

TEACHER LEADERSHIP FOR DEVELOPING THE SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: *The study investigated the circumstances of teacher leadership concerning the policies, practices and challenges in secondary educational institutions in Bangladesh. Teachers are the per se leaders in society. A teacher being a leader, should possess a vision, a philosophical and superior lifestyle of an ideal leader. Students get attracted to their personalities and classroom teaching. As leaders, they share the leadership vision of the principal being practiced. Without principal leadership, teachers cannot contribute to educational development. Four secondary-level institutions were considered to collect the relevant data through informal meetings, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Two institutions were selected from the capital city Dhaka and the other two from the commercial town Chattogram. Twelve teachers and four principals were selected randomly. Findings show that teachers in secondary educational institutions are devoid of leadership. Many of them are involved in coaching and private tuition primarily. A rock-hard top-down educational administration has been prevailing in Bangladeshi educational administration, making the principal and teacher leadership nonchalant.*

Keywords: *teacher leadership, principal leadership, classroom teaching, educational administration*

1. Introduction

One of the most significant responsibilities placed on teachers today is leadership. The dedication of schools to their goals of guiding society, developing a school's good qualities, and effective practical education management is significantly influenced by teacher leadership (Gulbahar, 2017; Bellibas, 2020). York-Barr and Duke (2004: 287–288) suggested that 'teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievements. The importance of teacher leadership for teacher leaders, colleagues, school leaders, and schools, as well as beyond, has been noted in existing literature (Harris et al., 2019). On the other hand, there is a different account of teacher leadership practice (Weiner & Woulfin, 2018). Although these initiatives influence the core teaching and learning tasks, teachers are still largely excluded from the decision-making process and the major work done on school restructuring and reform (Supovitz,

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2018).

Alegado (2018) identified two factors that make it a problem for teacher leadership to flourish: one is the conventional 'principal-oriented' form of leadership that is highly ingrained to its system and second, the absence of leadership training and the categorization of teachers they follow. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2016) cited some more reasons teachers may not choose leadership roles. There is a sense from some teachers that the principals do not want to share leadership. Other teachers cite the lack of recognition for their efforts when they take on informal leadership activities. The lack of time and the personal values of teachers who want to make a difference in the classroom working with students are among the reasons for teachers not seeking leadership responsibilities. Finally, bureaucratic and institutional norms do not promote the idea of teacher leadership (Trinidad, 2019). Three primary factors, including the external educational setting, teachers' ability for additional work, and the role of senior managers, were identified by Mujis and Harris (2006) as impediments to teacher leadership.

Through the analysis of Bangladeshi secondary education, Salahuddin (2010) stated that a lack of knowledge about teacher leadership served as a "stumbling block" to its successful use. There is no mention of teacher and principal leadership in the education policy, 2010 in Bangladesh (National Education Policy, 2010). Rather, educational administration has been solely responsible for looking after secondary and higher secondary education in Bangladesh. Against this backdrop, the objectives of this study were set to unearth the state of teacher leadership policies, practices and the challenges besetting in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions.

2. Review of Related Studies

A leader should possess a high character standard and be a role model for his followers (Ong, 2019). So, the teacher leader must be an iconic character to both fellow teachers and the students with academic, administrative, ethical and social values. The core idea of the teacher leader as the instigator of change at the school and system level has been the focus of much contemporary analysis and discussion (Berg & Zoellick, 2019; Campbell et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2017). All the evidence about teacher leadership suggests that teachers, working purposefully, collectively, and collaboratively, can influence policy and practice in significant ways. The concept of teacher leadership has been advocated in many studies. The research by Lai and Cheung (2015) exposed educators' leadership behaviours and skills as they worked to implement change in Hong Kong after a curriculum reform. Schott et al. (2020) developed a conceptual framework incorporating the existing understanding of teacher leadership, its definitions, and its causes and effects. As instructors at various career phases engaged in a professional development programme, Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) looked into how teachers become teacher leaders. Wenner and Campbell (2017) looked at what teacher leadership is, how it is developed, its effects, and the things that help or hinder teacher leaders in their job. In addition, they discussed the theories that guide teacher leadership, the duties of teacher leaders in disciplinary contexts, and social justice and equitable problems.

Teacher leadership works when it is enforced or boosted up; when there prevails an environment conducive to teacher leadership. So, teacher leadership is proportionate to principal leadership (Hunzicker, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019; Sebastian et al., 2019). The principal's understanding and training on educational leadership and management, and eventually, his leadership and leadership style is the most critical factor that directly contributes to the student's learning. Studies (Bush &

Ng, 2019; Liljenberg, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2016; Szeto & Cheng, 2018; Tsai, 2015; Wilson, 2016) have shown that teacher leadership could be cultivated when principals build a school culture through formal structures, formal/informal leadership roles or behaviour, coaching, feedback and modelling inside and outside the classroom environment. Szeto and Cheng (2018) UK study echoed these conditions where the principal distributed leadership among the teachers, and created a culture of collaboration, trust and a shared vision.

Teacher leadership and principal leadership are two very closely correlated issues. Though there have been several studies on similar topics, the teacher leadership practices, and challenges have not been explicitly explored in the context. Bellibus et al. (2020) found that the more principals participate in learning-centered leadership, the more chances teachers have to engage with leadership practices. Hossain and Mozumder (2019), in an exploratory study on principal leadership, transformational leadership being the underpinning theory found that there exists in Bangladeshi schools and colleges transformational leadership-15%, transactional leadership-46% and Laissez-faire leadership-39%. In Bangladesh, 39% of principals were deemed to lack leadership. This grew over time due to the emphasis placed on management and bureaucracy, which took the shape of top-down authoritarian administration and prevented principals from exercising leadership. Therefore, to understand teacher leadership state and challenges, it is imperative to understand principal leadership. All efforts in this study have been directed towards understanding and uncovering leadership state and challenges of teachers in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions.

3. Methods

The researchers used the qualitative approach to conduct the study because it helps comprehend the meaningful and logical explanations of human behaviour, thinking and actions based on subjective experiences, judgments and opinions (Hennink, 2020; Flick, 2022) of the teachers and principals regarding teacher leadership, its policies, practices and challenges in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions. Our method focused on understanding how and in what state teacher leadership is at play in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions from the stakeholders' perspective.

Participants and Setting

All relevant stakeholders were explored for comprehensive data for this study. The general setting for this study was the four secondary educational institutions out of which two are located in Dhaka, the capital city and the rest are situated in Chattogram, the commercial metropolis in Bangladesh.

The respondents were selected by combining three teachers and the principal from each institution. So, total participation stood against four secondary educational institutions: twelve teachers coded as T1 through T12 and four principals coded as P1 through P4. While selecting the participants, the gender issue was considered to make a balance. All participants were from urban areas.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Teachers			Principals		
Cod e	Gende r	Ag e	Cod e	Gende r	Ag e

T1	Female	42	P1	Male	56
T2	Female	38	P2	Male	55
T3	Male	31	P3	Male	48
T4	Female	34	P4	Male	50
T5	Male	46			
T6	Male	41			
T7	Male	35			
T8	Female	29			
T9	Male	28			
T10	Male	36			
T11	Female	36			
T12	Female	32			

Data Collection and Analysis

The research sought to grasp the issue in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions by collecting extensive data over a year through semi-formal or informal conversations, meetings, surveys and semi-structured interviews. The data collection took place covering the educational session starting from January to December 2021. Data were collected through meetings, questionnaires and interviews in twelve 2-hour sessions with selected participants. Tables A and B in Appendix-I depict the adaptation of questionnaire to interview or involve the participants on the investigated topic. Furthermore, the first author's working experience as a principal gave insights into the gamut of affairs in the field of education in Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions in the paper.

In every visit to the four educational institutions, the principal was interviewed on an open-ended questionnaire served three days before the meeting. The researchers made face to face 2-hour informal conversations with the parents. The rest 2-hour session with the teachers was conducted serving the respondents an open-ended questionnaire. The researchers recorded and transcribed all the interviews and informal conversations. The field notes and transcription from informal discussions, surveys and interviews generated a large amount of data which were later compiled for thematic analysis.

From each institution, the principal was contacted for three days. The first day was allotted for the interview with the principal. The second day was scheduled for the selected teachers. For the first and second days, open ended questionnaires mostly on leadership and its challenges were served to the principal and the teachers for an interview and a survey respectively. The third session, though informal but effective, shed light on issues like classroom teaching, teacher-student relationship, teacher-parent relationship, parents' access to the principal, etc.

Ethics, Approval and Limitations

Ethical issues were given highest priority during the period of data collection. Approval from the concerned authority was sought and all concerned respondents were duly briefed before the commencement of the study. Respondents' names were kept secret using pseudonyms to provide them a free and fair environment to forward their opinions. None was named personally so that the study's objectivity could be achieved. They were also given a choice to withdraw their participation at any point in time.

Most respondents, especially teachers, had varying conceptions of teacher leadership and some important related issues like community culture, the importance of classroom teaching, etc. The English language is also a barrier for many of them. So, sometimes the researchers conducted the study mixing up the vernacular with English for a smooth functioning of the procedure. Another drawback is that the guardian and teacher respondents might be dissuaded by the fear factor from expressing any negative opinions about the teachers and the principal. However, the respondents seemed to express their thoughts very openly and freely.

4. Findings

Informants Profile

The participants are from a diverse background in terms of socio-economic aspects. Interestingly, 30% of the informants relocated their residences for their children's education. They have been residing in a rented house near the institution for convenience. Out of the guardian respondents (12), most (7) are female. Most of them are house-wife. These mothers invest their time in the education of their children. Besides very negligible few, most of the teacher respondents live in rented houses. Out of the 12 teachers, six were female. None of the four principals reside in the quarters provided by the institution. Though many of the participants are from a rural background, but presently all of them are city dwellers.

Even though the respondents' general characteristics, such as their geographic region, degree of economic solvency, and age, varied, the narratives we obtained following in-depth meeting, survey and interviews were distinctive. Nevertheless, there were recurring themes in the tales they told us. We were able to recognize the emerging themes for our investigation. We discovered the following five issues:

- a) Vision of the institution;
- b) Principal's attitude towards teacher leadership;
- c) Collegial culture;
- d) Classroom teaching;
- e) Extra-curricular activities.

Vision of the Institution

The successful principal is in charge of managing a complicated organization that is a part of a wider social and political setting. When using leadership abilities, the administrator contributes to the creation of the organization's own objectives, mission, and common vision as well as those for the organization as a whole and within a broader context. When everyone understands the vision, management may create structures and procedures to direct goal achievement.

On being asked about the institution's vision, none of the guardian participants could make any

practical end of the institution's vision. Some of them confused it with the motto of the institution. One of the teacher participants, T7 said that "We will make this institution a real seat for education. We will be the best of the best." Another teacher respondent, T3, said, "Our vision is to achieve the goals of Sustainable Development-2030 of the United Nations."

All the principal participants were conversant with having a vision of the institution. The principal (P2) mentioned, "They have written mission and vision in their institutional constitution. He emphasizes that everybody should know the constitution. If someone does not know what is written there as the institution's vision, this is a sheer failure of an individual."

Principal's Attitude to Teacher Leadership

The principal (P1) enthusiastically explained how he maintains discipline of the institution. To his version, "I don't allow students to enter the institution if they are late by one minute." So, he said, "It is applicable not only for the students but also for the teachers." He kept saying, "Not only do I admonish to that particular teacher, I also take punitive measures curtailing one day salary for coming late in the office." "My institution is awarded the academic champion trophy for standing first in secondary school certificate examination in 2020." The secret for this excellence as he (P4) said, "Monetary incentive. It works if you declare a handsome amount to the teachers."

"I don't follow the style of reward and punishment. What I do I give hundred per cent liberty. My policy is simple. Do whatever you feel like to. "But I want result." said the other principal (P3).

Collegial Culture

"Parents bother too much with silly matters and disturb my administrative work. To get rid of this situation, I have employed my Administrative Officer to make a devise so that they cannot come straight to my office", said one of the principals (P1). "Some of my teachers maintain too much relation with the parents. This made me curious. So, I made a quarry about it and warned them not to give any indulgence to the parents", expressed the principal (P2).

One of the teachers (T5) said that the eligible or expert guardians' opinion should be taken positively. They may contribute to the in-house training of the teachers in different ways."

"On various occasions like birth anniversaries, marriage anniversaries, we celebrate the event. A particular teacher offers a feast on the occasion of their special day. Sometimes other teachers bring delicious homemade food. Many of them present gifts. Students also present gift to celebrate their teachers' birthday. Our principal is very much fond of attending these kinds of parties. This is very much encouraging. He wishes good luck and offers a big gift to the teacher on behalf of the authority", teacher (T4) exclaimed with joy.

Teacher (T6) expressed that, "One thing puzzles me whenever I draw the attention of the teachers at the teachers' lounge for a professional talk, they get annoyed. There are teachers gossiping hours together on day-to-day affairs. But they will give a cold shoulder when you initiate a professional talk like new teaching skills or pedagogies. It seems talking professionally has become a taboo."

Classroom Teaching

Teachers at this institution are now receiving large amount of money from private tuition, particularly those who are working with students who will be taking public examinations.

One of the principals (P2) mentioned that the inside narrative of the school is horrific. Teachers are now divided into groups. Many of the teachers are always trying to have the principal's favour. He added that some of them show their influence. Consequently, the general teachers face terrible time as well. Their spirits are now in decline. The teaching community has been dominated by egotism, distrust, and other negative traits.

A principal (P2) said that many teachers are not taking classes regularly. Some teachers come to the class lately. Classes are not going that much effective. Most of the teachers come to the class without preparation. They do not give homework. They do not at all check classwork copies. If they are contacted over cell phone, they do not receive calls. If they are met physically, they get annoyed. For any complaint against a teacher, it so happens that the particular student was maltreated. Students are harassed for complaints lodged against this institution's teachers.

Extra-curricular activities

Students and teachers are very much fond of extra-curricular activities. Every time there is a programme. Students are engaged in taking preparation during class time. The principal usually gives much emphasis on programmes. He allocates a big budget for the decoration, sound system and the other events.

One of the principals (P4) said, "Parents and teachers are now getting the importance of having extra-curricular activities. Students observe and learn about various religious festivals, national days having historical and cultural importance. We have lots of scopes to celebrate colourful programmes. Every time the ministry of education and their field offices are giving us detailed instructions how we will go about it."

5. Discussion

The challenges principals are facing represent the challenges of education in Bangladesh. The fundamental issue is rooted in the education policy in Bangladesh. There is no mention of educational leadership in the National Education Policy (2010). Centering this issue of principal leadership (Rieckmann, 2017) all other issues detrimental to quality education are surfacing. This has obstructed the target of achieving quality education as has been envisioned in serial 4 of Sustainable Development Goals 2030. In most cases, principals are confined to management and running the administration of the institutions. Their faulty and wrong understanding revealed through our investigation reflects their wrong and ineffective leadership understanding as principals. A kind of top-down hierarchical system is existent (Salahuddin, 2011) in education in Bangladesh. Consequently, a bottom-up system is not gaining ground. And, in the absence of a bottom-up system, teacher leadership is not growing.

Educational administration is the backbone of the education system of Bangladesh. Ministry of Education sits at the top of the administration. They make the policies. These policies and decisions are implemented through the downward channel. The principal is a party to the administration sitting at the bottom of the track. A principal in Bangladeshi schools and colleges is to ensure proper implementation of those decisions and instructions sent down. The principal acts like a post box. There is no scope of practicing leadership. By default, he becomes a manager and sometimes a bad administrator. People who are sitting on top of the administration do not care about the ideal role of a principal. Bureaucracy develops in a top-down system; so, does in educational administration in Bangladesh (Hidayati, 2019; Hossain, 2019). Principal's time and

effort does not mean anything to them. This has been reflected in the study where an unprofessional and unaccountable scenario inside the investigating context has surfaced.

The culture of power distance prevails (Tian & Virtanen, 2021) in a top-down and hierarchical structure. Instead of behaving like a senior teacher, a principal, part of the system, behaves like a bureaucrat. Managing and administering become his sole agenda. His role has become to implement decisions and instructions come down from the top. Sometimes he maintains a grim relation with the teachers. Teachers were also maintaining a distance from the principal.

There is no recognition of principal leadership in Bangladeshi schools and colleges. The workable knowledge principals gain through hands-on and shared experience. As such, leadership training gets less priority in educational training institutions like, Teachers' Training Colleges (TTC) and National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) in Bangladesh.

Teacher leadership is directly proportional to principal leadership (Li & Liu, 2020; Suprayitno, 2022). In a top-down system, neither the principal nor the teachers are comfortable with their role-play. When they work with their students, they find leadership within. When the principal gives them space, teachers practice some leadership. It also depends on the very leadership understanding of the principal. So, an array of unprofessional circumstances overcomes Bangladesh's secondary educational institutions.

The commonplace scenario in Bangladeshi schools and colleges is that a principal is devoid of leadership practices, as evident in the Laissez-faire leadership of the principals (Hossain & Mozumder, 2019). When principals belong to the administration, in most cases, they take the autocratic leadership style. So, in a top-down system, process leadership, that is, follower-centric leadership does not grow. It hampers the growth of teacher leadership. As a result, a positive environment to flourish teacher leadership from the bottom loses its impetus. Instead, a top-down bureaucracy has developed over a period of time. The existing attitude and culture compelled teachers to pull out from the leadership role.

The study revealed that teachers have limited scope to practice leadership. Most of the teachers are qualified in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), the major of which is pedagogy. They confine themselves mostly in teaching. The educational training institutions in Bangladesh do not advocate leadership training for teachers. If they get some lesson, there is no room for practicing. Teacher leadership is contingent to principals. For lack of principal leadership, teachers also lack motivation. They get demotivated and remain in the bud throughout.

Teachers are the role models who should serve as society's mirror. However, it cannot be denied that a person's social position is influenced by their economic situation. So far, their status is concerned, an assistant teacher at the starting of the career is getting a 11th grade and a lecturer 9th grade. Side by side, teachers are lowly paid in the private sector, in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. They find it challenging to maintain their family. This situation has affected the quality of classroom teaching. Ultimately, students are getting involved.

This investigation indicated that pupils are compelled to attend private lessons, proving that teachers and administrators are also implicated in certain malpractices. Teachers have moved away from the conventional teaching job due to their engagement in coaching and private tuition and the resulting malpractices they have created over the years. Most of them participate in private coaching or tuition during or after school. Male instructors use it as a springboard to advance in their careers while they are young. Many of the regular instructors were discovered to be money-making machines.

Guardians are not involved for institutional development. As a result, they do not appreciate it even if something good occurs. For lack of communication, they get antagonistic with each other. Without having a clear vision, they lack a common agenda. For the lack of a common agenda, they do not belong to a common platform. Eventually, they lack a collegial culture. Previous study suggested the importance of collegial culture (Ojetunde, 2016; Wang et. al., 2022). This is another indicator which exposes the presence of a top-down administration in which the principal is a party who maintains a high-power distance from the rest of the stakeholders of the educational community of the secondary educational institutions in Bangladesh.

5. Recommendations

Teachers were drifting away from the teaching job, let alone addressing their leadership position, due to their engagement in coaching and private tuition and the resulting malpractices they created over the years. To engage teachers, a combination of monitoring, inspiration, and leadership development is required. A principal's foremost duty should be to establish teachers as leaders. Principals alone are the suitable and qualified authorities for doing this. Even the Governing Body ought to see the school from the principal's perspective. They need to be aware that they serve as a facilitator. The following recommendations may be gleaned from this study:

- a) Personnel working for the educational administration in the ministry and field should know that they are facilitators. Principals are more leaders than administrators should be the attitude. As education is a specialized field, appropriate persons should be posted and given responsibilities to hold the key appointments like, principal and chairperson.
- b) Principal and teacher leadership should be incorporated in Bangladesh's secondary education policy.
- c) Leadership training should be made a compulsory criterion before becoming a principal.
- d) The governing body needs to facilitate the principal's work. It shouldn't impose limits on the principal.
- e) Principals need to have greater control over the budget, the hiring and firing of employees, the professional development of teachers, and other administrative tasks.

6. Conclusion

In Bangladeshi secondary educational institutions, the educational system is top-down. The Education Ministry makes all decisions related to achieving the objective of high-quality education, while field officials like Thana Education Officers carry them out at the local level. The position of the teachers and administrators, who are the actual change-makers on the ground, who collaborate with students, who have an impact on them and help them develop their leadership skills, is still covered in ignorance. It seems that we are considering the adoption of excellent education while excluding these change-makers from the decision-making process, without empowering them, and without creating an atmosphere suitable for the time-worthy leadership of the principals who will lead from the front. Teachers and administrators are solely given management and administrative tasks in Bangladeshi schools and institutions. The ministry, field offices, or the Governing Body make the choices and provide the criteria for every event, whether academic, extra-curricular, or national day celebration. Therefore, each time choices and concepts are thrust onto them. However, further research may be directed at the challenges of leadership implementation and psycho-social issues of teacher leadership in

secondary educational institutions for a better environment of sustainable education.

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Appendix 1

Table A. Survey questionnaire for the teachers

SL	Items	Adaptation
1	I encourage team colleagues to practice new skills and pedagogies.	Chen (2022)
2	I supervise and evaluate team colleagues' performance for teaching improvement.	
3	I encourage team colleagues to monitor student progress.	
4	I attend/participate in extra- and co-curricular activities.	
5	I set team plans and make decisions by referring to the school's goals with my team.	
6	I encourage team colleagues to collaborate with peers from other schools.	
7	I provide suggestions to my supervisors for setting school goals	
8	I am involved in school decision-making	

Table B. Interview questionnaire for the principals

SL	Items	Adaptation
1	Promoting a Shared School Vision, Mission, and Goals of Learning	Michigan Teacher Leader Preparation Standard (2013)
2	Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning	

3	Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community	
4	Leading to increase teacher voice and influence: working to enlarge teachers' role in decision-making beyond the classroom and in concert with other stakeholders	Kentucky Teacher Leadership Framework (2015)
5	Driving initiatives	Ohio Teacher Leadership Framework (2017)
6	Practicing equity and ethics	