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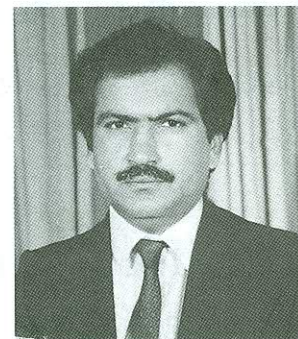
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RECONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF HEADTEACHERS AS PEDAGOGICAL LEADERS IN PAKISTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY REFORMS

By
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Abstract

Since its independence, Pakistan has launched a series of education reforms, which are either related to curriculum development or teacher education, but no effort has yet been made to address the issues relating to recognition of headteachers' role within the framework of educational management development (Memon, et al. 1999). However currently the government of Pakistan seems to be cognizant of the importance of professional development of headteachers and others who are responsible for improving the quality of education in schools (Government of Pakistan, 1998). Literature in the area of educational management suggests that schools cannot function effectively without the dynamic leadership of headteachers who eventually provide leadership and vision to their staff. In Pakistan the majority of headteachers tend to perform as 'bureaucratic leaders' (Sergiovanni, 1998) or 'transmission leaders' (Memon, 1998) who either simply respond to the demands of the system or education reform. This addresses the issue of the moral and ethical values and obligations that headteachers face while work-

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ing in their schools. Research in the area of educational management reveals that schools do not work in a vacuum but are highly influenced by the social context of surrounding communities (Goldring & Rallis, 1993). Therefore, social context has a significant impact on a school's academic policies and plans. This requires schools to meet the changing needs of communities. Schools are no longer there just to impart literacy and numeracy but they are responsible for the holistic development of the child. This can only be possible if the school headteachers consider themselves as 'pedagogical leaders' (Sergiovanni, 1998) who should value and recognize the needs and demands of the society. In the late 80s, a major emphasis was placed on Headteachers' role as 'instructional leaders' because of the changing needs of the society. This was later superseded by 'transformational leadership' (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) and this has now been further superseded by 'pedagogical leadership'. It "invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 37). In order to develop headteachers as pedagogical leaders, the Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi launched a one-year field-based modular Advanced Diploma in School Management (ADISM) programme in June 1997. The impact of this programme seems to have implications for policy reforms in the area

of educational management in Pakistan.

Introduction

Since the independence of Pakistan, several education reforms through national education policies were launched in order to bring about the qualitative and quantitative improvements in the education sector. This indicates political commitment towards improvement of education but in reality it is more visible in public speeches rather than in actions. Till date the education reforms are either externally imposed or implemented through a piece meal approach embedded in the 'top-down management model' (Memon et al., 1999). These reforms do not seem to have a significant impact on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of education in Pakistan. The donor agencies also do not seem appreciative about the quality of education being offered in schools. The educationists, parents and other stakeholders also do not seem happy with the quality of education. As one of the educationists portrays Pakistan's education system as an "engine without fuel". (Rizvi, 1999, p. 9). He further mentions that the standard

of education in government schools has deteriorated to such an extent that no sane person is prepared to send his/her kids to government schools, which are now commonly dubbed as orphanages. This seems an extremist view, which cannot be generalized, however, the quality of education in Pakistan has substantially deteriorated and numerous factors are responsible for such deterioration. Lack of shared vision, purpose of education and good educational leadership are considered to be the main contributing factors (see further Memon, 1999). The National Educational Policy 1998-2010) also endorses this issue that the educational administrators possess a professional qualification which does not cater to needs of managing and supervising schools effectively. Therefore, there is a need to professionally develop people who can become effective educational leaders to provide leadership in the field of education.

Notions of Educational Leadership

Leadership was not known to many of us until some effort was made to identify the bases of leadership practices in the behavioral sciences (Bennis, 1959). But those efforts lacked integrated understanding of leadership (Stogdill, 1974). However, some studies have helped us in understanding the issues related to leadership styles, levels of decision-making, organizational effectiveness etc. (see Reddin, 1970, Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

Nowadays leadership has become a buzzword in the context of the developed and developing countries. Literature on educational leadership describes several types of leadership which includes Transactional (Burns, 1978); Situational (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982); Instructional (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985); Cultural (Schein, 1985); Expressive (Nias, 1987); Person-Centred (Covey, 1990); Moral (Sergiovanni, 1992); Transformational (Leithwood et al. 1994); Invitational (Stoll, and Fink, 1996); Servant (Greenleaf, 1996); Inspirational (Rees, 1998); Constructivist (Lambert, 1998); Reflective (Southworth, 1998); Transmission (Memon, 1998); and Bureaucratic, Visionary, Entrepreneurial, Pedagogical (Sergiovanni, 1998). Sergiovanni (1992), one of the North American gurus of educational leadership argues that today's leadership practices tend to rely heavily on logic, objectivity, self-interest, individuality, bureaucracy and technical rationality which ignore the values and importance of the emotions, feelings, morality, self sacrifice, empathy and understanding. Ribbins (1993a), one of the European gurus of education leadership does not seem happy with a growing body of literature on leadership, which he considers as shambles, a mess of philosophical confusion. He further mentions that if the people could burn words, he would suggest that the word 'leadership' be burnt. This does not seem to be a solution to the problem. There is a need to find out the missing links in order to develop a shared understanding about school leadership as a whole. Leaders should help people in developing understanding of their meanings they attach with their actions. Busher (1997) mentions that leaders have a key role in building a vision inspirationally that will help to define the quality and purposes of interpersonal relationships within a school. Bolman and Deal (1991) mention that school leaders need to have flexible strategies to cope with changing environments. They also need to develop and sustain core values and beliefs, which are required for managing schools effectively.

Headteachers as Educational Leaders

Literature on educational management and leadership (e.g.

Greenfield, 1987, Dalin, 1993, Leithwood et al., 1994, Baker, 1995, Grace, 1995, and Sergiovanni, 1998) highlights the significance of the role of headteachers as educational leaders in the developed countries. Research on effective schools reveals that school leadership is one of the critical variables, which has significantly contributed to school effectiveness. This has led to develop a grounded theory that good schools have always good headteachers but their role is becoming highly complex and difficult, therefore, they encounter numerous difficulties to 'walk the tightrope' (Daresh and Playko, 1998) of school management. On the other hand, expectations of education reforms in UK and other countries have compelled to headteachers to give priority to their administrative functions. OFSTED report (1995) maintains that few heads spend sufficient time evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Laws and Dennison (1991) mention that the heads spend most of the time on activities related to role of chief executive and professional leadership actions get less significance. Therefore, there is a danger of losing their expertise in pedagogical matters, which is a great concern of headteachers.

Williams (1988) already predicted that the headteachers in UK would become the managers of an imposed curriculum rather than partners in curriculum development. This may create major hierarchical forms of management (Garrett, 1997). Busher (1997) noted that the paradigm shift in the headteachers' role from 'leading professionals' to 'chief executives'. Hughes (1975) mentions that professionals as administrators play dual roles: chief executives and leading professionals and Coulson (1986) calls the latter category of the role as 'lead professionals'. Ribbins (1993b) identified four roles of headteachers namely curriculum chief, school leaders, abnegators, and chief administrators.

In the context of developing countries, the headteachers' role as an education leader is not yet substantially recognized in school effectiveness and improvement process. Headteachers tend to work as administrators rather than educational leaders because of the increased demands of education reforms (see Memon et al. 1998,

Simkins et al., 1998 and Murillo, 1999). Black and his fellows (1993) suggest that there is a need for formal and focused professional development programmes for headteachers to ensure centrality of their role which is pivotal in guiding the direction of school effectiveness and school improvement. Bacchus (1995) in the context of Pakistan suggests the professional development programme for headteachers and others who influence the decision-making for school policies. This will help schools to transform themselves as learning schools through developing a shared vision, empowerment, collegiality, professionalism, and motivation.

Sergiovanni (1998) warns that despite the widespread use of different leadership strategies such as bureaucratic, visionary and entrepreneurial leadership, schools are not yet transformed to help students in improving their learning outcomes and teachers in enhancing their professional knowledge and skills. He argues that students' better results will not be achieved until we emphasize a new conception of leadership and different set of school improvement strategies. In order to understand the rubric of the educational leadership, I agree with Ribbins (1997) that we need to find out new ways of researching leaders and leadership in education.

Reconceptualizing Role of Headteachers as Pedagogical Leaders in Pakistan
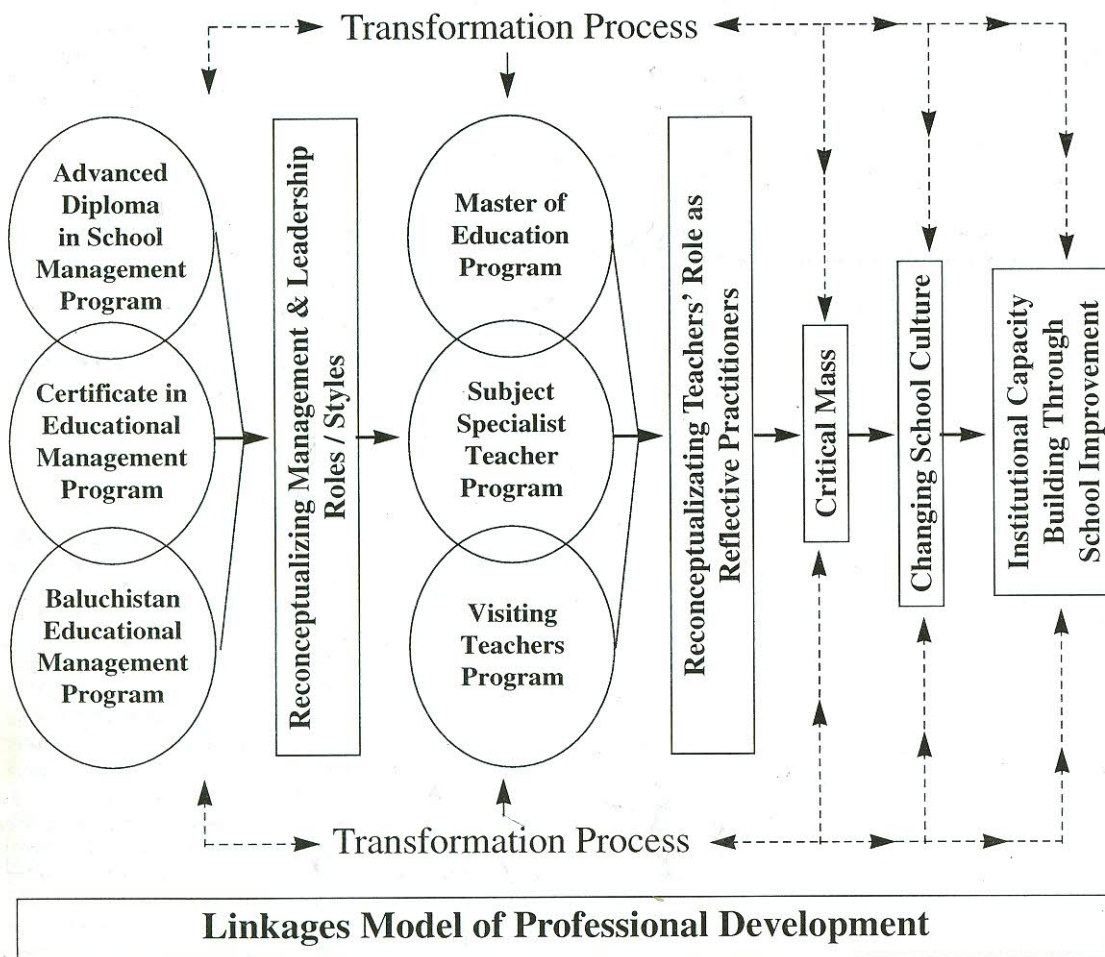
Since the establishment of the Aga Khan University, Institute for Education Development (AKU-IED) in 1993, its several professional development programmes have been conceived in the broader perspective of school improvement and effectiveness. In its initial phase, AKU-IED launched a two-year master's programme in teacher education with the teachers of its cooperating schools from three systems (Public, Private, and Aga Khan Education Services). The teachers who complete their masters programme are called as professional development teachers (PDTs) whose role is to work as mentors with their colleagues in their own schools. In addition to masters programmes, an eight week visiting teachers (VT) programme in the areas of teaching Science, Maths, Social Studies, English language and Primary Education was intro-

duced to increase the schools capacity for school improvement. But, our experience shows that the headteachers and other senior education officers seemed to be a major barrier in the process of change.

Hence, AKU-IED introduced other programmes. These include a one-year field based modular Advanced Diploma in School Management (ADISM) programme for headteachers, a ten-week intensive professional development programme leading to Certificate in Educational Management (CEM), and an initial three-week educational management programme which is offered to headteachers and senior education officers who are responsible for supervision, monitoring and evaluation. Another one-year field based follow-up teacher education programme is introduced for those teachers who completed an eight-week visiting teacher programme in different subjects to enhance their pedagogical content knowledge in the particular subject. These programmes are interwoven in their nature and aimed to develop practitioners who can create a 'critical mass' for enhancing institutional capacity building required for school improvement and sustainable change. The institutional capacity building encompasses both institutional strengthening-carrying out existing roles more effectively and institutional development redefining existing roles and responsibilities (see further AKU-IED document 1998). The linkages of these programmes are featured in the following figure.

Till date the education reforms are either externally imposed or implemented through a piece meal approach embedded in the 'top-down management model'. (Memon et al., 1999). These reforms do not seem to have a significant impact on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of education in Pakistan. The donor agencies also do not seem appreciative about the quality of education being offered in schools. The educationists, parents and other stakeholders also do not seem happy with the quality of education.

Transformation Process →

| Advanced Diploma in School Management Program | | Master of Education Program | | | Critical Mass | Changing School Culture | Institutional Capacity Building Through School Improvement |

Reconceptualizing Management & Leadership Roles / Styles

Certificate in Educational Management Program

Subject Specialist Teacher Program

Reconceptualizating Teachers' Role as Reflective Practitioners

Baluchistan Educational Management Program

Visiting Teachers Program

Transformation Process →

Linkages Model of Professional Development

Figure: Linkages Model of Professional Development

These programmes have received a wider recognition and credibility for their relevance and quality. AKU-IED's mission statement indicates that there is a mission to raise the level of competence of teacher educators, principals and others engaged in the key decision-making and management roles in education. The AKU-IED's document (1998) entitled "Educational Management Programmes at AKU-IED" mentions that its key priorities are; a) quality improvements to enhance students' learning; b) strengthening management and supervision at school and system levels; and fostering community participation in schools.

Currently, educational management has been considered as one of the key areas of professional development of headteachers and other senior educational managers in Pakistan. The role of headteachers in school improvement and effectiveness has become a major focus in educational research over the last

two decades. Literature on school management and leadership suggests that the success of any major school improvement initiative depends on the motivation, commitment, managerial skills and competence of the headteachers and others involved in the management of schools. It reveals that success or failure of a school is largely related to the headteachers' performance. Sergiovanni (1992) mentions that we need to develop rich leadership practice by expanding its theoretical and operational foundation by adding a wide range of values of educational leadership.

The programme evolved as results of need analysis of the working/aspiring headteachers of various school systems. The programme consisting of ten modules offers a blend of theory and school based practicum guided by the tutors in the participants' schools. Specifically, the programme comprises a total of 400 contact hours (33 credits), of

which 112 contact hours are assigned to the school-based practicum guided by the tutors during school visits. The first two modules are conducted during the summer vacation in July and the remaining modules are mainly delivered on Saturdays. The tenth module is conducted in the next summer vacation (see ADISM programme handbook for class 2000). The first ADISM programme was offered in June 1997 to twenty four working/aspiring headteachers from the public, private and AKES systems. The programme contains the following four major aims:

a) to reconceptualize the school management and leadership practices of the working/aspiring headteachers as 'pedagogical leaders' embedded in the philosophy of transformational leadership;

b) to develop understanding of the working/aspiring headteachers

about the dynamics of school improvement and effectiveness and its implications for school policies and plans;

c) to help working/aspiring headteachers in creating a 'critical mass' consisting of PDTs, SSTs and VTs required for facilitating change process for multiplier effect in schools; and

d) to help working/aspiring headteachers in establishing and strengthening networking building by joining as a member of SHADE (School Headteachers Association for Development of Education) across the various school systems and learn from each other's managerial experiences required for further professional development.

The ultimate purpose of the ADISM programme is to develop headteachers as pedagogical leaders. Sergiovanni (1998) mentions that "Pedagogical leadership develops human capital by helping schools become caring, focused and inquiring communities within which teachers work together as members of a community of practice" (p. 37). He further mentions that "pedagogical leadership invests in capacity building by developing social and academic skills for students and intellectual and professional capital for teacher (p. 38).

During the ten modules the head-teachers are exposed to several alternative management practices related to headteachers' role as pedagogical leaders. Headteachers are exposed to critical reflective practice, which allows them to question and challenge their own management and leadership practices for finding out alternative pathways to improve their practices and styles.

Headteachers are encouraged to critically analyze their notions and assumptions associated with old management practices and roles and identify alternatives to enhance their understanding about their new role. They are also encouraged to apply new ideas and reflect on them about their implications. Headteachers are exposed to several new ideas such as schools as learning organizations, school cultures, Headteachers' role in curriculum enrichment, dynamics of change, school improvement and effectiveness, teachers' professional development, monitoring students'

learning outcomes, relationship with teachers and community, and management and leadership practices. During the reconceptualization process the headteachers reconstruct their experiences for developing indigenous educational management and leadership practices. This allows them to take their own context in the mind and apply new ideas, which are relevant, to them. The headteachers are also encouraged to share these challenges with their counterparts in the programme and learn from each other's experiences.

Two cohorts (48 headteachers) of ADISM programme have completed their ADISM programme and most of them have moved to practice their new role as 'pedagogical leaders'. A systematic study is being conducted to examine their understanding and meaning of the new role, however, some reflections of the headteachers are given below which demonstrate headteachers' perspective and understanding about their new role.

When female government school headteacher was asked to share her reflections on her new role, she mentioned that:

When I started reflecting on my previous role, I found out that I was not doing much as far as school improvement was concerned... I don't think I have yet been able to become entire pedagogical leader. I am still learning from my own and others' experiences... My staff and others question my new role which is now more concerned about the development of school through teacher and students development... The headteachers who work in the government schools might, think they are not able to work as educational leaders, but I would like to add here that the government school headteachers can also become educational leaders if they are willing to change their ways of seeing things (Reflections of government school female headteacher)

This reveals that even the government headteachers can work as educational leaders who are always trying to comply with instruction from their bosses. In case of any change, they have to seek permission, which seems to be a cumbersome procedure because of the complex hierarchy. This practice sometimes discourages the headteachers not to take any initiatives, which may destabilize systemic and established government norms and rules. This prac-

tice may not help to improve the existing scenario of quality of education.

The male government headteacher shared his following reflections:

Prior to joining programme, I was dealing with several academic matters in my school, which I still carry on, but the main difference was that I used to force teachers do that which made me an educational administrator rather than a pedagogical leader. I used to involve teachers in solving problems but now my approach is different one; what I do is to negotiate with teachers, students and parents and identify their perceptions about the problems and then discuss the alternatives ... I share and explain an innovation with teachers and others before we introduce it. I know this is very time demanding but we have to do it for making our schools effective... I am not yet fully moved to the practice of pedagogical leadership, but I am sure I will be able to develop confidence over a period of time provided I am given professional support and autonomy. (Reflections of government school male headteacher)

The above views of the headteacher indicate that he used to emphasize the academic aspects by using an authoritarian style. But now he has started moving from authoritarian to participatory approach in order to get teachers and others involved in academic matters which suggests his appreciation about his new role. From his understanding, he has not become a typical entirely pedagogical leader but he has learnt that without teachers, students and parents participation, school cannot be improved which indicates his concern about the teacher and students' participation in the school improvement process.

The male headteacher of the private school said about his new role:

Our school system has already introduced the notion of education leadership. Each headteacher is supposed to work as a leader rather than an administrator. But, becoming leader generally and particularly a pedagogical leader seems difficult which has to be learnt on the job rather than told to do that. After attending ADISM programme, I can now appreciate and enjoy this role by creating shared understanding of new ideas, which we intend to introduce in our schools. My alternative role has really helped me in understanding the importance

of my role. (Reflections of private school male headteacher)

This reveals that his school has already introduced the new notion of headship but he had difficulty in reconceptualizing his role as a pedagogical leader. This seems a common approach of 'telling' the headteachers to follow the school or system reforms without any adequate understnading about the new role. The new management and leadership notions have to be reconceptualized through a systematic process of professional development allowing headteachers to critically analyze their beliefs associated with their existing management practices. This process will help develop self-critical awareness about their role and its implications. Headteachers are to be provided with opportunities to practice new management ideas to internalize for making them effective headteachers.

The female headteacher from the private school expresses her views as follows:

I thought I was an experienced headteacher and I did not need any further exposure because my role was very subtle and task oriented. But looking at the different management practices and by observing the best practices of headteachers in the developed world, I started questioning my leadership style. I think headteacher must be caring and role model for others who can follow his/her practices. Headteacher should have professional autonomy to work with his/her teachers on the innovative ideas, which can help improve students' learning outcomes. The pedagogical leader should have both qualities of general and educational leadership. I enjoy my role as a pedagogical leader, which has helped my school in its improvement. (Reflections of private school female headteacher)

The above reflections suggest that the headteachers seem willing to change their styles and practices until they themselves observe the best management and leadership practices which serve as a source of motivation and further professional learning. The private school female headteacher's understanding about her role as a pedagogical leader seems more clearer than the other three headteachers. Perhaps she was able to compare and contrast her role with her counterparts who are considered

to be effective headteachers. This also suggests that the headteachers might be more willing to change their styles and practices until they are provided with opportunities to observe effective management practices of headteachers.

Implications of Policy Reforms for Headteachers' Role as Pedagogical Leaders

The education system of Pakistan has been going through several radical reforms, which have not yet made any significant impact on the quality of schooling and education perhaps because of over-emphasis on the use of the 'cascade model' of teacher education. The National Education Policy (1998-2010) seems to be cognizant of the fact that the past education reforms failed to address the issues of educational management development, therefore, institutional capacity building for sustainable change was not achieved. The schools were also not considered as social units in the intellectual, economical and cultural transformation of the country. Several initiatives were taken to decentralize the management of education in Pakistan but in reality they turned into the worst form of centralization. This has affected the management of education at the micro, and macro level. Literature on school effectiveness and improvement suggests that schools cannot be made effective without effective leadership, which has implications for school management generally and particularly headteachers' role. Headteachers have to be prepared as educational leaders who should not only be interested in administrative matter but also be capable of understanding academic matters which can only happen when headteachers are professionally developed for their role as leading professionals or pedagogical leaders.

Headteachers' role has to be reformulated or reconstructed in the broader perspective of educational management and leadership. At the micro and macro level, the role of headteachers as pedagogical leaders have to be recognized. They have to be encouraged to develop their own school development plant for the improvement. At the national and provincial government levels, secondary headteachers' role and their required professional qualification for becoming headteachers in schools for quality enhancement should be debated for formulation of policy. It

will give recognition to the headteachers' role and professional status, which is being undermined by the senior officers in the education department. Thus, the headteachers would become accountable for the development of their own schools. Working headteachers should undergo the school management and leadership professional development programmes underpinning the philosophy of pedagogical leadership. A separate professional development programme for aspiring headteachers to be developed as pedagogical leaders should also be designed so that the professionally qualified headteachers could be deployed in the schools.

Conclusion

The current management practices indicate that the majority of secondary school headteachers work as 'chief executives' or 'bureaucratic leaders'. In the public sector of education in Pakistan, there is no systematic arrangement for the professional development of secondary school headteachers (in primary schools of public sector a senior teacher is designated as a headteacher). Most of them are promoted as headteachers on the basis of seniority as teachers. Perhaps, the prevailing myth about headship in secondary schools is that any teacher who acquires Bachelor of Education degree, which is a minimum professional qualification for secondary school teachers, can become a headteacher in the public sector which does not seem to be workable or viable any longer in Pakistan. Research on the role of headteachers in Pakistan indicates that the headteachers tend to work as chief executives rather than educational leaders because they are more interested in maintaining the status quo in their schools. On the other hand, there is no pre-service or in-service professional development programme for headteachers, therefore, majority of the headteachers seems to be unaware about their role and how to manage their school effectively. In order to produce effective schools, there is a need to formulate a cohesive policy for creating new type of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992) which can be prepared through professional development programme for aspiring/working headteachers as pedagogical leaders in Pakistan. I agree with Bredeson (1992) that school heads must understand their new roles if school restructuring is to be successful.

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