

Discretionary powers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan educational managers for the institutional betterment: a study on actual grounds

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Abstract: Discretionary powers are those powers which are not mentioned under the prescribed rules but are exercised practically by the educational managers for the betterment of educational institutions. These powers are indispensable productions, where educational managers evaluate real situations and make strategies to emphasis on their goals which they intend to achieve. This study explored the areas where educational managers have the freedom and not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study was descriptive in nature and the design of the study was a 'mixed method approach'. The study found that educational managers had limited discretionary powers and in most of the cases their hands were bound and they did not take any solid steps for the institutional betterment and owing to that resistance, they were not be able to show any remarkable results for their educational institutions.

Key words: *Discretionary powers; Freedom; Real situations; Institutional betterment*

1. Introduction

Discretionary power is the part of management and when educational managers have no or limited discretionary powers, then how do they show their performance and produce outstanding results as in the case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa secondary school managers who have limited discretionary powers. In respect of discretionary powers, educational managers desire to have staff according to their expectations but in actual situations, their hands are bound and they do not exercise their discretionary powers for the well-being of their institutions.

They have no approach in District Education Offices and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education to demand for the staff according to their wishes or transfer those teachers who do not deliver their duties properly. So, work in the principals' office is the challenge for them in the school management and administration.

Educational managers have no powers to use against their staff members in case of negligence in their duties as states by Ashfaq (2015), educational managers have no discretionary powers to suspend, transfer, deduct or seize up salary from the incompetent and absent staff members. He adds that educational managers have these powers in the decades of 60's and 70's, when schools had produced remarkable results but in a present set up, they are bound and do not use their powers for the best interest of their institutions. Now, the government is making decisions to hand over discretionary powers to the educational managers who come ahead and

play their role for optimizing the present deplorable condition of educational institutions.

Suppose, the managers are all in all in their powers, then what would be its effect? If the managers are dutiful, responsible and sincere to their institutions, then they would exercise these powers for the institutional betterment. On the other hand, if the managers are personally corrupt and they do not bear good moral characters, then they would misuse their powers and ruined the environment of their institutions. They would keep personal grudge with their staff and reject their all good efforts. These sorts of persons believe on favoritism and their attitude with their staff would not be lauded by anyone. They would tease their staff members and putting extra burden on them. They would pressurize and disturb them and make cruel and unjust laws against them. Because of such negative behaviour, there would be restless and conflicting situations initiate between the educational managers and the teaching staff (Heikkila and Schlager, 2012).

The present study is about discretionary powers which should be with the education managers or not and if they have discretionary powers, so what would be their limitations and what would be their benefits to the educational institutions? Now, the question arises, either the educational managers should be delegated with all these powers or not. If they would be delegated with these powers but to what extent and what would be their limit and why?

According to Roux (2012), discretionary powers are divided into two parts. Firstly, the powers which are external that relates to education department and directorate of education and secondly, the powers which are internal that relates to internal

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school affairs. In external discretionary powers, the educational managers have the powers to deduct salary or any other penalty to the staff, transfer, or informing higher authority about the inefficiency and negligence of their staffs, bring budget for the repairs in the school, collecting school fund and their proper utilization but in internal discretionary powers which relates to the command and control system in schools, utilize the precious services of the teachers and use their energies on their proper positions and take benefit from their experiences, take decisions from them and take strong and solid measures by acting on the consultations of teachers, management of school discipline in the morning assembly, assurance of 100% presence of their staff in the school, and take such other measures that would enhance their ranking and give high prestige to their staff (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010).

Discretionary powers are the important construct where managers evaluate real situations and make strategies to emphasis on their goals to be achieved. The powers have fruitful impact on the organizational performance, teachers' efficiency and students' academic achievement (Pont, Nusche, and Hopkins, 2008). Under the powers of discretion, managers have the freedom to implement which sort of actions that improve and develop the organizational environment, teachers' efficiency and academic control of students in their learning attitude (Bohlmark et al., 2012).

Discretionary powers are the essential build up as discussed by Shami and Hussain (2005) that discretionary powers enhance the role of educational managers when they have freedom to do according to their own perception and conception while Cann (2007) proposes that discretionary powers are effective for running institutions according to their vision and mission along with allocation of available resources and their role is inclusive in conflict mediation and handling critical issues.

As well as discretionary powers are concerned, Armone (2009) indicates that educational managers have to do a lot for the organizational development because they do not want that their institutional environment become loose and the situation would go against them. In this situation, alert managers do not lose any opportunity and they take their staff members hand in hand by boosting up their morale, encouraging them for their tiresome efforts, and providing to them feedback in a respective way, enhancing the environment of learning with a soothing school climate, and making labours for brilliant results in curricular and co-curricular activities whereas Rice (2010) argues that discretionary powers are imperative for the achievement in desired targets because staffs are in action when managers circulate their orders and then the staff has no way to carry out their instructions to be followed.

It is necessary for the educational managers that everything would be transparent which is ahead of

them. The focus of their eyes would be on their institutions and the manpower who render their services in them (Kaiser & Hogan, 2006). The managers employ their delegated powers by a proper way and it would be their endeavor efforts that all of their staff members would be delighted by those discretionary powers that promote the institution and gave credit to the staff for their efforts in the form of appreciation, encouragement, and award (Glickman 2010; Jones 2010; & Louius 2009).

The present study tends the attention of the educational managers to show their discretionary powers for changing the environment of schools according to their own wishes. In this regard, what they have learnt from their daily practices; how much their experiences help them; what new ideas set in their minds for producing the expected goals and objectives for their institutions; and what they think in the light of their discretion for demonstrating their performance by exercising their discretionary powers.

The purpose of this study was to highlight those issues and problems which were directly related to the discretionary powers of educational managers in the areas where they had the freedom and not having the freedom to exercise them for the institutional betterment.

1.1. Objectives of the study

Objectives of the study were:

1. To explore the areas where educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment.
2. To assess the areas where educational managers have not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment.
3. To recommend the areas where educational managers have the freedom and not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment.

1.2. Research questions

The research questions of the study are followed as under:

1. What are the areas where educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment?
2. What are the areas where educational managers have not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment?

2. Methods and materials

It was a descriptive research and the design of the study was a *mixed method approach* including

quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data included a questionnaire which was administered for educational managers and teachers and the qualitative data included interviews which were structured for the District Education Management Personnel and educational managers.

In this study, the population of the study was 12 District Education Management Personnel, 279 educational managers and 3671 teachers and the sampling was made on 'census sampling' and 'simple random sampling'. The quantitative data of questionnaire from educational managers (279 i.e. 100% population) and the qualitative data of interviews from the District Education Management Personnel (12 i.e. 100% population) were based on 'census sampling' and the quantitative data of questionnaire from teachers (361 i.e. 10% population) and the qualitative data of interviews from educational managers (29 i.e. 10% population) were based on 'simple random sampling' and then, the sampled data was selected by 'sample table'. The researcher tried to reach the whole population but he could only reach to 192 (68.8% population) educational managers and 265 (73.4%) teachers and similarly the qualitative data was gathered from 12 (100% population) District Education Management

Personnel and 29 (100% population) educational managers.

The quantitative and qualitative data were first validated by sending to two experts, who studied the contents and removed the unwanted material and refined them from mistakes and the reliability of the quantitative data was also validated on *Factor analysis* and *Cronbach's alpha*.

The quantitative data was analysed on *Chi Square* and similarly the qualitative data was analysed on *frequency* and *percentage* as suggested by Mile and Huberman. The data was tabulated and analysed on SPSS 20.0 software and the results of the study were analysed on five point likert scale having codes 5 for SA (strongly agreed), 4 for A (agreed), 3 for UD (undecided), 2 for D (disagreed), and 1 for SDA (strongly disagreed) and similarly *df* for 'degree of freedom', *TV* for 'tabulated value', χ^2 for 'calculated value', *CI* for 'confidence interval', and *Cr V* for 'critical value'.

3. Quantitative results and discussion

Table 1 indicates statement wise results of the study.

Table 1: Exploring the areas where educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment

S/No	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SDA	Df	TV	χ^2
1	Punctuality and attendance of staff and students management	58	152	11	136	100	4	9.488	145.681
2	Efforts for the achievement in school results	94	191	7	94	71	4	9.488	191.173
3	Bringing desire change in the school environment	0	203	2	118	134	3	7.815	182.764
4	Work distribution among the whole staff	5	174	41	0	237	3	7.815	314.562

Cr V = 7.82 at CI = .05 level n = 457

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 145.681$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Punctuality and attendance of staff and students management" was accepted. It means that educational managers have the freedom to exercise discretionary powers in punctuality in their duties and they held in the first period 'Attendance Register' in their hands and marked *question mark* to late comer and absent staff members with a red pen. They did not compromise on absentee and late arrival but their absentee was considered when they had provided application. In respect of students, educational managers instructed to the 'class teacher' to provide details of absent and present students. Those students were struck off from the school who were absent from the school for six days without any prior permission.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 191.173$) was found greater than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics supports the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Efforts for the achievement in school results" was accepted. It means that educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers in efforts for the achievement in the school results. They did a lot. They did not

compromise that teachers passed their periods without teaching. They visited classes time to time and their eyes were on their monthly results. They made planning for further improvement in course understanding to the students. They also took periods with the students and asked about their problems.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 182.764$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Bringing desire change in the school environment" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom to bring desire change in the school environment. They were not updated and due to that they were unaware about the modern management skills. They had not yet delivered their discretionary powers for bringing desire change in the school environment because of their old fashioned approaches; neither the attitude of managers nor their managerial style was changed because they believed on conventional ways.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 314.562$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Work distribution among the whole

staff" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom in exercising discretionary powers in delivering work and periods' distribution. They did not distribute periods and other work among the staff members equally. They believed on favoritism. There were some

teachers who remained close to the educational managers who had assigned minimum periods and those who were not of their favorite had assigned maximum periods.

Table 2 reflects statement wise results of the study.

Table 2: Assessing the areas where educational managers have not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment

S/No	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SDA	Df	TV	χ^2
5	Employing school budget and funds	0	171	23	149	114	3	7.815	111.639
6	Termination or suspension of staff	60	241	10	36	110	3	7.815	316.540
7	Deduction of salary	0	237	41	5	174	3	7.815	314.562
8	Stoppage of increment	0	125	0	180	152	2	5.991	9.930
9	Bringing to school own choice staff	0	153	12	161	131	3	7.815	126.239

Cr V = 7.82 at CI = .05 level n = 457

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 111.639$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Employing school budget and funds" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having the freedom in exercising their discretionary powers in utilization of the school budget and funds. The funds had complete record which they kept in registers and what they had spent they had kept the record of them. Only *zero funds* in which managers had discretion to utilize them for daily expenses but in allocated budget, they had no freedom to use according to their wishes. The allocated budget was very limited and which did not fulfill all the requirements of the educational institutions and on annual basis the accountability of all the school funds were checked by the inspection team.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 316.540$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Termination or suspension of staff" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom in exercising discretionary powers to terminate or suspend any of their staff members because in government rules termination or suspension comes under the jurisdiction of DEO or Director Education in the case when the serving person have had fake documents, on long leave without informing the head of the institution or department or serving abroad and drawing salary but in case of negligence or in-disciplinary act, they have had no powers to terminate or suspend them. According to rules, disobedient, irregular, and absent staff members were informed through *show-cause notices* and they were also informed through print media to report to their station and after fulfilling all these documentary proofs and records; the government had made to remove them from their duties in the form of suspension and termination. The educational managers just inform high officials the situation a writing form and directly they have had no powers to remove them from their office.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 314.562$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore,

the statement, "Deduction of salary" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom in exercising their discretionary powers in rules to deduct salary from any of their staff members. If they do the same which would be unlawful. In the past, the salary system was manual, then the educational managers submitted the deduction amount on challan to the National Bank of Pakistan but most of the educational managers were those who did not submit deduction salary on challan and kept their deduction salary in their pockets. When the government was informed, the deduction from the salary was seized up but the government has given power to IMU (International Monitoring Unit) to deduct salary from the absent and late comers.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 9.930$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Stoppage of increment" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom in exercising their discretionary powers to stop the increment from those staff members who could not provide good results in the Board examination and the majority of their students had failed the annual board exam but in the past their increments were stopped owing to negligence in their performance. Stoppage of increment makes them active and energetic and these teachers would not waste their and their students' precious time in extravagance. Educational managers cannot directly deduct their salary but they report to the District Education Officer or Director Education to deduct salary from them on challan and by giving change of that.

The calculated value ($\chi^2 = 126.239$) was found smaller than the critical value (7.82); hence the test-statistics does not support the statement. Therefore, the statement, "Bringing to school own choice staff" was rejected. It means that educational managers had not having freedom in exercising their discretionary powers to bring to school own choice staff. It is possible in ideal situations but on actual grounds, in schools the educational managers suffered owing to shortage of teachers. If educational managers bring staff from other schools, then they

have the problem. In this regard, educational managers request to DEO, Director, and concerned educational managers from whom the managers demand for their choice teachers.

4. Qualitative results

The qualitative answers of 41 responses of interviews from 12 District Education Management Personnel and 29 educational managers were collectively recorded in *frequency* and *percentage* as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and only those statements of the interviewees were brought into notice that relate to the current topic.

Answers of Research Questions

The detail of the interview responses are given as under:

1. *What are the areas where educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment?*

Table 3 shows that 17% and above respondents agreed that educational managers had the freedom in exercising their discretionary powers in charging

absent students with special fine, striking off students on their absentee and bad behaviour, and calling explanation and warning letters to absent, irregular, and disobedient teachers but 17% and below respondents agreed that educational managers had the freedom in exercising their discretionary powers in providing conducive educational environment that suits the teachers and students, checking and balancing of the performance of staff and students, and engaging staff in their work according to their own perception and vision.

2. *What are the areas where educational managers have not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment?*

Table 4 explains that 19% and above respondents agreed that educational managers had not having discretionary powers in termination and suspension of teachers, deduction of salary and stoppage of increments from the teachers" while 19% and below respondents agreed that educational managers had not having discretionary powers in selection of own choice of teachers and giving admission on merit to the students.

Table 3: Exploring the areas where educational managers have the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment

Sr. No	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Charged absent students with special fine.	9	21.95%
2	Struck off students on their absentee and bad behaviour.	8	19.51%
3	Calling explanation and warning letters to absent, irregular, and disobedient teachers.	7	17.07%
4	Provide conducive educational environment that suits the teachers and students.	6	14.63%
5	Check and balance of the performance of staff and students.	6	14.63%
6	Engage staff in their work according to their own perception and vision.	5	12.19%

Table 4: Assessing the areas where educational managers have not having the freedom to exercise their discretionary powers for the institutional betterment

Sr. No	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
7	Termination and suspension of teachers.	11	26.82%
8	Deduction of salary.	9	21.95%
9	Stoppage of increments from the teachers.	8	19.51%
10	Selection of own choice of teachers.	7	17.07%
11	Giving admission on merit to the students.	6	14.63%

5. Conclusion

In Pakistan and especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, educational managers have limited discretionary powers and they are bound to obey what the high officials command to them. In the educational institutions, there are a number of issues and problems that require discretionary powers to exercise them and due to no discretionary powers the sensitive and important issues are not dealt with. The study had found those issues where educational managers need disciplinary action against the disobedient, absent, and irregular staff members and owing to their limited circle they do not cross their limit but they require discretionary powers in the areas where they may exercise for the well-being of their institutions and for the effective performance of their staff.

The positive discretionary powers give benefit to the educational institutions and the staff and the negative discretionary powers devastate the educational environment and the trust of the staff. So, the educational managers have the freedom in exercising discretionary powers in the areas such as punctuality and attendance of staff and students management; efforts for the achievement in school results; bringing desire change in the school environment; equal work distribution among the whole staff; charged absent students with special fine; struck of students on their absentee and bad behaviour; calling explanation and warning letters to absent, irregular, and disobedient teachers; providing conducive educational environment that suits the teachers and students; checking and balancing of the performance of the staff and students; and engaging staff in their work according

to their own perception and vision but they have not having discretionary powers in employing school budget and funds, termination or suspension of staff, deduction of salary from the staff members, stoppage of increments from the staff, bringing to school own choice staff, and giving admission on merit to the students.

The above mention study concluded that educational managers are powerless in some of the areas where they need full powers of discretion in the delivery of their jobs. If the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government demands for the remarkable results, so they may empower the educational managers with discretionary powers because discretionary powers are the significant tools of the educational managers for the institutional betterment.

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