstract

This study tackled a pressing issue: the widespread deterioration in the quality of education within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. There were high expectations for secondary schools in the region, both from public and private stakeholders, including parents who were seeking trustworthy information about what makes a school truly admirable. Consequently, it became imperative to discern the key elements contributing to school excellence, drawing upon global literature reviews and feedback from various stakeholders. The questionnaires administered to principals, teachers, and students included items gathered from reputable sources and were categorized into distinct groups, encompassing aspects specific to schools, strategies for school improvement, and the competencies demonstrated by effective school principals. The study's target population comprised 247 principals/headmasters, 2,964 teachers, and over 10,000 10th-grade students in 247 boys' high schools located within Peshawar City. These schools comprised 27 public and 220 private institutions within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The sample size encompassed 30 principals, 60 teachers, and 600 10th-grade students. Data collection involved the administration of questionnaires to principals/headmasters, teachers, and students. The collected data underwent both quantitative and qualitative analyses, with quantitative methods used to evaluate specific aspects of the data and qualitative data categorized for subsequent discussions. The study's findings unveiled that school excellence is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors. Paramount among these were relevant curricular

offerings, dedicated and well-trained educators, engagement in extracurricular activities, the effectiveness of school principals/head teachers, collaborative efforts among teachers, and the presence of adequate infrastructure. Principals/head teachers played a pivotal role in enhancing school effectiveness by overseeing instructional supervision, efficient administration, promoting teacher collaboration, and involving stakeholders in decision-making processes. Positive school-community relationships also made a substantial contribution to school effectiveness. Admirable institutions were characterized by effective classroom interactions, a perception among stakeholders that the school provided an optimal environment for teaching and learning, and a sense of pride among both educators and students in the school's effectiveness. The recommendations derived from this study were drawn from a synthesis of the literature review and input from a diverse array of stakeholders. These recommendations encompassed both general and specific factors, with a strong emphasis on the leadership abilities of principals, the presence of qualified and committed educators, the cultivation of a conducive school environment, the provision of appropriate infrastructure, and the nurturing of effective school-home relationships. The study adeptly addressed all research questions it posed.

Keywords: Excellence, Admirable, Factors, Principals, Students, Teachers, School effectiveness.

Introduction

Education is often regarded as a systematic endeavor, where success hinges on both its internal and external effectiveness, ultimately culminating in the achievement of excellence within educational institutions. The primary objective of education is to cultivate students equipped with foundational knowledge and essential skills that are sought after in the contemporary job market. Consequently, the outcomes and yields of the educational system should align with the significant resources invested in this endeavor.

Excellence in schools is an ideal that adopts a multifaceted and holistic approach. It encompasses all facets of learning among education stakeholders, aiming for noticeable and advantageous transformations in the behavior of learners as they work toward becoming effective citizens and better individuals. Its core elements encompass inculcating a fervor for learning, nurturing critical thought, cultivating problem-solving aptitude, fostering an appreciation for aesthetics, stimulating curiosity, advocating a spirit of inquiry, nurturing creativity, bolstering interpersonal proficiency, and extending beyond what can

be imagined for the sake of excellence. The pursuit of excellence in education acknowledges that there is always room for improvement and progress beyond mere competence.

The evaluation of a school's effectiveness must be recognized as multi-dimensional, and a single indicator cannot suffice. Further elements such as the formulation of the curriculum, the provision of educational facilities, the classroom environment, the structure of schools and classrooms, the availability of library and laboratory resources, playground amenities, access to electricity, gas, and water, sanitation provisions, and security measures all exert an impact on the efficiency of the educational system.

The National Education Policy 2009 underscored that enhancements in the education system can be attained through proficient, dedicated, and resolute educators, a curriculum aligned with both national and international benchmarks, a comprehensive evaluation framework, and a suitable learning milieu. Nevertheless, the crucial absent component is the caliber of teachers.

Iqbal (2005) noted that the term 'effectiveness' is often used interchangeably with 'excellence' in educational literature. It was observed that admirable schools attain effectiveness by surpassing societal expectations through remarkable achievements, with both teachers and students putting in extra effort compared to less effective schools. Achieving excellence in schools is a gradual process that necessitates persistent efforts to transform conditions and meticulous approaches to maintain intricate relationships within and outside the school. Significantly, research has shown that the improvement of the quality of interpersonal relations among stakeholders enhances the school environment, uplifts staff self-confidence, and accelerates public trust in the educational system.

It is a commonly observed phenomenon that successful schools are those where a majority of students achieve high test scores and excel academically in lower grades. These schools align their educational goals with the student's abilities, resulting in a smooth fit. Conversely, schools are less successful for students who struggle academically, fail in one or more subjects, experience social isolation, or lack clear life and educational goals.

As Sergiovanni (1983) posited, effective schools, like other human enterprises, evolve through persistent efforts to adapt to changing conditions and diligent approaches to sustaining complex processes and relationships within and outside the school. Research has consistently shown that efforts to enhance the quality of personal relationships among stakeholders strengthen the school's overall environment, boost the morale of staff, and enhance the confidence of the public in the educational system.

Review of Literature

According to Sergiovanni (1983), competence can be defined as the mastery of predetermined essential fundamentals. To explain what excellence in schools means, the author uses the example of playing the harmonica. A person is competent in playing the harmonica when they can play the notes correctly and deliver a performance that is recognized as technically skilled. However, in admirable schools, there is more to it than just technical competence. There is a sense of purpose that unites people towards a common goal. Work takes on meaning, and life becomes purposeful and significant. In these schools, teachers and pupils work together with enthusiasm, and achievements are readily acknowledged. Excellence encompasses more than just high moral standards, excellent test scores, or receiving awards. It is a culture of striving for continuous improvement, where everyone is valued and supported to reach their full potential.

Quality education, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the educational system meets the economic needs of society. The evaluation of educational quality often hinges upon the assessment of student's performance and the establishment of standards of attainment across a spectrum of school subjects. Expressing concerns regarding a potential deterioration in the quality of education typically implies a decrease in these standards of achievement. This reduction is commonly ascertained through the examination results or other scholastic benchmarks utilized to measure educational performance.

Imran et al. (2008) argue that the concept of quality education should be contextualized within the ever-changing organizational context in which schools operate. The external environment is molded by the developmental framework specific to the given region, whereas the internal environment manifests itself through elements including infrastructure, human resources, the pedagogical process, and the progression of students.

Enhancing educational standards and augmenting students' learning outcomes demand a sustained and persistent endeavor. The refinement of the teaching-learning process perpetually remains amenable to enhancement through innovative methodologies. Recent government reforms and initiatives have concentrated on instituting minimal educational benchmarks, frequently executed via curriculum frameworks and assessment procedures. To optimize the efficacy of these initiatives, the strategic utilization of short-term planning, as exemplified by target-setting plans designed to elevate standards, has garnered escalating significance.

Under the National Education Policy of 2009, the educational system is visualized as a means through which students are empowered to expose their skills and talents, thereby equipping them to make meaningful contributions to the advancement of society. A well-rounded individual should embody qualities

such as patriotism, concern for the welfare of the country, character, tolerance, commitment to social justice, democratic values, cultural awareness, historical knowledge, and an understanding of Pakistan's ideology, purpose, and goals for its citizens.

Educational institutions are anticipated to furnish high-quality education to every student, irrespective of their socioeconomic or demographic background. All students should have equal education opportunities, and achieving such an inclusive atmosphere requires careful planning each year. Effective schools prioritize the educational goals of teaching and learning and respond to the demands of society. They work diligently to ensure the all-round development of students. In contrast, less effective schools may not invest the same effort in meeting the desires and expectations of parents, leading to a disparity in the educational experience of students.

Ed Balls (2008) asserts that good schools make a distinctive contribution through admirable teaching and learning, fostering confidence, teamwork, leadership skills, responsibility, and successful relationships among students. These educational institutions also work as central community assets, providing fruitful events for students and families to participate in sporting and cultural pursuits. Effective schools demonstrate an inclusive comprehension of the child and adopt a proactive posture in detecting and mitigating emerging challenges before become more serious.

According to Daggett (2005), Engagement in the learning process leads to real achievement and an increased likelihood of excelling in their endeavors. Persistent efforts and consistent attention to maintaining complex processes, both within and outside the school, are key factors in achieving such excellence. Iqbal (2005) stated that exceptional schools are discerned by the following attributes:

- Admirable schools engage in meaningful and purposeful work, emphasizing the importance of their educational mission.
- These schools foster productive interactions between teachers and students, creating a conducive learning environment.
- Admirable schools exhibit a commitment to completing tasks and assignments promptly, driven by a shared enthusiasm for realizing the school's objectives.
- Achievements, both by individual students and the school as a whole, are readily identifiable and acknowledged.
- Excellence in these schools is not solely reliant on individual efforts, but rather, it is the result of a collective endeavor involving both the school and its students.
- The curriculum and co-curricular programs in excellent schools are designed

to provide long-term benefits that extend beyond test scores.

- High test scores are a notable aspect, excellence in these schools is not solely measured by test performance. It can also be discerned through various indicators that reflect value-oriented outcomes aligned with the school's specific objectives.

Iqbal (2005) identified the following additional features of admirable schools:

1. Admirable schools consistently meet a high standard of effectiveness in their educational endeavors.
2. These schools go above and beyond in meeting the elevated expectations of society, achieving outstanding results.
3. Admirable schools exhibit a strong and cohesive organizational culture, driven by a clear sense of purpose that guides their actions and decisions.
4. In the pursuit of the fundamental objectives of the school, educators and other staff members are provided with appropriate goals and directions.
5. The school environment is characterized by the active and cooperative involvement of various stakeholders including students, parents, and teachers from society.

TLRP (2006), emphasized these points for the effective teaching-learning process:

- Effective teaching and learning go beyond academic knowledge and prepare learners for various aspects of life, encompassing a wide range of skills and competencies.
- It involves engaging with knowledge that is considered valuable and relevant, ensuring that what is taught is meaningful.
- Effective teaching acknowledges the role of students' prior experiences and previous learning in shaping their current understanding and abilities.
- Teachers play a crucial role in supporting and guiding students through the learning process, providing the necessary structure and assistance.
- Assessments and evaluations should align with the learning objectives and goals, ensuring that they accurately reflect what students have learned.
- Effective teaching and learning encourage active participation and engagement on the part of the learner, fostering curiosity and a desire to explore and learn.
- It recognizes the importance of both individual and social aspects of learning, emphasizing collaboration, communication, and the development of interpersonal skills.

- Effective teaching acknowledges that learning takes place not only in formal educational settings but also through informal, everyday experiences.
- Effective teaching is closely tied to the professional development and continuous learning of teachers, who must stay updated on best practices and pedagogical approaches.
- Educational policies and frameworks should consistently prioritize and support teaching and learning as their central mission.

Following the findings presented by Horne and Brown (2004), the process of school improvement can be delineated as a confluence of ongoing and simultaneous activities within an educational institution. This multifaceted undertaking encompasses several pivotal facets, including:

- The school, in its pursuit of improvement, commits itself to the augmentation of students' educational achievements and overall well-being.
- A paramount focus is placed on the refinement of pedagogical practices and the enhancement of the teaching and learning experience within the school.
- Irrespective of its resource constraints, the schools endeavor to cultivate the ability to initiate and manage change autonomously, while concurrently shaping its developmental trajectory.
- A critical assessment of the prevailing institutional culture is conducted, to foster positive cultural norms conducive to progress and growth.
- The school formulates a suite of strategies tailored to realize its predetermined objectives and aspirations.
- Attention is directed towards the internal factors and conditions that facilitate and expedite the process of transformation.
- Even during periods of instability and flux, the school strives to maintain a consistent forward momentum in its pursuit of improvement.
- Vigilant monitoring and rigorous evaluation are integral components of the school's approach, aimed at scrutinizing the processes, measuring progress, assessing achievements, and fostering development.

Bouchey and Harter (2005) underscored the significance of parental and teacher support for school children, highlighting its pivotal role in influencing their academic performance. Willms (2004) posited that successful schools exhibit subtle yet crucial distinctions, including heightened teacher autonomy, structured student assessments, and the cultivation of a robust disciplinary climate.

Hopkins (2001), drawing from the perspectives of Gray et al. (1999), explored

multiple facets of the definition of 'school improvement,' with a common thread emphasizing the enhancement of schools as conducive environments for both educators and learners.

These scholarly viewpoints collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of school improvement efforts and the various factors that contribute to creating enriched educational settings.

The strategies outlined by Dalin (1994), as cited by Khan (2014), offer valuable insights into ensuring the effectiveness and excellence of public schools:

1. Balancing creativity and practicality
2. Alignment with local realities
3. Minimizing political influence
4. Effective communication
5. Dual role of school administrators as facilitators

UNESCO's perspective on quality education, as delineated in 1998, underscores several key factors integral to the attainment and perpetuation of quality within educational institutions. These factors highlight the intricate interplay of various components inherent in the educational system. These salient points can be summarized as follows:

1. Paramount in this pursuit is the competence and unwavering dedication of teaching and administrative staff. Exceptional educators, well-versed in their craft, driven, and resolute in their commitment, assume pivotal roles in the delivery of quality education.
2. The curriculum stands as a bedrock element of education. It should be meticulously structured, current, and meticulously aligned with educational objectives and societal requisites. A high-caliber curriculum ensures that students receive a pertinent and all-encompassing education.
3. The quality of education also hinges on the students themselves. Students actively contribute to the learning milieu, and their motivation, pre-existing knowledge, and dedication to learning constitute pivotal factors influencing the overarching quality of education.
4. The physical facilities, resources, and the overarching external milieu wherein education unfolds hold unequivocal significance. Adequate infrastructure, well-appointed classrooms, libraries, and supplementary amenities contribute indispensably to a conducive learning atmosphere.
5. Effective management surfaces as an indispensable prerequisite for harmonizing all facets of the institution. This encompasses meticulous planning, judicious resource allocation, and transparent decision-making processes. Quality management ensures the unified

operationality of the institution.

According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000), effective schools exhibit several characteristics that contribute to their success:

1. In effective schools, teachers and parents maintain regular communication. This close collaboration between educators and parents helps in monitoring student progress and creates a supportive learning environment.
2. Effective schools have high expectations for their students. Teachers expect students to perform well academically, and students, in turn, strive to meet these expectations.
3. The overall atmosphere in effective schools is conducive to learning. This includes a positive and motivating environment that encourages excellence.
4. Everyone involved in effective schools, including students, staff, administrators, and parents, is committed to achieving excellence in education.

Regarding the change process in schools, as quoted by Khan (2014) from Miles (1986) and Fullan (1991), it's important to note that the process is not a linear one but consists of three interrelated stages: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. These stages can overlap and influence each other. Factors that play a role in the initiation phase of the change process include:

1. The presence of innovative ideas and their quality can influence the initiation of change in schools.
2. Having access to these innovations is crucial for schools to consider implementing them.
3. Support and advocacy from the central administration or higher authorities can encourage schools to initiate changes.
4. Teachers themselves advocating for change can be a driving force in the initiation phase.
5. External change agents, such as consultants or experts, can facilitate and support the initiation of change.
6. The local community's pressure, support, or apathy towards change can also impact the initiation phase.
7. Availability of funds and policies at federal, state, or local levels can promote or hinder change initiation.
8. The ability of the school to identify and address issues and challenges is essential during the initiation phase.

The various lists of indicators and factors found in the literature provide insights into different aspects of effectiveness and excellence in schools. Despite variations in terminology, the common thread among these indicators is

their focus on quality, effectiveness, and excellence, which are somewhat synonymous. The most important indicators identified in the global and local literature point to several aspects that can promote excellence, effectiveness, and quality, all of which are considered characteristics of excellent schools:

1. Well-designed and up-to-date curricula are fundamental to providing a quality education that meets the needs of students and society.
2. High-quality education depends on educators who are well-trained, knowledgeable, and skilled in their teaching practices.
3. Beyond academics, the inclusion and effective implementation of co-curricular activities contribute to a well-rounded education.
4. Effective teaching involves the use of appropriate instructional methods and strategies tailored to the needs of students.
5. School leadership plays a critical role in promoting excellence. Effective principals provide direction, support, and a positive school culture.
6. Collaboration and support among teachers within the school community enhance the overall quality of education.
7. Adequate physical infrastructure and resources, such as classrooms, libraries, and technology, are essential for effective teaching and learning.
8. Principals should actively supervise and guide to ensure that teaching and learning processes are effective.
9. Teachers benefit from ongoing professional development and instructional support to improve their teaching methods.
10. A satisfied teaching staff is more likely to be motivated, which, in turn, positively impacts the quality of education.
11. Establishing and maintaining strong relationships with the local community can enrich the educational experience.
12. Integrating modern technologies into the teaching-learning process can enhance the quality of education.
13. Positive and productive interactions between teachers and students are essential for effective learning.
14. Teachers and students should have access to and be satisfied with the technology used in the educational process.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives in mind:

1. To disseminate fundamental information regarding outstanding educational institutions to both educators and students.
2. To discern the factors and characteristics that foster excellence and

efficacy within high schools.

3. To pinpoint discrepancies in various educational approaches and formulate pertinent recommendations aimed at enhancing the success of school approaches.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were evaluated

1. What are the key features and attributes that define an educational institution as outstanding, and how can this information be effectively communicated to educators and students?
2. What factors and characteristics contribute to the excellence and effectiveness of high schools, and how can these factors be identified and measured?
3. In what ways do educational approaches in high schools vary, and what specific discrepancies exist among these approaches? Furthermore, what recommendations can be made to bridge these gaps and enhance the overall effectiveness of school strategies?

Population

In the pursuit of comprehensively examining the educational landscape of Peshawar City, the population under scrutiny encompassed a diverse selection of stakeholders within the educational domain. Specifically, the study encompassed 247 principals, 2,964 teaching professionals, and an impressive group exceeding 10,000 students, all of whom were enrolled in the 10th grade. This expansive and multi-faceted cohort was drawn from a total of 247 high schools located within Peshawar City, a demarcation that included a spectrum of 27 publicly funded institutions and 220 privately administered establishments. Public sector schools were found to employ 324 educators, while their counterparts in the private sector constituted a significantly larger contingent, numbering 2,640.

Sample

The study's sample size comprised 30 principals, representing 12.14% of the total participants, with 4 from public schools and 26 from private schools. Additionally, there were 60 teachers, accounting for 2.02% of the sample, with 8 hailing from public schools and 52 from private schools. Lastly, 600 10th-grade students, constituting 6% of the sample, were included, containing 80 students from public schools and 520 from private schools.

Research Tools

Used three opinionnaires separately for principals/headmasters, teachers, and students.

Pilot Testing

Before commencing the formal fieldwork, a pilot test was undertaken using the developed questionnaires. These instruments were initially trialed on four teachers, 40 students from two distinct high schools, and two principals from these institutions to assess their validity and practical utility in the study. Subsequently, based on their feedback and responses, refinements were made to the instruments, including the removal of extraneous statements and questions, the incorporation of new relevant statements and questions, and minor adjustments aimed at enhancing their user-friendliness for the study participants.

Sent and Returned of Opinionnaires

The questionnaires were personally administered to the participants, and the entire process spanned approximately two months. The response rate for the returned questionnaires was notably satisfactory. It's essential to recognize that stakeholders in education encompass not only the management but also principals, teachers, and students, all of whom possess insights into aspects such as achievement, standards, effectiveness, and other salient attributes of educational institutions.

Statistical Analysis of Principals' Responses

The responses collected from 30 principals, gathered through the administered questionnaires focusing on the characteristics of admirable schools, underwent statistical analysis. Specifically, a non-parametric test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, was employed using the software Minitab to assess the similarity among the principals' responses. The responses from the principals, comprising evaluations on 60 different subjects with five available choices, are detailed in Table 1.1

Table-1.1

S. No.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	15	15	0	0	0	30
2	17	13	0	0	0	30
3	17	9	2	1	1	30
4	17	13	0	0	0	30
5	15	14	1	0	0	30
6	15	14	0	1	0	30
7	10	14	3	3	0	30
8	15	14	1	0	0	30
9	14	15	0	0	1	30
10	15	13	2	0	0	30
11	15	12	2	0	1	30
12	17	8	4	0	1	30
13	15	12	3	0	0	30
14	14	15	1	0	0	30
15	5	12	4	7	2	30
16	15	14	0	1	0	30
17	17	13	0	0	0	30
18	16	14	0	0	0	30
19	22	8	0	0	0	30
20	14	14	2	0	0	30
21	19	11	0	0	0	30
22	20	10	0	0	0	30
23	16	11	3	0	0	30
24	18	12	0	0	0	30
25	16	13	1	0	0	30
26	15	15	0	0	0	30
27	16	14	0	0	0	30
28	15	13	2	0	0	30
29	13	14	3	0	0	30
30	15	14	1	0	0	30
31	13	14	3	0	0	30
32	15	14	1	0	0	30
33	19	10	1	0	0	30
34	18	11	1	0	0	30
35	17	12	0	1	0	30

36	13	16	1	0	0	30
37	19	9	2	0	0	30
38	15	12	0	2	1	30
39	17	12	1	0	0	30
40	16	14	0	0	0	30
41	14	9	2	5	0	30
42	14	15	0	1	0	30
43	15	14	1	0	0	30
44	17	12	0	1	0	30
45	10	18	0	2	0	30
46	18	12	0	0	0	30
47	20	10	0	0	0	30
48	23	6	1	0	0	30
49	18	11	1	0	0	30
50	16	13	0	1	0	30
51	15	12	1	2	0	30
52	19	10	0	1	0	30
53	17	10	2	1	0	30
54	19	9	2	0	0	30
55	16	14	0	0	0	30
56	21	9	0	0	0	30
57	13	12	3	2	0	30
58	21	9	0	0	0	30
59	15	11	1	3	0	30
60	15	12	3	0	0	30

H = 4.77 DF = 59 P = 1.000

H = 5.15 DF = 59 P = 1.000 (adjusted for ties)

Based on the aforementioned p-value, it was determined that the statistical hypothesis of the study was insignificant. In conclusion, the responses from all the principals showed no discernible differences on average.

11. Statistical Analysis of Teachers' Responses

A non-parametric statistical analysis was conducted on the responses of 60 teachers who participated in an opinionnaire survey concerning the features of school excellence. The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed using the Minitab software to examine the similarities in the teachers' responses. The dataset comprised 20 subjects, each offering five response choices, as presented in Table 1.2.

Table-1.2

S. No.	Strong Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	35	23	1	1	0	60
2	5	15	6	23	11	60
3	32	25	0	0	1	60
4	15	25	11	9	0	60
5	35	21	0	1	1	60
6	32	26	0	0	2	60
7	41	14	2	1	2	60
8	32	24	1	1	2	60
9	34	22	2	2	0	60
10	31	22	4	1	2	60
11	42	15	1	0	2	60
12	39	18	1	0	2	60
13	23	28	3	4	2	60
14	19	28	9	3	1	60
15	3	28	9	10	10	60
16	13	31	12	3	1	60
17	26	28	3	2	1	60
18	27	25	3	4	1	60
19	11	29	12	7	1	60
20	7	26	12	10	5	60

H = 4.07 DF = 19 P = 1.000

H = 4.10 DF = 19 P = 1.000

(Adjusted for ties)

In light of the mentioned p-value, it becomes apparent that the statistical hypothesis of this study was estimated as insignificant. In summary, it can be concluded that the responses provided by all the teachers were consistent on average.

Students' Responses and its Statistical Analysis

A statistical analysis was conducted on the responses obtained from a sample of 600 students. These responses were collected through a questionnaire addressing the characteristics of an admirable schools. The analysis employed the Kruskal-Wallis test and was facilitated using the Minitab software. The primary objective of this analysis was to explore the level of agreement among

students' opinions. The students provided their responses on a range of 20 topics, each offering five choices: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." These response data are presented in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3

S. No. (Questions)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	376	188	10	12	14	600
2	171	132	104	68	125	600
3	259	264	11	34	32	600
4	205	202	75	48	70	600
5	242	238	23	57	40	600
6	192	207	70	51	80	600
7	194	250	36	59	61	600
8	225	208	69	46	52	600
9	200	202	51	97	50	600
10	162	249	43	74	72	600
11	174	184	111	52	79	600
12	161	227	94	55	63	600
13	164	209	88	67	72	600
14	222	253	41	38	46	600
15	188	225	68	71	48	600
16	237	217	37	75	34	600
17	304	163	74	29	30	600
18	201	276	23	61	39	600
19	167	186	83	82	82	600
20	230	220	43	71	36	600

H = 3.35 DF = 19 P = 1.000

H = 3.35 DF = 19 P = 1.000

(adjusted for ties)

Based on the aforementioned p-value, it is evident that the statistical hypothesis of the study was found to be insignificant. Consequently, the responses from all

students were remarkably consistent on average.

Conclusions

Based on the data analysis and interpretation, the following conclusions have been drawn regarding the major characteristics of both private and public admirable schools:

1. The attainment of school excellence is not exclusively linked to a sole factor, such as elevated morale, exceptional student endeavors, or a high pass rate. Rather, it is the culmination of numerous contributory elements, including well-structured curricula and a proficient teaching staff.
2. Improved relationships among stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the community, contribute to a positive school environment, enhance teachers' morale, and increase communal trust in the education system.
3. Both the curricular and co-curricular programs within educational institutions play a crucial role in cultivating a dedicated commitment to academic achievements.
4. Proactive interventions by school principals constitute a substantial factor in endeavors aimed at enhancing school improvement. This encompasses activities such as monitoring students' progress and furnishing them with valuable feedback.
5. Effective school leadership, particularly the vision and goals set by principals, is a cornerstone of school improvement. Successful leaders focus on students' needs and translate their visions into achievable objectives for the faculty.
6. Effective principals possess a deep understanding of teachers' activities in the classroom and can logically evaluate their performance.
7. Principals assume a central role in cultivating a school culture that encompasses values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meanings among parents, students, teachers, and the wider community. Their leadership qualities empower them to garner the full collaboration of teachers in the endeavor to enhance the school's performance.
8. Teachers are expected to utilize a wide range of instructional strategies to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Schools should provide the necessary equipment and materials to support these strategies.
9. Principals are responsible for resolving conflicts among teachers by fostering a sense of collegiality and discouraging adversarial relationships within the teaching staff.
10. Effective educational institutions align with the elevated societal

expectations by demonstrating notable achievements, a steadfast commitment to the teaching and learning process, and a resolute dedication to the attainment of their educational objectives.

11. Within outstanding educational institutions, the tasks and responsibilities carry substantial significance for all members of the school community.
12. Proficient principals possess a comprehensive understanding of their teachers' performance and offer assistance in addressing their issues and overcoming challenges.
13. Proficient principals engage in discussions with teachers about areas that require improvement and collaborate on strategies to achieve this improvement.
14. Competent principals discern administrative issues and implement suitable corrective actions to resolve the problem.
15. The study reveals a dissonance between the stated virtues and actual behavior of principals, such as punctuality, devotion, and honesty. While these virtues are emphasized as contributing to school excellence, some principals may not consistently demonstrate them. However, it is suggested that personal and administrative approaches can bring about a positive change in principals' attitudes, which is considered a fruitful characteristic of excellent schools. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning the principles advocated by principals with their actual practices, as the failure to do so can negatively impact the quality of education.

Based on the responses collected from educators through the questionnaire, several factors were discerned as significant contributors to fostering excellence and efficiency in secondary education, encompassing both public and private school sectors:

1. The level of career satisfaction among the teachers was recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing the overall quality of education. Satisfied teachers are more likely to be motivated and committed to their roles, which positively impacts the learning experience of students.
2. The provision of refresher courses for teachers' professional development was acknowledged as instrumental in keeping educators up-to-date with the latest teaching methodologies and subject knowledge, ultimately benefiting the quality of instruction.
3. Principals' active involvement and interest in addressing the concerns and challenges faced by both teaching staff and students within the school environment were seen as pivotal in fostering a supportive and conducive learning atmosphere.

4. The strength of the relationship between the school and the broader community was noted as a significant factor. Positive community engagement can lead to additional resources, support, and a sense of belonging for students, which can enhance their educational experience.
5. The effective incorporation of modern technologies into the teaching and learning process was recognized as a valuable resource. Technological tools facilitate interactive and innovative instructional methods that engage students and improve the learning experience.
6. The organization of various extracurricular and co-curricular activities for students was deemed beneficial for their holistic development and improved learning outcomes. Such activities provide opportunities for practical application of knowledge and skills.
7. Effective communication, both within the school and between teachers and students, was identified as a key element in the teaching-learning process. Clear and open communication fosters a better understanding of academic concepts and expectations.
8. The active participation of parents in school improvement initiatives was seen as a positive force for enhancing the quality of education. Parents' engagement in their children's education can lead to increased support, accountability, and a stronger sense of community within the school.

The responses provided by students to the statements presented to them have revealed several key characteristics that are considered crucial in defining excellence in schools, both in the public and private sectors:

1. Effective classroom interaction
2. Parents' school visits
3. Perceived school quality
4. Student satisfaction with instructional technologies
5. Co-Curricular activities
6. Library and laboratory utilization
7. Modern instructional technologies
8. Student devotion to learning
9. Effective administration
10. Student cooperation

Outcomes

The study's findings underscored the multifaceted nature of excellence within educational institutions. It revealed that excellence in schools is a complex phenomenon shaped by a myriad of interrelated factors. Among these factors, as identified by principals, key contributors to promoting excellence included

curriculum development, the presence of highly qualified and trained teaching staff, the effective integration of co-curricular activities, the adoption of suitable instructional methodologies, the presence of competent and dynamic principals, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment among teachers, and ensuring the necessary infrastructure. Additionally, the study emphasized the pivotal role of principals in overseeing and providing instructional support as a significant factor in elevating schools to the pinnacle of excellence.

Based on the feedback provided by teachers, several pivotal factors emerged as essential for promoting excellence in schools. These factors encompassed the imperative of cultivating job satisfaction among teachers, the implementation of ongoing professional development through refresher courses, the active engagement of principals in addressing the concerns of educators and students, the cultivation of vigorous school-community relationships, and the integration of innovative technologies to enhance the teaching and learning processes.

According to the students' feedback, admirable schools were characterized by several key elements. These included the presence of highly effective classroom interactions, regular visits by parents to the school, a prevailing perception among both students and parents that the school represented an optimal environment for learning, a high level of student satisfaction with instructional technologies, and a tangible enthusiasm among students regarding the overall effectiveness of their educational institutions.

Recommendations

The study derived the subsequent recommendations through a meticulous analysis of the data and the subsequent inferences drawn:

To attain the pinnacle of excellence, exceptional schools must prioritize the cultivation of students' skill sets and the nurturing of their well-rounded personalities. In a broader context, the following pivotal factors have been identified as essential for elevating schools to the zenith of excellence:

- a. Empowering students with practical life skills.
- b. Providing teachers with opportunities for scaffold learning experiences.
- c. Aligning the assessment of needs with the learning process.
- d. Actively engaging learners in their educational journey.
- e. Nurturing both individual and collective developmental processes and outcomes.
- f. Encouraging and fostering participation in co-curricular activities.

The effectiveness of a school is profoundly influenced by the competencies and commitment of its principals. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that

principals in less effective schools should possess and cultivate the following qualities:

- a. School principals or headmasters should possess a well-rounded education, demonstrating dedication, integrity, punctuality, and a lack of political affiliations.
- b. Principals should hold well-informed and coherent visions for the future of their schools, with a strong focus on the students and their evolving needs.
- c. Principals should exhibit a high level of competence in translating their visionary goals into tangible objectives for their educational institutions, all the while establishing unequivocal expectations for students, teachers, and administrators alike.
- d. Principals should actively foster a school climate conducive to progress toward these defined goals and expectations.
- e. Continuous monitoring of progress is essential, ensuring that the school remains on course towards its objectives.
- f. In cases where progress falters, principals should intervene in a supportive and corrective manner, providing the necessary guidance and resources.
- g. Principals should encourage a culture of collegiality and healthy competition among teachers while discouraging any adversarial trends, thereby creating an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual growth within the school community.

Outstanding schools are characterized by the presence of highly competent and professionally skilled teachers who, through concerted efforts, contribute significantly to the attainment of excellence. These educators can be distinguished by the following attributes:

- a. Facilitating enriching learning experiences
- b. Promoting parental engagement
- c. Continuous professional development
- d. Delegation and collaboration
- e. Performance accountability
- f. Nurturing student growth
- g. Leveraging modern instructional technologies

In instances where educational institutions fall short of achieving the benchmarks of excellence, they manifest deficiencies that demand corrective measures to enhance their efficacy. This leads to the fundamental question: how can the recommendations gleaned from this research be effectively translated into a pragmatic action plan? While the study can furnish actionable insights to pertinent stakeholders, the actualization of behavioral transformation

necessitates the development of a comprehensive strategy through the implementation of public policies and administrative measures aimed at the revitalization of school leadership.

For instance, the introduction of a forceful monitoring and supervisory system can instill punctuality among principals, while a stringent accountability framework can foster honesty. Furthermore, motivational incentives can encourage dedication to the teaching profession. The impetus for change hinges upon the effective implementation of the study's recommendations, and the author's avenue for action is to submit these recommendations to the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, urging them to take appropriate actions. The catalyst for change will ultimately depend on the government's unwavering commitment to these reforms. Importantly, these suggestions are feasible without involving significant financial implications.

This research has added value by contextualizing and employing existing indicators within a distinct framework, utilizing different approaches and instruments. This study has yielded valuable insights into the critical components that must be in place within exemplary educational institutions, thereby furnishing a roadmap for less proficient schools to ascend to the zenith of excellence.

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