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**Influence of the Head Teacher's Role on  
Student Behavior Management in a Primary School**

**Muhammad Ramzan, Ph.D., Hussan Perveen, M.A., and  
Aijaz Ahmed Gujjar, Ph.D. Candidate**

**Abstract**

The role of head teacher as the school leader does not only deals with the academics and general administration of the school but also deals with the life world of the school which is composed of values, character, relationships behaviors and attitude. Hence it becomes imperative to know how the head teacher's role does influences behavior management of the students. To address the above stated query, a case study method has been followed with in the qualitative research paradigm.

A private school head teacher was purposefully selected as study participant from the context of Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. The study explored that, the head teacher as the school leader has delineated a comprehensive vision and policy for student behavior management in the form of "Six character Pillars".

The critical role of the teachers in managing the student behavior is highly valued and they are expected to be role models of good behavior. Teacher's professional development for student behavior management emerged as an area highly valued by the school leadership. In

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addition to that, parental involvement revealed as a critical component of an effective student behavior management system. Privacy and confidentiality emerged as another prominent policy followed by the school leadership for managing the behavior of their students.

## INTRODUCTION

Behavior management of students is increasingly becoming the integral component of the set of processes and activities involved in the day to day life of a school. Behavior management of students is the initiation of pro active policies, support structures and strategies employed in a school for preventing student's problem behaviors before they actually occur. It is not only a preventive measure but also the initiation of long term strategies and policies for bringing about a positive and sustained change in the problem behavior of the students.

Docking (1996), maintains that behavior management of students focuses on pro-active policies and range of intervention strategies to manage problem behavior. It is about building positive relationships between pupils as with pupils' conduct in relation to authority figures by shared decision making. Similarly, Barbetta, Norona and Bicard (2005) are of the opinion that, "The most efficient way to eliminate misbehaviors is to prevent their occurrence or escalation from the beginning. Using a proactive approach also allows us to focus more on teaching appropriate behaviors rather than eliminating negative behaviors.

The contemporary role of school head is multidimensional. The values, norms of practices and the organizational culture of the school come through the main gate of the educational leaders (Johnson, Mac Creery, and CastellWe2000). Sergiovanni (1991) maintained that it is the principal who has the most power as a moral authority. The role of head teacher does not only deals with the academics and general administration of the school but also deals with the life world of the school which is composed of values, character and relationships (Hodgkinson, 1999).

When it comes to the nourishing and nurturing of values, character and relationships, the head teacher's role becomes significant for the student's behavior management. Perhaps, the positive behavior and attitude of a student plays a decisive role for the acquisition of desired values and respectable character. Furthermore, it is the student's behavior and attitude that navigates and reflects in the kind of relationships they build in their social surroundings.

Arguing in favor of the pivotal role of head teachers in student behavior management, Chaplain (2003) states that, "Heads are perceived as being responsible for providing leadership; strategic planning... plus overall responsibility for students' behavior" (p.103). Therefore, the school leadership plays a vital role in establishing policies, formulating strategies and installing support structures in a school for managing students' behavior. Hence, the overall responsibility

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of students' behavior predominantly lies on the shoulders of the school leadership. Hence in pursuing our interest, we intended to undertake an in depth and comprehensive inquiry to understand the different ways in which the head teacher's role influences behavior management of students in the school context.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

The head teachers as leaders of the school play a vital role in almost every development that takes place in a school environment. The head teacher initiates and shapes the organizational culture, different structures, policies and procedures, strategies and develops relationships with the parent community of the school. Therefore, it can be said that the active involvement of the head teachers in the school affairs provides him the significant positive opportunity of making a difference in the lives of the others (Arbon, Duignan and Duncan, 2002).

When it comes to the holistic development or social and moral development of the child the student behavior improvement emerges as one of the fundamental ingredient of the head teacher's responsibilities. Smith as cited in Haydn (2007) argues that, "Heads in practice carry ultimate responsibility for the school's progress and the pupils' safety and well-being and are thus often placed in an unenviable position... they must of course uphold the law of the land and expect their teaching colleagues to do the same" (p.148).

Similarly, Chaplain (2003) also emphasizes on the head teacher to be the prime responsible individual in the school environment for the effective management of student behavior. Hence, head teachers are expected to be responsible for providing a safe environment for the school community, upholding the laws for everyone in a justifiable manner and managing the student behavior. Teachers play a pivotal role in managing the student behavior. Blackman (1984), maintain that, "Teachers form a prominent part of the social environment of their pupils and can therefore be expected to influence their pupils' behaviors through their own behavior" (p.8).

Again, Blandford (1998) argues that, "A teacher's inability to control a pupil or class prevents the process of education and learning from happening" (p.3). Therefore, the skills of student behavior management are considered as one of the fundamental indicators for success in the profession of teaching. Such as Obenchain and Taylor (2005) maintain, "One indicator of successful teachers in middle and high school is the quality of their behavior management skills" (p.7).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Question**

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How the head teacher's role does influences behavior management of the students in a private primary school of Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan?

## **Research Design**

Keeping in minds the nature of the problem it is realized that the qualitative design of research would be more appropriate for conducting this study. Working within the qualitative paradigm, we opted for case study method to have an in-depth understanding of different perspectives of the role of head teacher in managing the student behaviour. The case study method supported me to retain the holistic and meaningful realities of the head teacher's role in managing the student behaviour in the school environment

## **Case Study**

Working within the qualitative paradigm, we opted for case study method to have an in-depth understanding of different perspectives of the role of head teacher in managing the student behaviour. The case study method supported me to retain the holistic and meaningful realities of the head teacher's role in managing the student behaviour in the school environment.

## **Research Context and Sampling**

We select a private primary school from Gilgit city as a case study for my research. The head teacher of this school was selected as a primary participant and teachers as secondary participants of this research. The rationale behind selecting a private school head teacher is because of their greater influence and autonomy in their school affairs. Semi-structured interview is used as a research tool for gathering all the relevant data.

## **Data Analysis**

Here we realized how important is the ongoing analyses of data and its proper organization. My systematic and organized way of dealing with my data since the inception of the collection process, placed me in a comfortable position to deal with this mass of information. We had adopted a daily based procedure in which the audio recorded interview data was transcribed to make sense out of the data gathered (Merriam, 1998). We employed the process of organizing, general sense making, coding, drawing themes and finally interpreting and making meaning out of the collected data (Cresswell, 2002). We followed the color coding and made the thematic arrangement of the data and finally presented it in chapter four and chapter five in an analytical and argumentative appearance.

## **FINDINGS**

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Following are the prominent findings revealed from the data of this study.

- The head teacher and her Shining Star School has delineated a comprehensive vision and policy for student behavior management in form of their “Six character Pillars”. These are the expectations, the benchmarks of positive behavior which the school strives to cultivate in the behaviors of its students.
- The head teacher and her school highly value the critical role of the teachers in managing the student behavior. Therefore, they emphasize on providing prompt and continuous support for their teachers in the event of any student misbehavior.
- The head teacher emphasized for the teachers to be role models of good behavior in order to minimize misbehaviors and cultivate positive behavior among the students of their school.
- Providing opportunity of self reflection to the students on their misbehaviors emerged as an important toll of student behavior management employed by the school. Mrs. Shela as well as both the research participant teachers emphasized on the important role of self reflection in managing the student behavior.
- Award and rewards for positive student behavior emerged as the formal practice of the Shining Star Model School. The head teacher and her teachers considered it instrumental for nurturing of positive behavior among the student.
- Parental involvement emerged as a critical component of an effective student behavior management system. The head teacher and her teachers explicated various strategies followed by their school for involvement of parents in managing the behavior of their students.
- Privacy and confidentiality emerged as one of the prominent policy followed by The head teacher as leader of the school for managing the behavior of her students. She and both the participant teachers considered it one of the corner stone of their student behavior management policy.
- Teacher’s professional development for student behavior management emerged as an area highly valued by the head teacher as leader of the school. She emphasized and showed her commitment for providing professional development opportunities for the teachers to help them better manage the student behavior at the classroom level.

## CONCLUSION

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Our research journey started with the aim to explore the role of head teacher as the school leader in managing the student behavior in a primary school of Gilgit Baltistan. It proved as one of the most valuable learning opportunities we had in our life. My three research participants dedicated to the services of their respective school communities, their sense of making a difference in the life of the others (Arbon, Duignan and Duncan, 2002; Shafa, 2003) provided us the opportunity to explore and learn together. Though this study provided me a valuable opportunity of exploring the complex concept of student behavior management with respect to the role of the head teacher yet we would say we reached at the point from where we had started. As Glesne, (1999) says, “True research does not ends instead it points the way to yet another research” (p.199). Certainly, it is my first step we have to explore, we have to explore further wide and further deep into the ocean of student behavior management.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Behavior management of students is the initiation of pro active policies, support structures and strategies employed in a school for preventing student’s problem behaviors before they actually occur. It is not only a preventive measure but also the initiation of long term strategies and policies for bringing about a positive and sustained change in the problem behavior of the students (Docking (1996). Learning to understand and apply complex interpersonal concepts such as respect, kindness, sharing, being responsible is a slow and complex process which definitely needs a long term continuous nurturing of personalities. Hence, this study of student behavior management suggests a number of implications for head teachers, teacher, for me and for my research participants.

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