

School Excellence: Principals' Perceptions and Students' Expectations

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This paper discusses findings from a mixed-methods research study that sought to explore and identify factors promoting excellence in schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The sample consisted of 30 (12.14%) purposively selected principals/headmasters of schools from the 247 (27 public and 220 private) boys' high schools of Peshawar City, which included 26 principals from private and 4 from public schools respectively. From the 30 schools, a sample of 600 students (6%) was purposively selected, of which 80 students were from the 4 public schools and 520 students were from the 26 private schools. Two separate opinionnaires were used to gather data from principals and students. The opinionnaires contained statements structured around eliciting responses from principals and students about factors that contributed to school excellence. The major finding is that principals' perceptions are aligned with the statements and those factors and processes that promote excellence in school. Students' expectations were that they wanted schools to support learning, and producing a caring and nurturing environment aimed at their all-round development.

Key words: School excellence, principals, students, public and private, high schools, opinionnaire, school effectiveness

Deterioration in the quality of education at the public and many private schools is a concern shared by the general public and the academic community alike. Needless to say that public in general and students, teachers and parents, in particular, have social and moral responsibility for making education system compatible with the demands of the growing needs of stakeholders (Fullan, 2007). It is also important because in today's technologically driven world, knowledge based economies are shaping and reshaping the world scenario (Jessop, *et al.*, 2008) and for the nations to be in competition, it is imperative that they invest in human capital (Ayers, *et al.*, 2008).

Investment in human capital is brought about through quality education (OECD, 2000; Smart and Paulsen 2012). The human capital investment hinges on internal and external efficiency of a school (Lange and Topel, 2006), which leads to excellence in school and overall student performance. The main purpose of education at the secondary level is to produce the number and types of students who have the knowledge and skills required for actual work market (Government of Pakistan, 1959). Therefore, the outcome of the school system should be commensurate with investment of all types of resources in that enterprise.

Bush and Glover (2003) argue that school excellence is multi-dimensional in nature. It is not only the achievement of high scores but many other factors also contribute to school effectiveness. Apparently, the important elements that usually contribute to school excellence include, but are not limited to, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation system, physical infrastructure, academic facilities, learning and human resources, finance and management, research and scholarship, community links and outreach. Given these many factors that contribute to school effectiveness and excellence, the purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the perspectives of principals and experiences or expectations of students regarding school excellence determinants.

Literature Review

The National Education Policy (2009) of Pakistan has documented that improvement in the education system could be made through well-trained, devoted and committed teachers, a curriculum that meets the national and international standards, a proper assessment programme and an adequate learning environment. The most important element of these is teacher quality, on which there is scarce research literature, especially in the context of Pakistan.

For achieving excellence and becoming effective schools, over a period of time, consistent and persistent efforts are required. A number of studies have found that improving the quality of personal relationships among stakeholders improves school climate, staff morale, and

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public confidence in schooling (Jones and Kennedy, 2008; Miller, 1981; Penfold, 2011).

The role of the principal as an instructional supervisor has also received attention in research literature and is considered important for effective teaching-learning process in the school. In this regard, Fink and Resnik (2001) argue that instructional leadership involves solid knowledge of the processes that govern teaching and learning, augmented by leadership skills such as selecting right teachers for posts, creating a culture of learning, which includes all members of the school community.

The nature of relationship amongst the adults of educational institutions has more to do with quality, character building of students, achievement of the educational programmes and the professionalism of the teachers than any other factor in public education system. The success of a school depends on the effective and positive interaction between the principal and staff, between teacher and teacher, between teachers and parents, and between the students themselves. To prioritize these interactions, the principal is the key person and possesses power to influence those different relationships. It is through better collegial and professional relationships of teachers that schools are considered better places for learning and principals that possess leadership skills could convert adversarial relationships into collegial ones.

Establishing rules and procedures and enforcing them are important for effective school functioning. In this regard, Taylor and Ryan (2004) have compiled a list of actions, through which school principals sought to turn their schools into calm and orderly centres of learning. Their list include, among others, principals having clear sanctions, be visible in school, getting the basics right, making the curriculum relevant, using sports to improve behaviour, and win the support of parents.

Balls (2008) states that, the distinctive contribution of good schools is excellent teaching and learning, which helps children to develop confidence, learn about teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and successful relationships. As a vital community resource, schools could offer wider opportunities for children and their families to take part in sports and cultural activities. Good schools have an understanding of the whole child and are places that could identify and address emerging problems before they become serious.

According to National Education Policy (2009), education systems enable students to promote their hidden talents and skills, facilitating them to play their effective roles in the development of society. Education should infuse in students the spirit of patriotism and build their character, quality of tolerance, social justice, democracy to know their culture and history and that they should be well aware of the ideology of Pakistan.

In order to achieve the above stated objectives, the quality of instruction imparted in classrooms is one of the key determinants for effective student learning. In this regard, Daggett (2005) states that incorporating a more thorough and relevant instruction in classrooms is a realistic goal and yields immediate results in students' eagerness to learn. Furthermore, when students are engaged in the learning process, real achievement takes place and their chances to shine at what they do increase. Moreover, persistent efforts play a major role in achieving such excellence. Besides, consistent efforts are made within and outside the school in maintaining such a complex process. Research studies reveal that an ideal relationship among stakeholders not only affects the school environment but also enhances staff morale and public confidence and satisfaction in their institutes of learning.

Bauman *et al.* (2005) report that, the progress, success, and achievements of students show that an institution has achieved excellence. Through education – a process involving teaching and learning – if students conceive the ideas being taught to them, make use of their potential, acquire a set of goals and skills, one may say that excellence was at work. Therefore, the students' success and the achievement of excellence are two sides of a coin. In a similar vein, Thompson (2001, p. 22) contends that achieving excellence requires two essential components: "The first is a structured, field-tested, research based curriculum. The second is a highly qualified and skilled teacher who is able to deliver the curriculum in an effective manner." Both components promote student success. This, in turn, makes excellence attainable.

According to Sergiovanni (1984), excellence is multi-dimensional in nature. It is not only the achievement of high scores but many other factors contribute to school effectiveness. In this regard, important elements that usually contribute to excellence include curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation system, physical infrastructure, academic facilities, learning and human resources, finance and management, research and scholarship, community links and outreach.

In excellence in teaching and learning, enabling students expressing their innate potentials is also of prime importance. Concerning this, in Teaching and Learning Research Program (TLRP), David (2009) documents the most important purpose of learning and reports that it is to make a person able to unfold their internal qualities. While, on the other hand, it requires teachers to keep in mind the previous knowledge of learners. The study also shows that teachers should perform different activities in the class in order to make the environment of the class healthy by discussing and solving pupils' social and emotional problems.

In a similar vein, James and Pollard (2006, p. 4) argue that:

Promoting the learning and achievement of pupils is the main aim of school education. Teaching is the main way of achieving this. Teaching and learning are what ultimately make a difference in the mind of the learner, and thus affect knowledge, skills, attitudes and the capacity of young people to contribute to contemporary societies.

Daggett (2005) describes excellence as something that prepares students for the global challenges. It enables students to compete with students around the globe. However, the U.S. education system stills grapples with the needs of the students of the modern world. In spite of the great efforts by the educators, the U.S. education system does not fully prepare students to acquire knowledge about global issues. The syllabi and goals set by the system have limitations in that students are to focus more on issues of national interests only. Although such students are good at some skills, they are a total failure at the global level.

Excellence is identified with effective schools, which like other human enterprises, grows over time, through persistent efforts for changing conditions. This requires painstaking approaches for maintaining harmony in the complex processes and relationship within and outside the schools. A number of studies have shown that improving the quality of personal relationships among stakeholders improves school climate, staff morale, and public confidence in schooling.

Teaching methodologies, different activities in the classroom and homework given to students show the extent of effectiveness of teaching and learning process at a school. A school is considered an effective school that provides its students with needed services. These include guidance and counselling services, which play a vital role in giving correct direction to student plans. For school excellence, guidance and counselling services help a school to be effective in achieving its goals.

Method

The study was descriptive in nature, consisting of two opinionnaires through which data were collected from principals/headmasters and students. It attempted to identify factors promoting excellence in 30 boys' public and private high schools. For principals/headmasters, an opinionnaire containing 60 items/statements was administered to 30 participants. The data from the sampled 600 students were gathered using an opinionnaire containing 20 items/statements. Both the principals' and students' data were statistically analysed using Kruskal Wallis test, through Minitab to explore in depth the experiences of both principals and students in regard to perceived school excellence.

Research Questions

The following key questions were explored in the study:

1. What factors promote excellence in boys' public and private high schools?
2. What parameters exist for attaining excellence in schools, in local and international perspective?

Population and Sample

The population of the study included 247 secondary schools and their principals, and more than 10,000 10th class students of the Peshawar City, which included 27 public secondary schools and 220 private secondary schools. The sample of the study included 30 principals (12.14%) (04 public and 26 private school principals), 600 students (6% of 10th class (80 students from public while 520 from private schools).

Research Instruments

Two opinionnaires for principals and students were designed for gathering data from the respondents. The opinionnaire for principals comprised of 60 statements, whereas the opinionnaire for students included 20 items on aspects pertaining to school excellence. The process of distributing and collecting back the filled up opinionnaires from the respondent took about two months.

Pilot Testing

A pilot test based on the developed opinionnaires was conducted before the fieldwork. The instruments were preliminary tested on four teachers of two secondary schools and two principals of those schools to verify their validity and actual effect of their use in the study. In light of the responses, the instruments were improved and restructured. Unnecessary statements/questions were omitted and some new statements/questions were added.

Results and Discussion

The findings show that principals' perceptions are aligned with the statements and those factors and processes that promote excellence in school. The results reveal that principals show complete agreement with school excellence related indicators, such as pupil attendance, teacher motivation and use of effective instructional strategies. In terms of their role in school improvement strategies, most school principals unanimously agree with the role and responsibilities for leading schools to excellence. On the other hand, the majority of students' expectations were in line with the statements provided, that is, students wanted their schools to support their learning, and producing a caring and nurturing environment aimed at their all-round development.

Analysis of Principals' Responses

The opinionnaire responses of 30 principals regarding factors promoting excellence in schools were subjected to statistical analysis by using a non-parametric test, i.e. Kruskal Wallis Test, through Minitab to test similarities in the principals' responses. However, first, a descriptive interpretation of the principals' responses about the 60

statements with five choices [Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)] is given

in Tables 1 through 4, followed by statistical analysis of the data in Table 5.

Table 1
Principals' responses about school specific aspects

S. No.	Part I – School Specific Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	Teachers' cooperation is available to principal/headmaster both in administration and in academic areas.	16	14	0	0	0
2	Teachers discuss their problems with principal/headmaster.	18	12	0	0	0
3	School administration provides materials, which teachers need in the teaching and learning process.	18	9	2	0	1
4	Teachers encourage the students in learning process.	16	14	0	0	0
5	Teachers supervise co-curricular activities of students.	16	13	1	0	0
6	Teachers are amenable to rules and code of conduct.	14	15	0	1	0
7	The curriculum of secondary level is need-based.	9	15	3	3	0
8	Full cooperation of all teachers is available to the principal/headmaster for school improvement.	16	13	1	0	0
9	The school provides basic facilities to teachers and students.	15	14	0	0	1
10	School staff has a commitment to make optimal use of learning time.	14	14	2	0	0
11	Due to effective classroom management, maximum time is utilized.	16	11	2	0	1
12	Students' attendance rate is high.	18	7	4	0	1
13	Students and staff morale is high.	16	11	3	0	0
14	Staff is competent and continues to grow and learn.	18	14	1	0	0
15	The curricula at secondary level of education are helpful in promoting social welfare and economic development of the country.	6	11	5	6	2
16	School improvement owes itself to proper curricula and well-trained teachers.	16	13	0	1	0
17	Effectiveness of teaching and learning could be assessed and based on the teaching methods, classwork and homework.	18	12	0	0	0
18	The quality of personal relationships among stakeholders improves school climate, staff morale, and public confidence in schooling.	18	12	0	0	0
19	Successful schools have a principal who set goals, maintain discipline, observe classrooms frequently and gives incentives for learning.	23	7	0	0	0
20	Principals ought to resolve inter-teacher conflicts by promoting collegiality and discouraging adversarial relationships among teachers.	15	13	2	0	0
21	Co-ordination with the teachers and parents is needed.	20	10	0	0	0
22	Teachers use all possible instructional strategies for effective teaching-learning process.	21	9	0	0	0

A look at the principals' responses in Table 1 above shows that for most statements, almost all respondents showed their agreement by 'agreeing' and 'strongly agreeing' with the statements. For statements 1 and 2, all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers cooperated with the principals in matters concerning administration and academic matters as well as discussed their problems with the principals. This may mean that principals in position of authority saw themselves as the pivot around which much of what happened in the school rotated. In addition, as the only focal person in their respective schools, teachers would turn to principal of the school in case they had any problem or faced any grievance. For statement 3, while most principals were of the view that the school administration provided material to teachers that helped facilitated the teaching-learning process, 2 respondents were not sure whether that was the case and 1 respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. Again, for statement 4, all respondents were of

the view that teachers encouraged students for learning. For the sake of argument, while private school teachers may be seen as encouraging students for learning, research suggests that despite better qualification and experience public school teachers do not encourage students for learning (Aslam, 2009).

In response to statement 5, almost all principals (except one undecided) showed their affirmation that teachers supervised co-curricular activities in school. For statement 6, almost all respondents agreed with the idea that teachers are amenable to rules and code of conduct. However, one principal disagreed with the statement. While the majority of respondents agreeing with statement 7 that secondary school curriculum was need-based, some respondents (3) were undecided about the statement and 3 were of the view that the curriculum was not need-based. Except for one respondent who was undecided about statement 8, most principals were of the view that all teachers cooperated fully

with the principal/headmaster for school improvement. Yet, again, the question arises that, if that is the case, then why quality of education imparted has been an issue at government schools. Concerning statement 9, one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement, while the remaining respondents were of the view that the school provided basic facilities to teachers and students. Low resource allocation and expenditure on education has been one of the major problems that beset the quality of education since Pakistan's independence. Despite political pledges, the minimum of 4 GNP has never been allocated and spent on education in Pakistan. Equal number of respondents (i.e. 14 respectively) agreed or strongly agreed with statement 10 that for optimal use of learning times, school staff was committed. However, two respondents were undecided about this statement. For statement 11, with one respondent strongly disagreeing and one undecided about it, all others showed their affirmation to the idea that due to effective classroom management maximum time was utilized. Yet, these claims are questioned that if the time was utilized properly, why are there issues of quality and efficiency, especially in public schools (Ali and Khan, 2002).

In response to statements 12 and 13, while most respondents appeared in agreement that students' attendance and students' and staff morale was high, 4 and 3

principals respectively were undecided about these statements and one respondent strongly disagreed with the opinion that student attendance rate at the school was high. For statement 14, a good number of respondents (i.e. 18) strongly agreed with the opinion that their staff was competent and continued to grow and learn, with 14 respondents agreeing with the statement. However, one respondent was undecided about this statement. The most divisive statement of Table 1 is statement 15. In asking about whether secondary level curricula promoted social welfare and economic development of the country, 2 and 6 respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement, with 5 respondents undecided. However, in all 17 respondents showed their agreement with the statement. For the remaining statements i.e. 18 through 22, almost all respondents were in complete agreement with the statements. This is surprising in that while the principals might have agreed with these statements in principle, in practice school practices are far from ideal. Research evidence suggests that private schools in general and public schools in particular have administrative, managerial and academic problems (Ali and Khan, 2002; Aslam, 2009). This leads us to exploring principals' responses about school improvement strategies, discussed as under.

Table 2

Principals' perceived responses about school improvement strategies

S. No.	Part II – School Improvement Strategies	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Excellent Schools:						
23	Enhance pupils' outcomes.	17	10	3	0	0
24	Focus on teaching and learning process.	19	11	0	0	0
25	Develop positive culture.	17	12	1	0	0
26	Have strategies to achieve their goals.	16	14	0	0	0
27	Address the internal conditions that encourage change.	17	13	0	0	0
28	Mentor and evaluate schools' process, progress, achievement and development.	16	12	2	0	0
29	Come up to the standards of effectiveness.	12	15	3	0	0
30	Meet the high expectations of the society by their best accomplishments.	16	13	1	0	0
31	There exists a strong culture and clear sense of purpose.	12	15	3	0	0
32	The culture of the school includes values, symbols, beliefs and shared meaning of parents, students, teachers and community.	16	13	1	0	0

As can be seen in Table 2, most responses fall under 'agree' and 'strongly agree' columns, with some respondents (maximum 3) showing their indecisiveness to the statements concerning school excellence. With none of the respondents disagreeing with the above statements, in principle, all principals seemed in agreement with the strategies, processes and practices of taking schools towards excellence.

However, given the culture and context under which these public and private schools operate, in addition to similarities between principals' school practices, the principals would have subjectively interpreted the statements. Therefore, given such individual subjective differences, some principals showed their disagreement with the statements they read in the opinionnaire, which are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

Principals' perceived responses about school improvement strategies

S.No.	In Excellent Schools:	SA	A	UD	D	SD
33	Work has significance and meaning for all those in the school.	20	9	1	0	0
34	Both teachers and students have effective interaction.	19	10	1	0	0
35	Curricular and co-curricular programs of school promote sustainable commitment to educational outcomes, which are not restricted to test	18	11	0	1	0

	scores only.					
36	The individual and school accomplishments of both teachers and the taught are readily recognized.	12	17	1	0	0
37	Excellence in effective school is not owing to a single factor or high morale or students' high achievement or high pass percentages but it is rather the net result of all these and more.	20	8	2	0	0
38	Principals' intervention does make difference in school improvement efforts.	16	11	0	2	1
39	School climate is conducive to better teaching learning.	18	11	1	0	0
40	School improvement largely owes itself to the leadership skills of principals.	17	13	0	0	0
41	Highly qualified teachers easily transfer their knowledge to their students.	13	10	2	5	0
42	Teachers possessing adequate skills in teaching methodology help promote excellence in schools.	15	14	0	1	0
43	Instructional technologies play vital role in promoting motivation among the students.	14	16	1	0	0
44	Proper monitoring of progress of students compels the students and creates competition among them.	18	11	0	1	0
45	Strong determination of teachers that no student will fall below minimum levels of achievement.	9	19	0	2	0
46	Teachers committed to their profession do enhance quality of education.	19	11	0	0	0
47	Principals' intervention helps in setting school climate.	21	9	0	0	0

Table 3 shows principals' responses to the statements that in most cases fall under 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories, with some respondents undecided and some disagreeing with some statements. One respondent showed their disagreement with statement 35, which asked, whether curricular and co-curricular programs of school promoted sustainable commitment to educational outcomes, not restricted to test scores only. For statement 38, while most respondents showed their agreement, three respondents were of the view that principals' intervention did not make difference in school improvement efforts. These respondents may be pointing out issues of culture and politics in school, in

which teachers may not see any reason to follow principal's advice and work for school improvement strategies. Five respondents disagreed with statement 41, that highly qualified teachers easily transferred their knowledge to students. Another worth mentioning statement is 45, in which while most respondents agreed with the idea, some (i.e. 2 respondents) were of the view that strong determination of teachers alone was not sufficient for enabling students to stay ahead of the minimum levels of achievement. In all this, effective role of principals is very important, which is explored in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Principals' perceived responses about school improvement strategies

S.No.	Effective Principals:	SA	A	UD	D	SD
48	Have clear visions of what they want their schools to become, visions that focus on students and their needs.	24	5	1	0	0
49	Translate these visions into goals for their schools and expectations for the teachers, students and administration.	19	10	1	0	0
50	Establish school climate that support progress towards these goals and expectations.	17	12	0	1	0
51	Allocate funds and material to enhance teaching effectiveness and students' achievements.	16	11	1	2	0
52	Recognize teachers' achievements/initiatives.	20	9	0	1	0
53	Extend support to the teachers to solve their problems.	18	9	2	1	0
54	Know specific details about the performance of their teachers.	20	8	2	0	0
55	Discuss with the teachers the areas that need improvement and how much improvement might come about.	17	13	0	0	0
56	Know fully what teachers are doing in the class and able to evaluate the teachers' performance logically.	22	8	0	0	0
57	Spend most of the time in discovering what was going on in the classroom.	12	13	3	2	0
58	Identify problems and take necessary corrective measures.	22	8	0	0	0
59	Assign tasks to the teachers as per their interest, aptitude and competence.	14	12	1	3	0
60	Work on the concept of collegiality.	16	11	3	0	0

Table 4 depicts principals' perceptions of effective principals. As can be seen, with few exceptions, in most cases, the majority of respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements provided. What seems evident from reading the statements is that all statements (except one, 57) appear in consonance with the role of effective principals performing their school duties. Yet, it appears that some respondents were 'undecided' about the statements and some 'disagreed' with them. The main reason could be that these respondents misinterpreted the statements and hence their response. For statement 57, the suggestion that principals need to spend most of their time discovering what goes on in the classroom can elicit ill feelings from teachers, which may lead to power issues and lack of trust between the principal and teachers. Two respondents seemed rightly 'disagreed' with the statement. There could be other approaches taken through which principals could appraise classroom activities and teacher performance in their schools.

Testing of Statistical Hypothesis of Principals' Responses

The responses of principals were tested through Krushkal Wallis Test to see whether their responses differed from one another. Null hypothesis for this purpose was "the responses of all principals were the same at the average". The results obtained through Minitab are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Testing of Statistical Hypothesis of principals' responses

Statement	N	Median	Ave Rank
1	5	0.000	138.0
2	5	0.000	137.5
3	5	2.000	167.0
4	5	0.000	138.0
5	5	1.000	151.2
6	5	1.000	151.1
7	5	3.000	169.8
8	5	1.000	151.2
9	5	1.000	151.1
10	5	2.000	153.5
11	5	2.000	166.2
12	5	4.000	168.5
13	5	3.000	153.2
14	5	1.000	150.5
15	5	6.000	182.0
16	5	1.000	151.2
17	5	0.000	137.5
18	5	0.000	137.5
19	5	0.000	134.3
20	5	2.000	153.2
21	5	0.000	136.0
22	5	0.000	135.4
23	5	3.000	153.6
24	5	0.000	136.7

25	5	1.000	151.1
26	5	0.000	138.0
27	5	0.000	138.0
28	5	2.000	153.2
29	5	3.000	153.3
30	5	1.000	151.2
31	5	3.000	153.3
32	5	1.000	151.2
33	5	1.000	150.0
34	5	1.000	150.3
35	5	1.000	150.5
36	5	1.000	151.1
37	5	2.000	153.0
38	5	2.000	166.2
39	5	1.000	150.5
40	5	0.000	138.0
41	5	5.000	166.3
42	5	1.000	151.1
43	5	1.000	151.1
44	5	1.000	150.5
45	5	2.000	153.2
46	5	0.000	136.7
47	5	0.000	135.4
48	5	1.000	148.9
49	5	1.000	150.3
50	5	1.000	151.1
51	5	2.000	166.2
52	5	1.000	150.0
53	5	2.000	167.0
54	5	2.000	153.0
55	5	0.000	138.0
56	5	0.000	134.6
57	5	3.000	168.9
58	5	0.000	134.6
59	5	3.000	166.8
60	5	3.000	153.2

H = 4.77 DF = 59 P = 1.000
 H = 5.15 DF = 59 P = 1.000
 (adjusted for ties)

The above-mentioned p-value reveals that the statistical hypothesis of the study is insignificant. Conclusively, the responses of all the principals were the same at the average.

Analysis of Students' Responses

The opinionnaire responses of 600 students regarding factors promoting excellence in school were subjected to statistical analysis using Krushkal Wallis Test, through Minitab for testing students' responses. However, before doing this, first, a descriptive interpretation of students' responses of the 20 statements with five choices [Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)] is given in Table 6, which is followed by statistical analysis of the data in Table 7.

Table 6
Students' responses about factors promoting excellence in school

S. No.	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	You consider your school a suitable place for learning.	377	187	12	11	13
2	Your teachers and principal use corporal punishment.	172	131	106	67	124
3	You co-operate with one another in studies.	260	263	12	33	32
4	School provides for co-curricular activities.	206	201	77	47	69
5	You take part in classroom discussion and interact with teachers and students.	243	237	22	56	42
6	Your parents visit the school from time to time to know about your academic progress.	191	209	69	50	81
7	You occasionally discuss your academic problems with your teachers.	193	252	35	60	60
8	Your principal/headmaster shows interest in solving your problems.	227	207	70	45	51
9	You learn better with the help of A.V aids.	199	204	50	98	49
10	You are satisfied with your present curriculum in different subjects.	160	250	44	73	73
11	You are using library and laboratory for your better learning.	173	186	112	51	78
12	You enhance your learning by using television, radio, internet and other modern technologies.	162	229	93	54	62
13	Teachers promote cultural activities among the students.	165	211	87	66	71
14	Students co-operate with each other in their learning.	220	255	41	37	47
15	Cultural values are given due consideration in your school.	186	228	67	72	47
16	Students talk with pride and enthusiasm about your school and also its educational standards.	239	218	36	74	33
17	Discipline of your school is very good.	307	162	73	28	30
18	Students are devoted to their learning.	202	278	22	60	38
19	Your parents visit the school to know about your academic progress and help school improvement.	165	185	84	83	83
20	You are satisfied with the instructional strategies of your teachers.	233	219	42	71	35

Table 6 illustrates students' responses about factors that promote school excellence. The students have responded variously to the given twenty statements. However, what appears evident is that a majority of them 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements. For statement 1, most respondents have considered school as a suitable place for learning. However, 24 respondents disagreed with the statement and 12 were undecided about it. What specifically learning entails may be a good question to explore further, as learning in Pakistani schools could mean many things. More specifically, learning could be seen as memorizing information and regurgitating pre-prepared answers. Statement 2 is interesting in that almost half of the students were of the view that principals and teachers used corporal punishment in their schools. This means that in both public and private schools, teachers and principals are in the habit of punishing students for their misconducts or for lapses in their academic matters. About statement 3, the majority of respondents (i.e. 523) were of the view that they co-operated with one another in studies. More than four

hundred students perceived that their schools provided co-curricular activities to them, with 115 students disagreeing with this in statement 4. However, for statement 5, the majority of students responded that they took part in classroom discussion and interacted with teachers and students, with nearly hundred students disagreeing with the statement. This means that for those students classroom discussion and interaction with teachers was not a norm.

In response to statement 6, exactly four hundred students responded that their parents visited the school from time-to-time to know about their academic progress. While this may be somewhat true for private schools, in public schools parental visit to school about academic progress of their children is not a norm (Ahmad, 2010). Concerning statement 7, nearly three quarters of the respondents (i.e. 445) expressed that they occasionally discussed their academic problems with their teachers. However, 120 students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This number is high and suggests that in many ways teachers are not approachable by students. The

reasons could be classroom culture, teachers' behaviour, student inhibition, school ethos and the like. In response to statement 8, the majority of students expressed that their principal or headmaster shows interest in solving their problems. However, in this regard, 70 students were undecided, while 96 disagreed with the statement. In learning better with the help of AV aids, again the majority of respondents agreed with statement 9. However, one quarter of students (i.e. 147) believed the opposite. These students may have misinterpreted the statement and hence their response. For statement 10, the majority of students expressed that they were satisfied with the present curriculum and the subjects, with nearly a quarter of students disagreeing with this.

The greatest number of undecided students (i.e. 112) was for statement 11, which asked whether students used library and laboratory for better learning. However, the majority of students 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement, with around a quarter of students disagreeing with the notion of using library and laboratory for learning. For the remaining statements, i.e. from 12 through 20, the majority of the respondents 'agreed' with the statements, with some falling in the undecided category and some disagreeing and strongly disagreeing with the statements provided. This means that concerning the notion of school excellence some aspects that may have been in practice and others that may contribute towards school excellence fared well with students and so the majority of them appeared to favour the statements.

Testing of Statistical Hypothesis of Students' Responses

Using Krushkal Wallis Test, the students' data were tested for checking similarities and differences in their responses. Null hypothesis for this purpose was "the responses of all students were the same at the average". The result obtained through Minitab is presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Statistical testing of students' responses about aspects promoting excellence in school

Statement	N	Median	Ave Rank
1	5	13.00	35.9
2	5	124.00	56.7
3	5	33.00	43.0
4	5	77.00	53.3
5	5	56.00	47.4
6	5	81.00	54.2
7	5	60.00	49.3
8	5	70.00	51.3
9	5	98.00	52.3
10	5	73.00	53.4
11	5	112.00	55.2
12	5	93.00	54.5
13	5	87.00	56.2
14	5	47.00	47.0
15	5	72.00	52.4

16	5	74.00	49.3
17	5	73.00	44.7
18	5	60.00	45.9
19	5	84.00	58.7
20	5	71.00	49.3
<hr/>			
H = 3.35	DF = 19	P = 1.000	
H = 3.35	DF = 19	P = 1.000 (adjusted for ties)	

The mentioned p-value reveals that the statistical hypothesis of the study was insignificant. Conclusively, the responses of all students were the same at the average.

Conclusion

The findings have shown that a number of factors contribute to school excellence. Interpretation of the principals' data revealed that the perceived school excellence consisted of multidimensional and disparate factors such as high staff morale, students' academic achievement, high pass percentages, proper curricula and well-trained teachers. It has been shown that better relationships amongst principal and teachers and between teachers themselves improve school climate, staff morale, and public confidence in schooling. Similarly, curricular and co-curricular programmes of school promote sustainable commitment to educational outcomes. Principals' interventions make considerable difference towards school improvement efforts. These efforts include proper student progress monitoring and giving feedback to them. The school improvement efforts largely depend upon leadership skills of principals. As such these include a clear vision of what the principals want their schools to become, a vision that focus on students and their needs, and translation of the vision into goals for faculty. Effective principals meet expectations of the teachers, students and administration.

Effective principals delegate powers to teachers; they know what teachers do in the class and thereby evaluate teachers' performance logically. The discussion has shown that effective principals promote school culture that include values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meaning of parents, students, teachers and community. Through their leadership qualities, effective principals secure full cooperation of all teachers for school improvement. For attaining excellence in school, teachers use all possible instructional strategies for effective teaching-learning process, for which principals ensure that all necessary equipment and materials are provided to them. Resolving inter-teacher conflicts, promoting collegiality and discouraging adversarial relationships amongst teachers are qualities that effective principals possess. Effective schools meet high expectations of the society by their best accomplishments, focusing on teaching and learning process, and by commitment to school goals. In excellent schools, work has significance and meaning for all those in the school. Effective principals know specific details about the performance of their teachers and extend support to solve their problems; they discuss with teachers the areas that need improvement and how much

improvement might come about; they identify administrative problems and take necessary corrective measures.

Students' responses about their expectations are largely in consonance with the statements provided. This means that the majority of the respondents' expectations are that excellent schools provide a caring and nurturing environment that focuses on students, their needs and learning requirements. Students' expectations are that such classrooms are effective that engage them through various interactional approaches. It has been shown in the discussion that parental visits to schools for academic appraisal of children have been regarded as important concerning effective schools. The discussion has demonstrated that students expect that use of effective and modern instructional technologies not only enhances their learning but also contributes towards their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Arranging co-curricular activities in schools form important learning and recreational components of school activities, and students expect their continuation and variety. Students expect that appropriate library and laboratory facilities are provided to them for their better learning. Expectation is also of effective school administration, which contributes towards better student learning and solving students' problems. When an appropriate environment is provided to students, it also leads to cooperation of students with/between each other; thereby leading to effective learning experiences for students. All these contributing factors lead to ensuring that students stay in school, come well motivated and are able to devote their time and energy for ensuring maximum learning.

Recommendations

For achieving excellence in education and promoting learning environment and ensuring effectiveness of public and private schools, the following recommendations are offered to the stakeholders:

1. Principals and teachers need to focus on developing skill repertoire of students and helping students develop a balanced personality. For achieving this, the following aspects are of importance:
 - a. Equipping learners with skills for practical life.
 - b. Enabling and motivating teachers to scaffold student learning.
 - c. Ensuring that educational and related needs of learners correspond with student learning.
 - d. Active involvement and engagement of students in learning tasks.
 - e. Fostering in students both individual and social processes and outcomes.
 - f. Promoting and encouraging co-curricular activities.
2. School effectiveness largely owes itself to the competencies and dutifulness of school principals. Therefore, it is recommended that principals possess and practice the following qualities:

- a. Such school principals be appointed that are fairly well educated, devoted, honest, punctual and having no political affiliations.
- b. Principals have informed and clear vision of what they want their schools to become.
- c. Principals translate their vision into goals for their schools and set clear expectations for the teachers, students and administrative staff.
- d. Principals establish school climate that supports progress toward those goals and expectations.
- e. Principals monitor student and school progress continuously.
- f. In matters pertaining to student discipline, school administration and management, principals intervene in a supportive and corrective manner.
- g. Principals need to make sure that they promote collegiality and competitive relationships and discourage adversarial trends among teachers.
- h. For effective school climate and academic excellence, principals expend leadership qualities and present themselves as role models that teachers and students emulate.
3. For achieving school excellence, competent and professionally skilled teachers play an important role in making schools centres of learning. It is recommended that teachers:
 - a. Arrange curricular and co-curricular activities for supporting student learning.
 - b. Ensure parental involvement for students' academic and personal growth.
 - c. Participate in professional developmental plans and programmes for updating their knowledge, according to the changing conditions.
 - d. Share or reduce principal's administrative burden by becoming sectional heads, and steering and coordinating various committees for numerous activities like admission, examination, co-curricular activities and related activities in school.
 - e. Be appropriately rewarded and corrected on yearly basis, in order to motivate them for their efforts and performance and warn them for their negligence and lack of interest in teaching.
 - f. Arrange healthy competitions like inter-school competition, debates, study tours, blood donor societies, parents' visits and other community involvement activities.
 - g. Are provided with and use modern instructional technologies for better student learning.

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