



## An Examination into the Elementary Schools Teachers' Viewpoint on the Role of Assistant Principal within the Enacted Curriculum

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**ABSTRACT:** The present research has employed a qualitative approach with phenomenological method to assess the viewpoint of teachers on the role of assistant principals in the enacted curriculum. The research sample comprised 20 teachers who were selected through the purposive sampling from among the elementary school teachers working in the 12th borough of Tehran with an educational degree of higher than diploma and long tenure of at least 10 years. Findings based on cognition, emotion and preparation for performing the activities related to the educational assistant principals that have been acquired with interview indicate the supervisory role of assistant principals in the enacted curriculum. Teachers contend that assistant principals supervise the classes and examine the teachers'-made tests and suchlike to become aware of the educational curriculum through employing the order and reaction control methods. Teachers do not evaluate this method as effective due to the lack of the experience of assistant principals in different grades, the occupational incompetency and so on. Therefore, the order control is not evaluated as positive method to control the accurate implement of the curriculum. The cognition of such experience produced negative effects in teachers' emotional aspect and their interaction with principal assistants which was evaluated as negative. Furthermore, the emotional and cognitive aspects of teachers establish the required preparation to accept the assistant principals' activities. Teachers do not value assistant principals' roles in enhancing the quality of education and particularly, handling the problem. They do not also support the supervisory techniques of assistant principals and believe that accurate supervision is acquired through expertise, and adequate level of educational experience in different grades and awareness of supportive methods. What's more, the teachers' informants evaluated the assistant principals' educational activities as positive owing to their sufficient experience in all the grades and their dominance over the lessons like science and mathematics. They contend that these activities are influential factors in encouraging the teachers to employ innovative methods and avoid the traditional methods.

**Key words:** Enacted Curriculum, Role, Viewpoint, Assistant Principal.

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### INTRODUCTION

Three types of educational curriculum as intended, enacted and experienced curricula are dealt with in the process of creating, planning and implementing the curriculum. The intended curriculum addresses the aims, objectives, content, methods of teaching and learning and the predicted facilities in the educational curriculum which are proposed by the educational planners in an educational system. The enacted curriculum entails a set of actions and learning-teaching activities that are done by teachers based on the intended curriculum and learners are practically exposed to that (Ahmadi, 2006).

Therefore, the educational curriculum is regarded as the essence and heart of educational system and teachers are the contributory factors and top performers in adequately performing this program and achieving its aims and objectives. With the recognition of the importance of teacher's role, identifying the influential factors is also of great importance.

Teacher plays his/her role in an interactional environment with other parts of the educational system and one of the influential factors in his/her performance is his/her viewpoint about other parts. According to Hoy and Forsyth (1986, Cited in Niknami,

2009) teachers' viewpoints about their colleagues especially, assistant principals who shoulder 84 educational responsibilities and have more interaction with teachers as compared to other individuals are of great significance in the performance of teachers.

One of the researchers who has contributed to this research, has observed that prior to 2005, assistant principals had limited level of interaction with teachers and educational activities. But after this year, with regard to the assigned responsibilities, assistant principals got the opportunity to assume more educational activities. Assistant principals' new roles shaped the evolution toward large-scale interaction with teachers which did not exist before the year 2005.

In this research we attempted to assess the viewpoints of teachers on the role of assistant principals in the enacted curriculum and with regard to their cognition, emotions and preparation. Not an adequate number of studies have been done on school assistant principal. The sole book which has been written on assistant principals is the book "assistant principal is a principal". Majd Far has shed light onto the assigned responsibilities, performances and the roles of assistant principals in eighteen realms such as management of the initial program,

management of break time, management of learners' cognition, management of absence and presence records and suchlike. What has been authored in this book and is evidenced by others indicated that assistant principals specifically in the elementary school occupy their regularly and supervisory roles, and aid the managerial roles. Many authors have concluded that the highest amount of time is devoted to the regulatory role (Austin and Brown, 1970; Pellicer et al, 1987; Hausman et al, 2002). No issue has been covered on the role of assistant principals in books and journals throughout the world. Hartzell (1993) considers the assistant principal as the forgotten role of the curricula. The executive deputy of National Association of Secondary School Principal (NASSP) has stated that until recently, no attention was directed to assistant principals, the current literature concerning the task and the role of assistant principals is not voluminous at all and there is scarcely any of the issues relating to assistant principals and assistant principals are only considered as individuals who aid the principal.

Prior to the year 2005, assistant principals did not continuously assess and observe the performance of teachers and only fulfilled the duty of adopting and imposing regulations, students' presence and absence and the management of break time. They assumed insignificant and minor role in the educational realm and were only regarded as regulators. Passed as the job description of assistant principals in the 408th session of Culture Supreme Council in 1944 and the clause 34, the principal assistants were regulators and were expected to be present at school before all the individuals and leave the place after all of them. According to the clause 35, they were supposed to record the students' presence and absence in a specific book and inform the manager (boys' and girls' elementary school's ordinance, 1951).

The term "regulator" instead of the term "assistant principal" indicates his/her prominent role in the regulatory realm. Some of the pioneers such as Marshall and Greenfield, 1985; Pellicer and Stevenson, 1991; Marshall, 1992; Miller and Lieberman, 1982, Reed and Hinnler, 1985, have stated 20 regular duties of the assistant principals. These duties include rules and regulations of the school environment, nurturing the students, their rota of attendance, and submission of the reports to the managers.

Since 2005 (circular number 710.62) apart from the regulatory role, the responsibility of teachers' assessment and controlling the process of learning and teaching was considered among assistant principals' responsibilities and therefore, took on the educational role.

Calabrese (1991) states that assistant principals' traditional role as co-manager and regulator is fading away and more attention is devoted to them owing to their greater educational responsibilities. We attempt to shed light onto their new responsibilities in the realm of monitoring and supervising. When a program is designed and organized, the goal achievement is seriously expected and the establishment of such program should determine our path toward the goal achievement. Hence, the necessity of implementing the accurate program and the required steps for essential modifications while deviating from the path is possible through the supervision process.

Amendment of teaching and learning is the goal of supervision. Therefore, the educational observers try to achieve their goals using different methods. Khorshidi (2003) has stated the following methods:

**Feedback supervision:** In this method, observer employs traditional methods and only thinks about the current situation. One of the main indicators of these observers is that they do not make any decisions prior to confronting a problem and only try to solve the problems while encountering a problem in the process of teaching-learning.

**Informal supervision:** In this method, observers supervise the class using informal and short-term observations and if accepted by teachers, this method can improve the process of teaching-learning.

**Direct supervision:** In this method, the individual personally observes, controls and amends the process of teaching-learning, class interaction and suchlike.

**Traditional supervision:** Supervisors assess the performance of teachers and highlight the disadvantage of teachers' activity in the class. They serve as a reporter and informant in this method.

**Teacher-based supervision:** This method was established based on the methods offered by Cogan, Goldhammer et al in 1960s. From Goldhammer's standpoint, this method entails close observation of the class, step by step observation of the information, interaction between the teacher and assistant principal and focus on the intimate relationship between the teacher and assistant principal (Acheson, 2006). Glickman, Gordon and Ross Gordon (cited in Niknami, 2009) have stated this in a five-stage process.

**Holding the initial session:** teachers and the supervisors make decisions on the goal of observation, cases of the observation, methods and time of observations and the time of briefing session. In this stage all the process of the supervision and both sides' duties are examined.

**Class observation:** the educational observer records the class event. S/he may use a number of methods including the record of teachers' observed behavior, drawing a diagram which depicts the

teachers' behavior, detailed explanation of class observations and suchlike.

Analysis of the class observation and determining the teachers' behavior: supervisor analyzes and studies his/her observation and data and decides on the required method.

Feedback: with regard to the results of his/her observations, they employ various methods to provide teachers with feedback on the observed behavior.

Order-based supervision method: the observer analyses what s/he has observed, for teachers and imposes them to do the required activities to solve the problem. No negotiation seems to be necessary and only the stated solution is worked toward by the teacher and in essence, the teacher is convinced to do the related task due to the authority of the supervisor.

Order-based informational method: if the supervisor offer various solutions to the issue or subject as an informational source from which teacher can choose; this method has been put to action by the supervisor.

Cooperation-based method: based on this method, the teacher and supervisor cooperate with each other. They negotiate and discuss the problem with mutual understanding in order to come to an agreement. This means that different aspects of the problem have been explored and clarified and a final plan or program is decided on with mutual agreement.

Authors contend that supervisors' direct and indirect services to teacher have helping role while management and assessment are characterized into the managerial roles. Supervisors lay the foundation for deep listening to teachers to enable them to tackle their problems. These supervisors supervise and analyze the teaching methodology in an environment conducive to trust and security and offer constructive feedbacks, provide the required educational materials and facilities and move toward more effective educational activities through clear and practical recommendations. In fact, supervisors practically teach the proper and accurate teaching method and help them to reduce the monotony of teaching and increase the quality of learning process through innovative and creative methods.

In the managerial role, supervisors manage, control and organize the programs. In such a role, supervisors are responsible for the quality control of educational programs and assessment of the implemented decisions of teachers. Actually, these supervisors provide the required educational facilities; organize the policies and executive actions and the managerial duties of educational programs (Khorshidi, 2003).

Kimball Wiles (cited in Vakilian, 2001) contends that individuals' perception and understanding of the role of supervisors differ in each realm and each individual interprets it with regard to his/her own experience. Therefore, studying the various viewpoints is of great value and pioneers of this realm consider it as vital in perceiving the social behavior and determinants of behaviors. This assumption implicitly indicates that individuals' viewpoints can be changed through modifying the behavior.

It can be stated that viewpoint means understanding and attitude (Sadri Afshar et al., 2004) which are both abstract. Therefore, there exist a number of definitions of attitude that of course share some commonalities. Karimi (2009) believes that the unanimously accepted definition by the researchers consider attitude as having three aspects of cognition, emotion and preparation. Kretch, Crutchfield and Ballachey (cited in Karimi, 2009) define it as a combination of cognitions, emotions and preparation for a specified thing.

Cognitive aspect: it means the information, an individual has acquired about an issue. Therefore, teachers' awareness from the assistant principals' roles and assistant principals' cognition of their educational activities is an indicator of this aspect (Salimi and Rezayi, 2004).

Emotional aspect: this aspect entails emotions that foster the cognition of a specified thing. This aspect has a motivating role and highlights the feelings. For instance, if a teacher develops positive feelings toward the assistant principal's performance, s/he can build up more trust and make more attempt in cooperating (Salimi and Rezayi, 2004).

The preparation for action aspect: individuals' attitude and cognition of an issue or subject prepares them for taking action and exhibiting a particular behavior. If the individual's attitude is positive, s/he is enabled to support or admire a particular issue (Karimi, 2009). Therefore, attitude entails emotional and cognitive aspects which are in fact the personal experience of the subject and the tendency to respond to it (Karimi, 2009).

Given the foregoing premises, the present research has employed a qualitative approach with phenomenological method to assess the viewpoints of teachers on the role of assistant principals in the enacted curriculum.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The present research employed qualitative approach with phenomenological method on the account of the importance of concepts and meanings which are the basis and cornerstones of individuals' behaviors, actions and reactions. These concepts

cannot be defined through numbers and figures. Qualitative method attempts to understand human beings' attitude, feelings and interactions with one another (Mansourian, 2008). This research aims to understand assistant principals' roles and teachers' experiences in the enacted curriculum from their viewpoints. Therefore, with regard to the subject under the study and also the nature of the research methodology, purposive sampling was used to enable the researcher to select based on the related criteria which leads to an adequate level of data file for the research process. Therefore, with regard to the research purpose, the sample comprised 20 teachers who were selected from among the elementary school teachers working in the 12th borough of Tehran with an educational degree of higher than diploma and long tenure of at least 10 years. This borough was selected on account of easy accessibility and long tenure of teachers and assistant principals. Easy accessibility makes for reducing the required money and time. Moreover, teachers with long tenure highly cooperate in responding to the questions and do not consider the interview as a threat to their job security. It's worth mentioning that no license was issued for the female researchers to conduct the interview in boys' schools and therefore, the interviews were only held in all-girls' schools.

One of the methods of data gathering in qualitative method which helps examine the perception and standpoint of various groups is interview. Semi-structured interview was carried out in this research. The researcher had a relatively clear framework for data gathering which also enabled her to make the necessary alteration with regard the process of the interview. In the present research, data gathering and data analysis were done simultaneously.

## RESULTS

The researcher has 6 years of experience as an assistant principal. In order to deeply understand the role of assistant principal, data gathering was done regardless of any assumptions. Questions were framed to examine the entailed aspects of the viewpoint (cognitive, emotional and preparation). Hence, in order to gather the data that teachers might have about the educational activities of assistant principals on the enacted curriculum, semi-structured and general questions were employed so that they can state all the educational activities of assistant principals from their standpoint and in the absence of any prejudice. A wider proportion of the acquired data included assistant principals' educational activity which was also acquired to have a deeper perception of teachers' emotional standpoint. Some of the

gathered data form the cognitive aspect and in terms of value may be evaluated as positive for the researcher; however, it might be of on the contrary for the informant. Face-to-face interviews were carried out and prior to that, the researcher went through all the required rigmarole in terms of the time table of the interviews with the principal and the assistant principals. The interviews were in-depth and lengthy and took 50 to 60 minutes which could have provoked principals' objection. Therefore, the place (class, laboratory or library) was selected far from the teachers' and principal's room so that teachers felt comfortable enough to voice their opinions about the assistant principal. All the interviews were tape recorded to be extensively followed and it took around 3 months to complete all the interviews. The first step in the qualitative method and in the data analysis stage is the main and initial review of the notes in the research field (Houman, 2006). Therefore, subsequent to consecutive rereading of the interviews, the main concepts were formulated and the aspects of the viewpoints (cognitive, emotional and preparation) were clarified. Based on these aspects, the role of assistant principals in enacted curriculum was analyzed.

Cognitive aspect of teachers' viewpoint: The obtained results indicated the cognitive and emotional effects of teachers' experience from assistant principals' performance in this area. Cognition of such experiences demonstrates the perception of the role assumed by assistant principal. The stated experience by teachers indicate that assistant principals monitor and supervise the classes (formal and informal), assess the teachers-made questioners and exams, examine students' assignments, perform assistant principal-made exams, seek for parents' opinion and attend the official sessions. Therefore, teachers consider the assistant principals as supervisors who acquire the data related to the curriculum through the above-mentioned methods. However, they contend that these activities did not produce the desired effects due to the following reasons:

Lack of consistency in class supervision: some of the statements in this regard include "assistant principals' presence should be consistent. When someone comes to the class for only once a year, all the students like to behave in a way to attract that individual and this will confuse the teacher. In fact, once or twice of supervision is in vain and can't help identify the teachers' weak points.

Lack of proper briefing after the supervision: "I observed no direct feedback, they thanked in the school council sessions but neither good nor bad points were stated. I really like to be informed of the observed points." "They only offered their thanks and

went. Nothing was said about the weak points. I think that supervisions can be useful if they let us know the results of the supervision.

Highlighting the weak points of teachers' educational activities. "While supervising, it's important to develop a positive attitude and not to only see the negative points."

Employing the order-based control to confront the educational deficiencies. "We deliver the exam questions to the assistant principal. S/he check them to make sure that the score is congruent with the exam questions, or whether or not they have been organized from easy to difficult then ticks some and verbally tells that some questions should be changed or rephrased. Sometimes, I think that more can be done with this regard."

Employing reaction method to confront the educational deficiencies. "Last year and this year I have been the teachers' representative and one of my objections is that why parents are required about the teachers. We have so many illiterate parents who object unfairly. For instance, they can't help their children with their assignments and think that I have overburdened them with a lot of homework. Any objection by parents can't be accurate."

Lack of expertise and tenure. "S/he doesn't have an adequate level of tenure and expertise, so I may not accept what s/he says owing to my higher experience. "The new assistant principal brought me a series of questions and I tore them to pieces and said that these questions belong to the past years and are not congruent with the new goals. This new assistant principal didn't have any experience in teaching to be able to solve the problem." Assistant principals' ignorance about teachers' need (respect, status...). "The assistant principal changed the exam questions. S/he had a series of exam questions and books and used them for altering the questions and teachers had no authority and should have worked under his/her surveillance."

Assistant principals' lack of awareness of supervision and supportive methods: "They attend the class and see what the problem of the teacher is. Assistant principal thinks that s/he should only care about the students' attendance and do not help the teachers with their educational role." "When the assistant principal attended my class to supervise it, I didn't have a good feeling. S/he intervened in the process of teaching and didn't let me do what I wanted." Assistant principals' heavy responsibilities; "assistant principal has lots of responsibilities to shoulder like recording the rota of attendance, engaging with parents, attending to the hygiene and etc. S/he doesn't have enough of time to carefully observe my class."

Teachers assign managerial role to assistant principals. However, this role is not effective and assistant principals do not employ supportive methods in their supervision.

The emotional aspect of teachers' viewpoint: The cognitive effect of teacher-assistant principal interaction shapes the emotional aspect of teachers' viewpoint. Teachers consider the occupational incompetency of assistant principals in different grades as an influencing factor in the lack of adequate educational activities based on their assigned task. As the experience of some of the teachers indicates, there have been assistant principals who have employed strong order-based supervision methods and have played their role as traditional supervisors. Therefore, the negative feelings experienced from such cognitions have framed the teachers' viewpoint. "Sometimes, I feel that the assistant principals only find unnecessary faults. Like the sequence of the questions which can be realized by the teacher or sometimes, they say that the questions are too simple to answer but we as teachers have realized that these questions are line with the abilities of the students. In my opinion these matters should be under the authority of teachers.

Preparation for action aspect of teachers' viewpoints: Teachers' cognition and attitude in their interaction with assistant principals prepares them for action and reaction to assistant principals' educational activities. Therefore, their attitude toward the assistant principals' action in the enacted curriculum prepares the teachers for admiration, support and suchlike for assistant principals' educational activities. The preparation of teachers' cognitive and emotional effects indicates that teachers do not evaluate the teachers' educational activities as effective and do not consider it as a contributing factor in solving the problems. They even resent their interference and consider it as nuisance. Hence, they do not develop positive feelings toward the assistant principals' activities and do not support his/her activities.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the present study reveal the cognitions, feelings and preparation toward assistant principals' educational activities and supervision role in the area of enacted curriculum. Teachers contend that assistant principals supervise the class, assess the teacher-made exams, analyze and examine the results of assistant principal-made exams, involve with parents and attend official session. They employ two methods of order-based and reaction-based control to avoid the deviation from the implement of the curriculum. However, teachers do not consider their activities as effective in solving the problems in the

process of teaching. Teachers believe that assistant principals do not have the required occupational competency to take over the assigned responsibilities. What's more, teachers do not evaluate the managerial role of assistant principals such as controlling the accurate implement of enacted curriculum with use of order-based control as to be effective. Therefore, the cognition of such experience leaves negative effect in the emotional aspect and teachers' attitude with regard to their interaction with assistant principals and it's evaluated as negative. The effects of cognitive and emotional aspects, establish the necessary preparation for acting upon assistant principals' activities. Teachers do not value the assistant principals' presence in the enhancement of education and tackling the problems in the process of educational curriculum's implement. Moreover, teachers contend that expertise, long educational tenure in different grades and awareness of supportive method can be regarded as influencing factor with which assistant principals' educational activities can exert the desirable effects such as encouraging the teachers to employ the innovative methods and distancing themselves from the traditional methods. Hence it seems that highlighting the supportive role of supervisors in the enacted curriculum and alteration of the issues stated by teachers can be of great significance in changing the teachers' viewpoints. One of the reasons that teachers' do not consider assistant principals' educational activities as effective is their lack of skillfulness in employing the supportive methods. Long tenure of teachers necessitates the employment of clinical supervision and cooperative methods in helping them with the process of enacted curriculum.

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