

Dimensions of Principals' Characteristics for Improving Efficiency of Schools

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Abstract

The quality of education could be improved by promoting the internal efficiency of secondary schools, which largely depends on leadership skills of the principals. Principals today function as instructional leaders, who continuously struggle for promoting learning outcomes of pupils, understand curriculum content and instructional skills and motivate teachers to improve these skills by providing them professional and instructional support. Their instructional leaderships could be improved by knowledge of curriculum content and modern teaching methodologies, which promote the internal efficiency of schools. The principals benefit from each other in professional matters and promote collegiality among them. They interact with their colleagues to share knowledge and skills. The experienced principals are good mediators and conflict resolvers. They collaborate with parents and community for improving learning outcomes of students. Administrative competence is important in determining the performance of the best and worst schools. But it is hard to measure it directly. Years of administrative skills and planning are also relevant to competence, but are less likely to be available on any consistent basis and affect the internal efficiency of school. The education level of the principal must ensure that he is an excellent evaluator of the classroom and school objectives. He checks students' work and gives feedback to teachers after classroom observations. Professional development of principals has an impact on the knowledge, skills and their dispositions. The professional development need of principal is somewhat different from those of teachers and is reflective of the four major categories of development: leadership skills, curriculum related (Instructional, supervision and evaluation) skills, human and financial resource management skills, and knowledge in using departmental rules and regulations. Effective supervision and good governance is affected by number of teachers in a school. Small number of teachers in school ensures close contact between principal and teachers, which makes monitoring and financial accountability more effective, resultantly promotes its efficiency.

Key words: Collegiality, Leadership, Learning outcome, Mediator and Supervision.

1 Introduction

A Principal is the head of a secondary school in Pakistan, who supervises and controls the school with the help of supporting staff. The principal is responsible for all school-based activities of routine nature and special events like speeches, debates and games to improve mental health of students. The important position of the secondary school principal demands an examination of his leadership characteristics (experience, education and professional development). Secondary education links primary and tertiary/higher (university) levels of education and opens the doors for employments. The quality of education could be improved by promoting the internal efficiency of secondary schools, which largely depends on leadership skills of the principals.

Principals today function as instructional leaders, who continuously struggle for promoting learning outcomes of pupils, understand curriculum content and instructional skills and motivate teachers to improve these skills by providing them professional and instructional support. In order to improve test scores they collect, analyze and use school and students data. They seek to rely on students, teachers, parents and community for the purpose of promoting pupils' achievement. Their instructional leaderships could be improved by knowledge of curriculum content and modern teaching methodologies, which promote the internal efficiency of schools.

1. 1 Experience of Principal

High school principal relies on other principals and teachers as his main source of ideas. He feels that classroom teaching and his own experience as a principal have been the most valuable contributions to his ability to succeed in his present position. The principal benefits from each other in professional matters and promotes collegiality among them. He interacts with their colleagues to share knowledge and skills.

The experienced principal is a good mediator and conflict resolver. He collaborates with parents and community for improving learning outcomes of students. The involvement of parents and community could be utilized to access the resources of community, which can be used to enrich the educational experience of the principal. The interaction with their colleagues help to build learning communities within the education system at different levels would promote internal efficiency in schools.

Kerr, Terry (2009:3) reported that there were six principles that ensured the success of students. Those include shared school vision, instructional programme, management of school operational activities, home school relationship, nurturing of honesty and communication with school management for their support.

1.2 Education of Principal

The educational record of school principal includes, but is not restricted to, his academic achievement and the span of time he utilizes in learning. Most of the secondary school principals are master degree holders in academic and professional education. Some of the principals in Elementary and Secondary Education Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are even more qualified having M.Phil and PhD degrees in either academic or professional education as shown by data collection in the opinionnaire in five selected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Administrative competence is important in determining the performance of the best and worst schools. But it is hard to measure it directly. Years of administrative skills and planning are also relevant to competence, but are less likely to be available on any consistent basis and affect the internal efficiency of school.

The education level of the principal must ensure that he is an excellent evaluator of the classroom and school objectives. He checks students' work and gives feedback to teachers after classroom observations.

According to Hallinger, Phillip and Joseph Murphy (1985:229) school principal is a key figure in developing staff commitment to excellence. Shared beliefs are the foundations upon which school improvement rests. Value leadership by the principal is the means by which it is achieved. The specific practices that the principal usually performs for improving internal efficiency and effectiveness of school include ensuring classroom objectives and evaluating teachers on it; monitoring instruction to ensure classroom objectives and

pointing out strengths and weaknesses of teaching-learning process on the basis of classroom observations.

1.3 Professional Development of Principal

Professional development of principals has an impact on the knowledge, skills and their dispositions. The professional development need of principal is somewhat different from those of teachers and is reflective of the four major categories of development: leadership skills, curriculum related (Instructional, supervision and evaluation) skills, human and financial resource management skills, and knowledge in using departmental rules and regulations. In order to meet the expectations of parents, a principal has to ensure that necessary support services are made available to the students. Most of the principals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are unaware about account matters and solely depend on the clerical staff, because they are mainly concerned with their academic responsibilities in schools. Their grooming in modern management skills, departmental rules and regulations are not up to the mark, on which the internal efficiency of schools largely depends.

Fullen, Michael (2003:156) stated that school effectiveness owes itself to the joint efforts of the principals and staff. This requires a couple of things, which include both knowledge and skills of the faculty as well as availability and utilization all types of resources.

1.4 Teachers/Principal Ratio

Large schools with many teachers and students are usually faced with several disciplinary problems due to lack of effective communication and supervision by their principals. Most secondary schools in KP do not have the post of vice-principals. This situation hinders them to create conducive environment for learning and collegiality among their teachers, which have negative impact on students' achievements and the internal efficiency of schools. The teachers/principal ratio in most of the secondary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 12:1 as per secondary education criteria but practically the ratio in most schools is beyond the mentioned one.

According to Meier (1996:14) effective supervision and good governance is affected by more than 20 teachers in a school. It is because of small number of teachers in school that ensure close contact between principal and teachers, which makes monitoring and financial accountability more effective. School teachers less than, 20 and more than, 12 are under the effective supervision of principal, which help promote school efficiency.

2. Literature Review

The traits of school managers and leaders have an impact on the internal efficiency of schools because it is good governance and effective management of the school that contribute to school effectiveness. The traits of school leader affect the decision-making and teaching learning environment of the school. Apart from this teachers/principal ratio, working conditions, salary and benefits are some of the motivating factors, which in turn, affect the internal efficiency of school. School leader characteristics includes: experience, education & qualification and training & professional development of principals.

2.1 Experience of School Principal

Zaccaro et al (2004:120) documented that the significance of headship qualities are supported by individual traits functioning, jointly. Those traits are judged by mental capabilities, personality features, motives and values, social assessment techniques, skills in conflict resolution, and proficiency in specific field.

Cranston (2002:5) attempted to explain that experienced principals were required to have certain skills and competencies. Those include management of human and financial resources, leading in uncertain situation, inter-personal communication and conflict resolution skills, ability to involve others, potential of efficient time management and working under pressure situation.

Van Wyck (2001:195-201) has given more importance to the managerial skills of principals and head teachers in setting school climate for effective-teaching learning process. The strategy that ensured effective operation of school included a workable timetable and teachers' discipline as elements of good management. The low level of teachers' commitment to teaching profession was evident from their absenteeism, irregularity and their non-attendance of classes even when they were available in their schools.

The literature reviewed on the experience of school principal indicated that experienced school principals were required to possess managerial skills and competence such as financial and human resource management, conflict resolution, inter-personal communication, motive and value as well as proficiency in other related areas. The conclusion was that they contributed to the internal efficiency of schools. [Zaccaro et al (2004:120) and Cranston (2002:5)].

2.2 Education and Qualification of Principals

St. Germain and Quinn (2005:88) documented that the interventional role of principals were largely based on their knowledge about the solution of the school problems. This knowledge was based on their past experience of handling such problems. It was found that they could better face the challenging tasks caused in different situations.

Stein and Nelson (2003:442) laid emphasis on principals' mastery over subjects and their knowledge about instructional strategies. In this way they could effectively perform the role of instructional leadership, which could help improve the internal efficiency of schools.

2.3 Training and Professional Development

Amorim (2008:45) reported in a study that it is important to develop the competence of principals to ensure school-based practices for planning, monitoring and evaluation for improvement of students' gains by prospective teachers undertaking post-graduate education in: promoting the achievement level of slow learners; enhancing the result of school-based measurement and allocation of resources to teaching-learning process. Simultaneously, the provision of incentives either in the form of money or promotion to teachers by acquiring higher education is significant for promoting content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Adeboyeje (2000:88-103) described that the school administrator has to play a major task in the school, which is the management of all the physical facilities. He further stressed that the school administrators should be conversant with universal principles of managing physical facilities. Proper understanding and application of such principles will contribute to correcting deficiencies in physical facilities management practices.

Chapman (2000:283-308) argued that decentralization of education service delivery ensures transparency and accountability in school administration due to community pressure. The development of administration effectiveness and accountability was carried out through educational decentralization in Ghana by problem-solving and decision-making at local level.

The analysis of foregoing discussion showed that the experience and education of principals are

essential for conducive environment of teaching-learning process in school. The internal efficiency of school could be improved if principal has the quality of inter-personal communication, conflict management, physical, financial and human resources management. The capacity of principal to empower and distribute academic and non-academic duties effectively, leading to multiple-dimensional leadership roles, effective time management, and to work under pressure, which have an impact on the internal efficiency of schools. [Amorim (2008:45) Zaccaro et al (2004:120) Cranston (2002:5) and Adeboyeje (2000:88-103)].

3. Methodology of the Study

The study attempted to identify different dimensions of principals’ characteristics for improving internal efficiency of secondary schools in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It chose a descriptive methodology based on scientific method of research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied for analysis of data. The study was delimited to Boys’ High Schools in public sector both in urban and rural areas of five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Girls’ schools as well as private schools were not included in the scope of the study.

Population may be target or sampled depending on the situation. The target population of the study was 1229 principals/heads of secondary schools and 4201 senior school teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The sampled population of the current study was 297 principals/ heads of secondary schools and 1433 senior school teachers in five districts of five divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

Table-1 Population of High Schools’ Principals and Senior School Teachers (SSTs)

| Population of Respondents, District-wise | District Bannu | District Kohat | District Lower Dir | District Mardan | District Peshawar | Grand Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Population of High Schools’ Principals | 48 | 44 | 62 | 69 | 74 | 297 |
| Population of SSTs | 248 | 145 | 275 | 410 | 355 | 1433 |

The study chose stratified random sampling technique as the population was spread over five districts. Therefore districts were purposively selected and sample from every district was randomly chosen in order to provide equal opportunity to subjects, for inclusion in every unit of the population. The sample of the study was adequate because 75 (25%) principals and 359 (25%) senior school teachers were included in the study from all five districts of five divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The following table gives a synoptic picture of the sample in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Table-2 Sample of High Schools’ Principals and Senior School Teachers (SSTs)

| Sample of Respondents, District-wise | District Bannu | District Kohat | District Lower Dir | District Mardan | District Peshawar | Grand Total |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Sample of High Schools’ Principals %age | 12 (25%) | 11 (25%) | 16 (25%) | 17 (25%) | 19 (25%) | 75 (25%) |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sample of SSTs | 62 | 36 | 69 | 103 | 89 | 359 |
| %age | (25%) | (25%) | (25%) | (25%) | (25%) | (25%) |

The following statistical manipulations were used for determination of consistency in data of the respondents.

Standard Deviation of principals (S_p) =3.03, Standard Deviation of SST (S_t) =23.04

Principals’ average per district (\bar{X}_p) =15.00, SSTs’ average per district (\bar{X}_{SST}) =71.80

Co-efficient of variation (C.V) for principals and SST are given as

$$C.V_p = S_p / \bar{X}_p \times 100$$

$$C.V_{sst} = S_t / \bar{X}_{sst} \times 100$$

$$C.V_p = 20.20$$

$$C.V_{sst} = 32.09$$

Co-efficient of variation of principals (20.20) is less than SST (32.09), which means that data of principals are more consistent (reliable).

4. Research Instruments

The study used opinionnaire for collecting data from principals and senior school teachers regarding financial category for improving school efficiency in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The opinionnaire was administered to the subjects using Likert Scale with five options for each statement. They were handed over to participants and collected in person.

5. Data Collection, Analysis and Discussion

The primary data were obtained through closed-ended opinionnaire personally handed over to the principals and senior school teachers in urban and rural areas in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The secondary data were obtained from office records, documents and review of relevant literature both in local and global perspectives.

The analysis of data was given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The quantitative data were supported by statistical measures and converted into percentages in tabular form duly supported by graphic presentation. The qualitative data were placed under different patterns and categories, discussed and interpreted for drawing inferences. Chi-square test was also applied for validation of results.

The following statements were framed under principals’ characteristics and the subjects (principals and senior school teachers) were asked to prioritize their choices out of the options: Most Essential, Quite Essential, Essential, Essential to Some Extent and Not So Essential in accordance to serial number of opinionnaire. School:

1. Administers by capable and well trained principal regarding his experience and education.
2. Has manageable number of teachers under effective supervision of principal (teachers/principal ratio).

Table-3 Responses of 75 Principals Regarding Principals’ Characteristics

| Options (Likert Scale) | Statement number | Districts | | | | | Total Responses (Row) | Percent-ages (%ages) |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | | Bannu 12 | Kohat 11 | Lower Dir 16 | Mardan 17 | Peshawar 19 | | |
| Most Essential | 1 | 9 | 2 | 13 | 12 | 15 | 51 | 34.00 |
| | 2 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 28 | 18.67 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 15 | 2 | 18 | 18 | 26 | 79 | 52.67 |
| Quite Essential | 1 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 17 | 11.33 |
| | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 30 | 20.00 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 6 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 8 | 47 | 33.33 |
| Essential | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 4.67 |
| | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 10.00 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 3 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 22 | 14.67 |
| Essential To Some Extent | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1.33 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1.33 |
| Not So Essential | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| G. Total | | 24 | 22 | 32 | 34 | 38 | 150 | 100 |

N=75

Out of (75x2)150 responses of 75 principals in all the five districts 79 (52.67%) responses were opted for ‘Most Essential’, 47 (33.33%) for ‘Quite Essential’, 22 (14.67%) for ‘Essential’, 2 (1.33%) for ‘Essential to Some Extent’ and 0 (0 %) for ‘Not So Essential’. It was found that out of 150 responses a majority of 79 responses were in favour of ‘Most Essential’. The analysis revealed that capable, experience, educated and well trained principals and having assigned number of teachers under their effective supervision could help improve schools’ effectiveness. The result of this analysis indicated that principal’s characteristics were helpful for creating conducive environment in the school. Principal is pivotal in improving the learning outcomes of the students, which has positive impact on the internal efficiency of schools. These findings endorsed what was reviewed with the help of different citations under the given caption and conclusively it can be stated that principals’ commitment, qualification, experience and professional development is helpful for promoting their multi-dimensional roles, which promote internal efficiency of schools.[Amorim (2008:45), St. Germain and Quinn (2005:88), Zaccaro et al (2004:120) Stein and Nelson (2003:442), Cranston (2002:5), Van Wyck (2001:195-201) and Adebeyeje (2000:88-103)].

The data reflected in Table-3 were further subjected to statistical measures for authentication.

H₀ = Principals’ Characteristics and Internal Efficiency of Schools are independent or they are not associated.

H_1 = Principals’ Characteristics and Internal Efficiency of Schools are not independent or they are associated.

Level of significance $\alpha=0.05$ (for 95% confidence level)

Critical Region $Chi-Sq (cal) \geq Chi-Sq_{\alpha} (r-1) (c-1) d.f.$

$Chi-Sq (cal) \geq Chi-Sq_{0.05} (1) (4)$

$Chi-Sq (cal) \geq Chi-Sq_{0.05} 4 \Rightarrow Chi-Sq (tab) = 9.49$

$Chi-Sq (cal) = 15.201$

Since $Chi-Sq (cal)$ (15.01) is greater than $Chi-Sq (tab)$ (9.49), which falls in the critical region. So we reject H_0 and conclude that ‘Principals Characteristics’ and ‘Internal Efficiency of Schools’ are not independent. The data were further elucidated by Figure-1.

Figure-1 Responses of 75 Principals Regarding Principals’ Characteristics

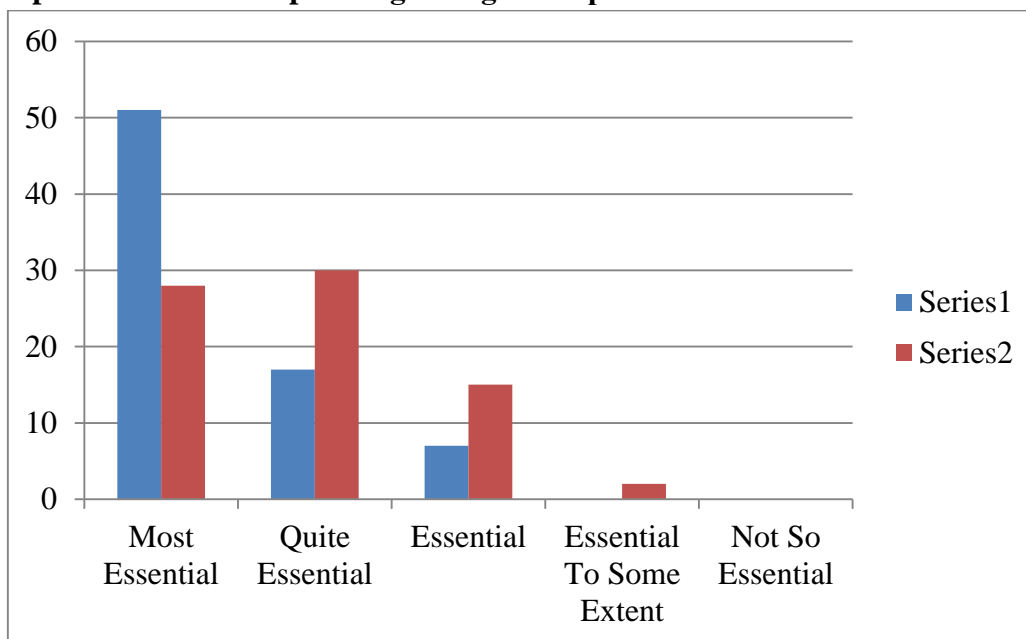


Table-4 Responses of 359 SSTs Regarding Principals’ Characteristics

| Options (Likert Scale) | Statement number | Districts | | | | | Total Responses (Row) | Percent-ages (%ages) |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | | Bannu 62 | Kohat 36 | Lower Dir 69 | Mardan 103 | Peshawar 89 | | |
| Most Essential | 1 | 24 | 13 | 52 | 69 | 62 | 220 | 30.64 |
| | 2 | 27 | 7 | 28 | 38 | 34 | 134 | 18.66 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 51 | 20 | 80 | 107 | 96 | 354 | 49.30 |
| Quite Essential | 1 | 18 | 8 | 11 | 18 | 18 | 73 | 10.17 |
| | 2 | 14 | 10 | 21 | 41 | 29 | 115 | 16.02 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 32 | 18 | 32 | 59 | 47 | 188 | 26.19 |
| Essential | 1 | 16 | 7 | 2 | 13 | 4 | 42 | 5.85 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | 2 | 13 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 76 | 10.58 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 29 | 23 | 17 | 29 | 20 | 118 | 16.43 |
| Essential To Some Extent | 1 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 20 | 2.79 |
| | 2 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 25 | 3.48 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 10 | 11 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 45 | 6.27 |
| Not So Essential | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0.56 |
| | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 1.25 |
| Total Resp. (Column) | | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 13 | 1.81 |
| G. Total | | 124 | 72 | 138 | 206 | 178 | 718 | 100 |

N=359

Out of (359x2)718 responses of 359 senior school teachers in all the five districts 354 (49.30%) responses were opted for ‘Most Essential’, 188 (26.19%) for ‘Quite Essential’,118 (16.43%) for ‘Essential’, 45 (6.27%) for ‘Essential to Some Extent’ and 13 (1.81%) for ‘Not So Essential’. It was found that out of 718 responses a majority of 354 responses were in favour of ‘Most Essential’. The analysis indicated that capable, experience, educated and well trained principals having manageable number of teachers under their effective supervision could help improve schools’ effectiveness. It further revealed that principal’s characteristics were useful for creating conducive environment in the school. Principal is pivotal in improving the learning environment, which has an impact on the internal efficiency of schools. These findings are in agreement with what was reviewed in relevant literature and resultantly it can be safely stated that principals’ commitment, qualification, experience and professional development is helpful for promoting their multi-dimensional roles, which promote internal efficiency of schools.[Amorim (2008:45), St. Germain and Quinn (2005:88), Zaccaro et al (2004:120) Stein and Nelson (2003:442), Cranston (2002:5), Van Wyck (2001:195-201) and Adeboyeje (2000:88-103)].

The data reflected in Table-4 were further subjected to statistical measures for authentication.

H₀ = Principals’ Characteristics and Internal Efficiency of Schools are independent or they are not associated.

H₁ = Principals’ Characteristics and Internal Efficiency of Schools are not independent or they are associated.

Level of significance $\alpha=0.05$ (for 95% confidence level)

Critical Region $\text{Chi-Sq (cal)} \geq \text{Chi-Sq } \alpha (r-1) (c-1) \text{ d.f.}$

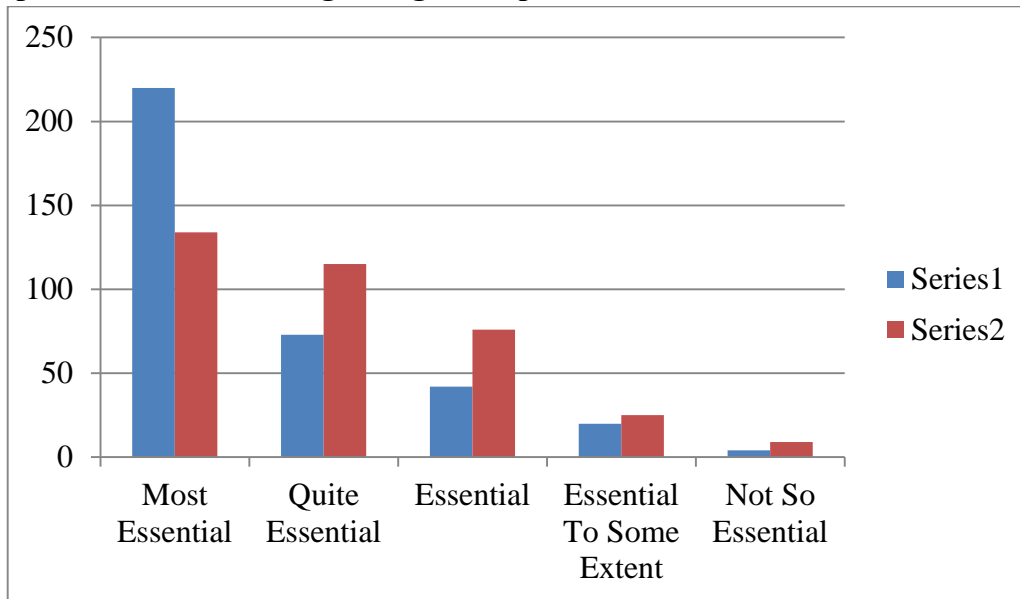
$\text{Chi-Sq (cal)} \geq \text{Chi-Sq } 0.05 (1) (4)$

$\text{Chi-Sq (cal)} \geq \text{Chi-Sq } 0.05 4 \Rightarrow \text{Chi-Sq (tab)} = 9.49$

$\text{Chi-Sq (cal)} = 42.551$

Since $\text{Chi-Sq (cal)} (42.551)$ is greater than $\text{Chi-Sq (tab)} (9.49)$, which falls in the critical region. So we reject H_0 and conclude that ‘Principals Characteristics’ and ‘Internal Efficiency of Schools’ are not independent. The data were further elucidated by Figure-2.

Figure-2 Responses of 359 SSTs Regarding Principals’ Characteristics



6. Outcome of the Study

The data indicated that out of 150 responses of principals and 718 responses of senior school teachers a majority of 79 (52.67%) and 354 (49.30%) responses were respectively in favour of ‘Most Essential’. The analysis revealed that principal’s characteristics were helpful for creating conducive environment in the school. Most of the respondents inferred that capable, experienced, educated and well trained principals and having manageable number of teachers under their effective supervision could help improve schools’ effectiveness. Principal with effective team of teachers is pivotal in improving the learning outcomes of the students, which has positive impact on the internal efficiency of schools. Effective supervision of school should be ensured by dynamic principal. Therefore, it is suggested that competency of principal should be increased by his continuous professional development.

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