

The Role of Educational Leaders in Strategic Planning at the Secondary Level in Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract

The nature of the study was descriptive to explore the role of educational leaders in strategic planning and to explain the influencing factors in the implementation of strategic planning. The study aimed to emphasize the relevance of leadership to consolidate strategic planning and to lead in implementation phase. The qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews was employed to meet the objectives of the study. The sample size was 12 educational leaders from government and private secondary schools in equal proportion. Thematic analysis of content of semi-structured interviews was done using inductive approach and their frequencies converted into descriptive words manually. 16 themes magnified in analysis and was related to leader's role and influencing factors equally. The study summarized the role of leaders in strategic planning and explored the influencing factors in strategic planning. It was concluded that the leaders have vital role in establishing educational goals and communication strategies with stakeholders.

Key Words: *Educational leaders, Strategic planning, Stakeholders, Teaching and learning community.*

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Introduction

The role of leaders in an educational organization is very significant. According to Dutta and Sahney (2016), the leadership role is a key factor that has a direct relationship with students' achievements in educational organization. Schools are regarded as an educational organization led by Principals and the role of teaching-learning community including teaching staff and other stakeholders with society is very significant. Jabbar and Hussein (2017) stated that educational leadership is considered as a sum of actions and behaviors that direct subordinate to establish educational aims and objectives by inspiring and motivating them to make collaborative efforts to achieve educational goals. Educational leaders have various functions and roles in school to provide clear vision, setting direction and planning educational objectives by considering the educational needs of society. It works with different stakeholders within society in expanding and advancement of knowledge and skills by ensuring quality of education (Mallillin & Mallillin, 2019). In another study, Mallillin (2022) define the purpose of educational leaders to supervise teaching learning process, professional development and resource management etc. According to it the educational leaders are responsible for all operations of education including direction implementation. Laurel (2023) concluded the leaders' role and functions in educational organization is to provide integrated leadership approach in supportive teaching and learning process, implementation of policies, fostering professional values, supervising the learning process, defining some criteria for assessment and evaluation to instill efficacy and efficiency and to improve quality of education. Planning and its successful implementation specifically in schools are major responsibility of an effective educational leader. Krstevska and Bajrami (2023) stated that educational leaders and organizations must have a comprehensive document, a strategic plan that provide them directions about the vision, goals, mission and objective of educational organization to make significant improvement in learning process.

Strategic planning at secondary level of education is a critical task for educational leaders. It is foundation function of educational leaders to shape to outcomes of education. It involves defining educational goals and strategies that work in specific educational scenario. In Karachi, the biggest city of Pakistan, the educational organizations are dominant by

private sectors. These private schools are working efficiently and independently to provide quality education, some of them are following the foreign curriculum like Cambridge and Ed-Excel board etc., the other ones are following the national curriculum and affiliated to Karachi, Zia-Ud-Din, or Agha Khan board of secondary education. The inadequate number of government secondary schools also exist that are affiliated with Karachi board of secondary education. The aim of both types of schools are to provide quality education. It is important for these institutions to have strong leadership that should have strong strategic plans on the table that reflect the values, philosophy, vision and mission, and clear educational goals. So, for this purpose there is need for the research study that explain that strategic planning of these educational leaders, consider their viewpoints to explain the role of educational leaders in strategic planning and influencing factors that the experience in implementation of strategic planning at secondary level of education in both public and private sectors.

Objectives

- To explain the role of educational leaders in strategic planning at the secondary level of education in Karachi, Pakistan.
- To explore the influencing factors in implementation of strategic planning

Literature Review

According to Ndlovu (2017), the recent reforms in education sector to improve pedagogies, and to build a healthy relationship between educational organizations and stakeholders, the educational leadership became more popular in research studies in international educational policies. The role of educational leadership is closely linked with efficiency and efficacy of educational process and influence on teaching learning community to make strategic decision about educational goals and taking community on board (Jagnandan *et al.*,2024). Smith and Squires (2016) stated that the role of educational leaders has transformed as dynamics of educational expectations from stakeholders with society are increasing. Cheng (2021) posited that educational leaders has a central role in strategic planning to define aims and objectives, long term goals by taking lead in systematic process to attain the desirable results. According

to Senol (2020), the effective strategic planning of educational leadership involvement of all stakeholders within society, teaching and learning community is main stake-hold in this process.

The leaders adopt transparent communication, collaborative approach in decision making including the stake-holds viewpoint. This strategy fosters a sense of alliance and develop consensus on shared vision; this will prevail motivation and aspirations to achieve common educational goals. Fusarelli *et al.* (2018) stressed on the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the process of strategic planning and its implementation by stating that educational leaders are required to develop strong assessment policy in strategic planning and overview the whole process by physical involvement, taking feedback and data analysis to ensure that plan is on track and implementing step by step. Tariq (2024) also concluded that role of educational leader is significant in strategic planning and improving the performance of educational organization, determining education goals, collaboration and coordination with stakeholders, assessment and evaluation, and implementation. By effective assessment and evaluation in strategic planning process, an educational leader can make significant difference in student learning and continuous improvement in teaching and learning process. Damon (2017) stated that a number of challenges and hurdles create complexity in implementation of strategic planning. The educational leaders' practices and strategies are important in transforming strategic planning into tangible results by creating supportive learning environment in educational organization. Baporikar (2021) stated that the educational leaders sometimes fail to allocate the essential resources for implementation of strategic planning. Defining the vision and future objectives of education in educational organization is strategic planning (Hanna&Bigelow, 2023). Edusolve (2024) stated that strategic planning is a declarative document of objectives of education to support educational leaders and staff in setting direction of organization, it also contains the core values of educational leadership and organization. According to Mathias (2023), strategic planning directs the educational leaders and staff to achieve educational goals by utilizing available resources.

Bryson (2018) argued that strategic planning can be important tool for educational leaders to address the problem in smooth implementation by defining strategies for conflict resolution in positive manner. Strategic

planning can be proving a source of giddiness for public, community, and other educations organization of same level to deal with internal and external changing environment and needs of education. Implementation of strategic planning in a proper way help all public and private educational organizations to improve teaching and learning (Frager, 2024). Aina (2022) exposed that strategic management is the product of strategic planning. Neyisci and Erdogan (2022) emphasized that capable teams that follow the vision of leader to implement the strategies of strategic planning and effectiveness of leadership lay in the factor that it brings sustainability in result of implementation of strategic planning. According to Tarifi (2021) strategic planning had positive impacts in achieving organizational goals. Educational leaders that consider Socio-cultural factors of specific society and dealing with expected future challenges increase the probability of successful implementation of strategic planning (Bantilan *et al.*, 2023). Bagano and Guzman (2024) recommended that the inclusive approach of educational leaders in strategic planning led to smooth implementation. The role of education leaders is very significant in implementation in strategic planning at each level of administration by collaborating, coordinating, and monitoring the whole process of education and strategic planning to prove guidelines for educational organization leaders (Hasbi *et al.*, 2024). Fullan (2013) suggested that the educational organization must have strategic plans that should be aligned with national and international educational policy. Naidoo and Mkhize (2019) stated that the strategic planning help in aligning education goal and curriculum with national educational policy. Mwaba (2018) stated that the strategic planning should represent the educational needs, values, and culture of specific society. According to Kasonde and Daka (2020), SOWT analysis, consideration of stakeholders' viewpoint, and development of dynamic plan of action are the major element of strategic planning at primary level. These studies widely addressed the component of strategic planning and the role of education leadership in planning process and implementation as well. Yulianti (2022) explained the social aspects of strategic planning for educational leaders is to protect the interest of stakeholders within society by accommodating the opinion in defining educational goals.

From the literature, it is clear that educational leaders are responsible for strategic planning by defining the shared education goal with inclusive

approach to make it acceptable for all stakeholders. Strategic planning serves the teaching and learning community and educational leadership in various ways in formulating vision and mission statement, reflecting the socio-cultural values of society, SOWT analysis, allocating resources, and establishing strong criteria for assessment and evaluation etc. Educational leaders have more vital role in implementing strategic planning by supervising the learning process and activating in educational organizations. Communicating with the stakeholders about the developments in implementation phase has special significance.

This study aims to explore the role of educational leaders in strategic planning at secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan. It is essential to take the viewpoint of educational leaders working in public and private secondary schools to explain their role in strategic planning and implementation phase, and the distinguishing factors that keep the more relevant as an educational leader.

METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive in nature and qualitative methods were employed to explain the role of educational leaders in strategic planning and the influencing factors. According to Oranga and Matere (2023) qualitative analyses of interviews allows themes and patterns to emerge smoothly without imposing quantification. The interpretive approach was used by content analyses of semi-structured interviews to elaborate the role of educational leaders in strategic planning at secondary level. Mugwaze (2024) stated that principals have key leadership role in strategic planning in school. The population for the study was the all-educational leaders/principals of public and private secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. The in-depth semi-structured interviews of 12 educational leaders/principals in equal proportionate from both sectors public and private sector were held in-person, using purposive sampling technique to explain their viewpoint about their role in strategic planning at the secondary level. The transcript of interviews was analyzed by thematic analysis using inductive approach to explain their role and relevance in strategic planning (Ramlal *et al.*, 2024).

Results

Thematic Analysis

Sr. No.	Themes	Category	Frequency
1	Role	Leaders' Role	Yes=12; No=00
2	Contributions	Leaders' Role	Yes=11; No=00
3	Aims and Objectives	Leaders' Role	Need-Base=10 ; Values=02
4	Stake-holders' engagement	Leaders' Role	Yes=11; No= 01
5	Communication	Leaders' Role	Internet=10; Others=02
6	SWOT analysis	Leaders' Role	Yes=12; No=00
7	Feed-Back	Leaders' Role	Yes=11; No=01
8	Concentration	Leaders' Role	Yes= 12; No=00
8	Assessment and Analysis	Leaders' Role	Yes=12; No=00
9	Social-Circumstances	Implementation	Yes= 12; No=00
10	National Education Policy	Implementation	Yes=12; No=00
11	Socio-Cultural Values	Implementation	Yes= 12; No=00
13	Intrinsic-Motivation	Implementation	Yes=11; No=01
14	Sense of responsibility	Implementation	Yes=12; No=00
15	Emotional-Management	Implementation	Yes=12; No=00
16	Social-Emotional Skills	Implementation	Yes=12; No=00

Code/Frequency description

Percentage of Frequency	Codes
100%	All
(90-100)%	Almost All
(80-90)%	Majority
(70-80)%	Almost Majority
(60-70)%	Most

(50-60)%	Above the Average
(40-50)%	Below the Average
(30-40)%	Some
(20-30)%	Minority
(10-20)%	Few
(0-10)%	Rare
0%	None

There were two specific objectives for analysis of qualitative data to explain the phenomena. The themes are categorized into two parts, Role and Implementation'. The detailed description and their relationship of sub-themes with respective themes in the result of the transcript of semi-structured interviews are given in table no.1. and table no.2 is the description of the percentages of frequencies for qualitative implications.

Emergед Themes

Role: It emerged from the item that the educational leaders participated in the formulation of short-term and long-term educational goals in their organization. It was related to leader's role in strategic planning at secondary level of education. All the participants from both sectors responded that they participated in the formulation of long-term and short-term educational goals at secondary level.

Contributions: It emerged as a result of the item that how contributions of educational leaders in strategic planning. It was related to leaders' role in strategic planning. All the participants responded that their contributions are significant in planning process in educational organization, they have vital role in strategic planning.

Aims and Objectives: It emerged in the result of the item how an educational leader can play their best approach in setting aims and objectives of education at secondary level and was related to leaders' role. The majority of educational leaders argued that their aims and objectives of education is to foster need-based education, while few educational leaders adopted that education should promote the value and culture that contribute to personality development.

Stake-holders' Engagement: It emerged in the result of item that educational leaders involve stakeholders in strategic planning. I was related to leaders' role in strategic planning. Almost all the educational

leaders responded that they include the teaching and learning community, parents, and different sections of society to construct collective and shared vision of education.

Communication: It emerged in the result of the item that how the educational leaders convey their vision of education to stakeholders within society. It was related to the leaders' role in strategic planning. Majority of educational leaders are in favor of communicating vision of education by internet and social media, while few of them argued that they conduct seminars, conferences, meetings, and parent teacher meetings to communicate the vision of education.

SWOT- Analysis: It emerged as the result of item that an educational leader are fully aware of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunity, and threats during the strategic planning process in education. It was related to leaders' role in strategic planning. All the participants of the study responded positively that they were very conscious about the SWOT-analysis in strategic planning process to increase the chances of success of strategic planning.

Feed-Back: It emerged in a result of the item that educational leaders think that they should take feedback from stakeholders. It was related to leaders' role in strategic planning. All the participants agreed that feedback is very important in the development of dynamic strategic planning and future learning.

Concentration: It emerged as a result of the item that what should be the focus point of strategic planning at secondary level, and it was related to leaders' role. All the participants of the study agreed that center of strategic planning at secondary level is students' initial development for practical life that equip them with skills to cope with future academic and professional requirements.

Assessment and Analysis: It emerged in the result of the item that meaningful strategies of assessment and analysis can contribute to smooth implementation of strategic planning, and it was related to implementation of strategic planning. All the participants of the study confessed that assessment and analysis strategies lead to better understanding of the ground realities and bottlenecks in implementation phase.

Social Circumstances: It emerged in the result of the item that how the understanding about social circumstances can lead to successful implementation of strategic planning. It is related to implementation of strategic planning. All the participants agreed that awareness of education with social dynamic help in deep understanding about the culture and values of society that is very important in implementation of strategic planning.

National Policy: It emerged as result of the item that how consideration of national education policy in strategic planning can cause success in implementation. It was related to implementation of strategic planning. All the educational leaders responded that they consider the national education policy while doing strategic planning otherwise there are very few chances of successful implementation to get desired results.

Socio-Cultural Values: It emerged in a result of the item that the social and cultural value of community affect the implementation of strategic planning. All the responses of the study was in favor of the point that it is very crucial factor of strategic planning to consider socio-cultural values. The objectives of education should reflect cultural values.

Intrinsic-Motivation: It emerged as a result of the item that do an intrinsic-motivation of teaching and learning community has significance in the implementation of strategic planning. It is related to implementation of strategic planning. Almost all the participants of the study stated that intrinsic motivation of teaching and learning community is very significant in implementation of strategic planning. Only rarity of educational leaders argued that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is important in implementation of strategic planning.

Sense of Responsibility: It emerged as a result of the item that the educational leaders think that sense of responsibility can be instilled in staff to implement the strategic planning. It was related to implementation of strategic planning. All the respondents of the study argued that it is very important to build a professional and loyal team for the implementation of strategic planning. Engagement in decision making and planning process can motivate them to achieve shared goals.

Emotional Management: It emerged in the result of the item that how emotional management can facilitate educational leaders to assess and

evaluate the gap of influencing factors in strategic planning. It was related to implementation of strategic planning. All the educational leaders agreed that emotional-management skills in educational leaders leads to better understanding about socio-cultural and socio-economic factors situation of specific community. The social awareness of educational leadership increases the probability of even implementation of strategic planning.

Social-Emotional Skills: It emerged as result of the item that how social emotional skills of educational leadership can be significant in implementation of strategic planning. It was related to implementation of strategic planning. All the respondents argued that social emotional skill of educational leaders plays a vital role in relation management, communication, and administration of stakeholders within society.

Conclusions

The study aims to explore factors of leadership in strategic planning. It concluded that the educational leaders play a key role in defining the direction of education by having all stake-holds, and teaching and learning community on board. They used to do SWOT analysis and feedback to enhance strategic planning. The internet and social media was widely used for the communication of vision to stake-holds. The focus of strategic planning is to improve the quality and make it meaningful. On the other hand, there was multiple factors that can influence the implementation of strategic planning. Assessment and analysis, social-circumstances, national education policy, socio-cultural values, team motivation and sense of responsibility, emotional management and social skills of educational leaders play important roles in implementation of strategic planning.

So, the study explained that the role of educational leaders in strategic planning is beyond educational organization. The involvement of teaching learning community and other stakeholders are very important in setting educational objectives. most of educational leader prefer to use modern mean of communication instead of meetings, conferences and seminars etc. to convey their education goals. Considering the local cultural and government policies, and socio-economic factors strengthen the probability of successful implementation. Social skills of educational

leaders and emotional management are very significant factors for smooth administration and implementation of strategic planning.

Suggestions

There are some suggestions in result of the study:

- The role of educational leaders may be increased in strategic planning.
- The stakeholders and teaching learning community may be respected in strategic planning by considering their opinion.
- There may be strong criteria for assessment and evaluation to track progress.
- Socio cultural and economical, and national education policy may be considered while doing strategic planning.
- Professional development programs for educational leaders may be arranged regularly to increase their skill of emotional intelligence.
- There is strong need for further research to explore the educational philosophy of leaders in strategic planning at secondary level.

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