



# VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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## THE PLACE OF PERSONAL VALUES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTAN

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### INTRODUCTION

The demands on the school principal are becoming increasingly complex and challenging because of the principals extensive involvement in the social, technical, and moral dimensions of school life. In order to cope with these demands, the personal qualities of both competence and character are emerging as critical necessities for every principal. Competence, here, refers to the principal's capacity to correctly interpret seemingly conflicting facts and events whereas, character refers to the need for the principal to consistently ground their subjective, personal decisions in socially appropriate values (Hodgkinson, 1999). Indeed, many would further argue (D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Johnson, McCreery, & Castelli 2000; Shafa, 2003) that the principal's values, as reflected in their character, are at the heart of the school's organizational culture and thereby, ultimately, make a difference in the lives of all associated with the school.

Hence, the influential role of the principal's personal values throughout the whole school is unequivocal. A principal stepping into the school milieu is never a blank slate in terms of possessing and applying personal values. They are frequently dealing with value-laden conflicts and to resolve such differences, their own values play a vital role in assessing and responding to the variety of scenarios they face (Begley, 2002). Furthermore, the values they apply in such situations become reflected in the school's culture and, subsequently, impact upon the lives of many other people. Thus, there is a strong

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justification for exploring the role of the principal's values in educational leadership.

To this end, a number of researchers have responded to this challenge (Begley, 2002; Branson, 2005; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006; Leonard, 1999), but most of these were conducted in essentially western societies. There has been negligible exploration of the influence of personal values in educational leadership in non-westernised societies like Pakistan (Law, Walker, & Dimmock, 2003). The importance of this cultural focus is indirectly acknowledged in the values literature because the study of values is considered as a context related phenomena (Ryan, 1999) such that our understanding of values must consider the impact of culture isomorphs (Begley, 2002). Culture isomorphs are situations in which social values seem to have the same shape and meaning across many countries and cultures but are actually composed of quite different interpretations. Consequently, generalizations of valuations to other cultures are likely to prove unhelpful.

This research was conducted in the specific social and cultural context of Pakistan and sought answers to the following two research questions:

- What are the motivational bases of the participating principals for the acquisition of their personal values?
- How do the personal values of the principals in this study influence their leadership practices?

Hence, this research provides a unique contribution to the pool of existing literature, which deals with understanding the underlying personal values and their deep rooted influences on the practices of the educational leaders in a non-western cultural context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Begley (2001, p.364) maintains that, "All leaders consciously or unconsciously employ values as guides in interpreting situations and suggesting appropriate administrative action. This is the artistry of leadership." More specifically, Leithwood, Steinbach and Raun (1993) found that values influence the principal's problem solving processes both directly and indirectly. As a direct influence, the principal's values act as preferences and dictate their actions. Whereas, as an indirect influence, the principal's values act as filters for determining the saliency of external factors in solving a particular problem. Likewise, Begley (1999a) suggests that the

school principal's personal values exert a significant influence on their problem solving processes, especially the rational value types of consensus and consequence.

More related to the context of this particular research, Campbell, Gold and Lunt (2003) posit that the ethnic, religious and socio-economic characteristics of the local community influence processes and practices of the school leader. In particular, their research highlights how the school principal's values and thus, role performance, are influenced by their relationships with parents and others in the local community. Moreover, it shows how principals can be motivated to work in ways which not only develops their students but also encourages community development, often involving attempts to change values and practices in the community rather than mirroring or reinforcing existing community values.

Similarly, studies in non-western societies have also confirmed the interconnectivity of school leadership and values. Khaki (2005) maintains, "The head's histories, beliefs and values influence how the head exercises their management and leadership role. These factors provide a background to which the heads refer when explaining why they do certain things the way they do" (p. 227). Also, Law, Walker and Dimmock (2003) studied the Protestant secondary school principals' values and their impact on perceptions and management of problems in an Asian culture. Here, religion, culture, profession and society are noted as being key sources of preferred personal values of these principal's regardless of the different aspects of their schools. This study reveals that, within an Asian cultural context, the links between the principal's personal values and their problem solving processes are influenced by both personal and organizational characteristics.

Finally, in order to further understand the nature of values, the work of Begley (1999a), in extending Hodgkinson's (1978) previous work on developing an analytical model for distinguishing different types of values, is noted. Here, Begley describes four motivational bases for describing the grounds or source for the development of personal values. His first motivational base is that of personal preference, which represents a conception of what is good in terms of one's own self interests. Begley's second motivational base is that of consensus, which is grounded in expert opinions, or peer pressure, or the will of the majority in a group. Third is the

motivational base of consequence where the person's action is focused on achieving a desirable future or likely outcome. Finally, the transrational motivational base acknowledges that some acts are motivated by personalized faith beliefs or commitments and are based on will rather than on reasons.

Hence, it is within this milieu of academic thought that this study strives to further investigate the nature, function and influence of a principal's values and motivational bases upon their educational leadership behavior in a Pakistani school.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research literature highlights methodological issues and complexities involved in the study of values. Values are unseen forces, like the wind, hence they resist empirical verification and cannot be reliably and explicitly tracked through scientific methods alone (Begley, 1999a, 1999b). Therefore the nature of this study demands a research approach which is scientifically rigorous but still sensitive to the complex life world of human beings (Sergiovanni, 2000). Hence, a qualitative approach to this study was adopted as the most appropriate course of action. Within this particular qualitative approach, a comparative case study method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) was deemed to be most beneficial. In order to attain more breadth and depth, this research study comprises two cases involving principals of two different schools (Yin, 2003).

Furthermore, this study employed multiple tools of data collection such as semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations. In order to ensure that the interviews comprehensively collected the perspectives of the participant principals, this study employed four rounds of specifically designed sets of semi-structured interviews. The first round of interviews was more of an open conversation intended to understand the principal's personal background and motivation level while also developing rapport with the researcher. During the second round, each principal was asked to articulate the achievements and accomplishments they felt proud of. In the third round, each principal was asked to describe the most serious dilemma they have had to deal with in their professional career and how they managed it. Further, they were asked to articulate some of the more frequent problems they come across. The fourth round of interviews was mainly focused on the relationships that each

principal aspires to develop with their students, their teachers, and with their wider parent community. Each interview lasted around one hour and the interval between each round was between seven to ten days. The interview language was English and each interview was audio taped and personally transcribed by the researcher.

The organizational culture of the school, such as the nature of the interpersonal relationships, the norms of practices, and the characteristics of the interactions among people, and its relationship to the actions of the principal, was the main focus for data collection during the observation sessions. These observations and the semi-structured interviews were conducted on alternate weeks and mutually complimented each other for the enrichment of the data generated. At times, the observations provided useful insights for asking further questions during the following semi-structured interviews and, simultaneously, some of the interview responses raised a focus for further observations. Each observation lasted for a full school day.

Documents including school policies, the school's vision and mission statements, the principal's reflective journal, meeting minutes, and the official web site of the school, along with any other relevant documents were scanned to reveal additional important insights about the personal values of each participating principal.

### **Research Context**

This study was conducted in two community based secondary schools, which provide education only to their own community children in the cosmopolitan city of Karachi, Pakistan. The rationale behind pursuing the community based secondary schools was their passion for serving their local community and upholding particular values, which ultimately provide a better chance of finding rich data about values, valuational processes, and sources of school values (Johnson, McCreery & Castelli, 2000).

### **Research Methodology**

This study was influenced by a grounded theory approach by reading and re-reading the data to extract themes (Merriam, 1998). It employed the process of organizing, general sense making, coding, drawing themes, and, finally, interpreting and making meaning out of the collected data (Cresswell, 2003). The research participants were informed about the nature, purpose, time and methods involved in the study. Also, the participants were voluntary

participants in the study. Furthermore, each participant was given the right to see the interview transcripts for any clarification or adjustments to the views they expressed in the interview and transcribed by the researcher. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms for each research participant, and their respective school related data, is used.

## DISCUSSION

As suggested by the literature, motivational bases are considered to be the sources from where school principals derive their articulated personal values and, ultimately, determine their leadership practices. This research seeks to explore this understanding within a Pakistani context. While an analysis of the data suggests the presence of a number of motivational bases, due to the structural limitations of this publication only those motivational bases common to both principals will be considered. Hence, only data associated with the motivational bases of (a) personal background and (b) community attachment will be discussed. Furthermore, this discussion will seek to describe how each of these motivational bases leads to the establishment of certain personal values that influence preferential behavior.

### (1) *Mr Barkat*

#### a) **Motivational Base : Personal Background**

As an orphan child, Mr. Barkat, the principal of Blessing School, experienced many hardships and deprivations during the early stages of his childhood life. He grew up and gained his secondary education in his community based orphanage. Consequently, he developed a strong commitment and connectivity to the religious beliefs of his community.

Thus, religion and personal upbringing emerge as a prominent motivational base for Mr. Barkat in acquiring his personal values. This statement from an interview reflects his personal value orientations and motivational base.

Every time, when I was walking alone on the road something from inside me was praying, "Lord, I want to serve you; I want to serve your people." How? I did not know? This was a continuous prayer inside me it was not that I was doing it willingly. It was out of my will. It was coming from inside. Sometimes, I would say I am not going to do this but every time some kind of force inside me said it. (Interview, January 19, 2009).

Apart from this quotation, Mr. Barkat frequently pointed towards the divine force, 'his Lord', as the motivation and inspiration for all his activities. To use his words, "My motivation is my Lord... it says serve the Lord with your whole heart, your soul, so that is the motivation that I have to serve the Lord and serve my neighbors" (Interview, January 19, 2009). In this regard, Mr. Barkat strives to portray himself as a role model for his teachers and students. He maintained, "I have to be the inspiration for my staff. I have to look after them, take initiatives ...I serve my staff and then I expect them to serve the children" (Interview, February 9, 2009).

Also, the school culture seems to reflect many of the values Mr. Barkat upholds. He appears to favour his teachers valuing the services to God and the community. Consequently, his particular school culture upholds the profession of teaching as a contribution to the sacred cause of educating the young generation of his community. He claimed,

This is not a place where you are going to come and do a job. You are here to serve. If you think you can serve the community and the Lord then this is the place for you... Every time we sit here, 7:45 to 8 o'clock is our devotion time, the staff is here to pray and definitely while praying we ask the Lord to help us in serving Him and the community and work for the sacred cause of educating the youth. (Interview, January 19, 2009).

Hence, it is not surprising to find that the Blessing School curriculum offers an amalgamation of both secular and religious education. In this regard Mr. Barkat argued,

We are arranging a three years religious graduation programme. It will be so that before the completion of matric, my students will graduate in religious education... we have chalked out a curriculum for it like any other subject like English or Urdu. (Interview, 27/2/2009).

It appears that Mr. Barkat has developed a distinctive school culture predominantly based on service to God and the community, which clearly reflects his own personal upbringing in an orphanage where religion and life were closely entwined.

#### b) **Motivational Base : Community Attachment**

Mr. Barkat is a prominent social worker in his community, which is a socially and economically underprivileged area of Karachi city. The majority of the people in this community are economically poor



and have no professional or skill-based training. Mr Barkat and his school aim to provide education to the children of this particular community.

Moreover, Mr. Barkat seems deeply concerned about the low socio-economic status of his community and is enthusiastically committed to bringing about an improvement in the status of his people through the education of the next generation. He elaborated his feelings in the following words,

Because I have grown up as an orphan child and I have seen all the troubles in life. Many things we wanted to get but couldn't...you see you are an orphan child wishing for good cloths but we didn't get it because we are poor. I realized at the end that something I have to do for the community children. (Interview, January 19, 2009).

His personal values appear to be grounded in an aspiration for a better future for his local community and its children.

Mr. Barkat's critical role as a reformist and a change agent encourages him to cultivate an intimate and compassionate relationship with his community. Elaborating upon his role in bringing about an improvement in the life of his community, he maintained:

I mean overall our role in the development of community is that we are educating these children. When they will go back to their houses each and every family will have more educated people in the family and then the whole community will start developing. Not only financially but morally and ethically they will be educated and will start developing. (Interview, February 9, 2009).

To this end, Mr. Barkat has also established a particular structure to keep the students who have completed their education in contact with the school. He arranges various programmes for the students to keep them connected to the school.

I keep in touch with them and every month we talk. After matric exam...I don't let them sit; I have a four month vocational training in the school which is composed of sewing classes, beautician courses, English language classes, computer IT, and literacy programme for them. In summer vacations for (class) 7, 8, 9 we have summer camps where they come and play. We have cooking classes, just to keep them involved. (Interview, January, 19, 2009).

The school structure created by Mr. Barkat is predominantly aimed at preparing the students from the local culture to become change agents for the future. His educational structure extends towards providing a safe environment to prevent the students from getting involved in unhelpful local community activities.

Mr Barkat is motivated by an extremely strong attachment to his local community but this is not a blind attachment. He wants to make it a better community for all. Upon this motivational base is built many values aligned with protecting, educating and preparing the next generation so that they can create a better community for all who live in the local area.

## (2) *Mr Hayder*

### a) **Motivational Base : Personal Background**

Mr. Hayder was born to a middle class business family and did his initial schooling at the St. Paul School in Karachi. He gained his Masters degree from his community based University where he studied for a period of 11 years. The majority of the adult members of his local community are professional business people and, consequently, live in well established areas and enjoy a better standard of living in the overall social set up of Karachi city.

Mr. Hayder's middle class business family upbringing strongly upheld the communal traditions and services to the local community. His family values are quite evident from the words his father said to him in response to Mr Hayder's transfer abroad to another international school within the same schooling system as the one that he had attended in his local community. According to Mr. Hayder his father told him, "Go my son, go. I have devoted you to serve my community" (Interview January 29, 2009). His primary value orientations have been predominantly formed within his family and his surrounding community such that his father had no concerns about them being eroded away once he left its safe boundaries.

Mr. Hayder's school culture seems to predominately reflect the specific values of his initial community. The inspirational prayers in the morning assembly, the typical communal dress code both for teachers and students and the particular eating and drinking style all mirror the norms and values of his childhood community. In an informal discussion, Mr. Shabir, a teacher mentioned, "See this is not only a school it is the extension of the home culture and we are proud

of it” (Observation February 16, 2009). Mr. Hayder and his teachers strictly follow the rules that reflect their effort to be role models of such a communal culture (Observation February 16, 2009).

#### **b) Motivational Base : Community Attachment**

Mr. Hayder feels proud to be part of his community and at times showed his complete devotion to the service of his community. He considered the sense of serving his community as a source of motivation for himself. To use his words; “The strongest motivation is I believe that this is my *khidmat* [service]. This *khidmat* concept always motivates me” (Interview January 21, 2009). When he discussed the issue of role modelling, he mentioned all the personalities from his own community as role models for himself. He hopes that the next generation will follow his community’s traditions with a sense of pride as well as being well equipped with modern knowledge and skills to better contribute towards the existing communal culture.

Importantly, Mr Hayder does not want to change his school community, he wants to replicate it. In all that he does, he wants to ensure that the community values and norms are sustained. This can be seen in how the school system has embedded religious and the secular education into a combined single pack (school web site analysis). In an informal discussion about such an embedded curriculum Tahira Bahan, a section head maintained, “We want our students to carry a single compact brief case in life, instead of two separate brief cases one for *Din* [religious] and one for *Dunya* [secular]” (Observation January 21, 2009).

As a committed member of his community, Mr. Hayder believes in cultivating a deep rooted and wide ranging interaction with not only the parent community but also the two levels of management authorities attached to the school. His interaction with the parent community is not confined to the premises of the school. He remains in contact with parents at various social gatherings and occasions which take place in the community. Mr. Hayder maintained,

This school belongs to the community, we only allow our community children to come and study in this school so our biggest stakeholders are our community members ...We also meet in community occasions. They are from the same community but at the same time they are parents also so I try to be very polite with them and always consider

parents as a priority. (Interview January 21, 2009).

Apart from informal interactions with the parent community at social gatherings, Mr. Hayder has established a formal system of keeping parents in contact with the school. This is described by Mr Hayder in the following way:

We have yearly plan in which we arrange three or four open days with parents to discuss problems. Apart from those open days we have a science fair when we call parents. We organize an annual sports day and at this juncture we call parents. We organize different stage programmes, we started two years back... Apart from this, if we face any behavioural problem, academic problem we involve parents and we discuss. (Interview February 16, 2009).

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

In the particular culture and context of Pakistan, family does not mean only the father, mother, sisters and brothers. Rather it extends to a wider spectrum incorporating many other relatives and in some cases even the tribesman. In this sense, a person’s community is akin to their family. Hence, there is a strong bond between the individual and his or her community and very few members venture away to live a life which is not influenced by their childhood community values. Moreover, the religion and the social structure of this childhood community play a crucial role of securing this seemingly lifetime attachment of the individual to this community.

Under these circumstances, the data for both the principals, despite the exceedingly different characteristics of their childhood communities, reveals that the inherent religious and communal values and norms of the respective communities remain as a strong motivational base for each principal. Moreover, their initial nurturing in their own community also created a correspondingly strong sense of attachment to their community. These understandings mirror the claims of Walker and Dimmock (2000) and Khaki (2005) who argue that, in Asian countries in particular, ideological and cultural forces factor into the formation of a school leader’s motivational bases and, thereby, act as prime sources for their value orientations.

Yet, although each of the participating principals in this study displayed a strong connection with their childhood community as a primary motivational base, this connection became manifest in different ways as

a result of the second motivational base – the principal’s upbringing. More specifically, this understandings can be seen in how each of the participating principals responded to the perceived economic status of their respective community. In the case of Mr. Barket, he is part of a very low socio-economic community. Thus, although he has a deep affection for his community his personal values are primarily focused on overcoming the existing low socio-economic status of his community. He believes that survival and sustainability for his beloved community depends on it being able to change itself through the education and actions of the next generation. In contrast to that, Mr. Hayder is part of a community which enjoys a comparatively higher socio-economic status. He also has a deep love for his community. Here though, this love is a cause of pride in his communal traditions such that he values devotion and services to his community. So much so that he wants to replicate almost unquestionably all of its norms, values, and practices.

Just like most schools in western cultures, the curriculum of each school in this research sought to prepare the student for living and working in the world at large, and in a global economy in particular. However, perhaps unlike most schools in western cultures, the curriculum of each school sought to do much more. Due largely to the influence of the motivational bases of the principal each school also had the additional aim of preparing the students to be active contributors and supports of their local community; one by making it better but the other by preserving it. In this sense, the basis for the value orientations of the two principals seems to be in a continuous struggle between their enduring alignment with their childhood community and the modern market demands aligned with the economic development of Pakistan (Sapre, 2000).

This study implies that Pakistani principals, in particular, may need to reflect on and understand how their leadership beliefs and behaviors are very likely to be influenced by personal values formed from motivational bases nurtured in alignment with their childhood communities and in response to the perceived quality of their upbringing. The findings of this study reflect a deep rooted connection between these motivational bases and the culture of the school as influenced by the day-to-day beliefs and actions of the principal.

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