

**Exploring Role of Principals in Managing Conflicts through Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities at Secondary School Level in District Khyber**

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**Abstract**

School is a body in which different stakeholders are involved for its right functioning and due to their differences, conflicts are investable in school. This research is aimed at exploring the role of principals in managing conflicts through curricular and co-curricular activities at secondary school in district Khyber. To achieve the objectives of research, narrative research design was adopted. Total ten principals and ten teachers from district Khyber were selected through purposive sampling techniques as sample. Data was collected through the conduction of semi-structured interviews and was analyzed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that principals are using different strategies for conflicts avoidance and resolution at secondary schools level. The findings of study revealed that conflicts at secondary school level are resolved through the use of proper balance between curricular and co-curricular activities. This research concluded that students' engagement in curricular and co-curricular along with proper balance between them is the technique used by principals in managing conflicts at secondary school level in district Khyber. This study recommended that both curricular and co-curricular activities are important for smooth operation of schools and policy makers may initiate proper balancing mechanism for their inclusion in daily timetable.

**Keywords:** Conflict management, Principals, Curricular Activities, Co-Curricular Activities

**1. Introduction**

School is a formal social space (Smith et al., 2016) that operates to impart information, abilities and skills to pupils, thereby transforming the lives of pupils in a positive and right direction (Murati, 2016). Schools are the main component of education, which combines different components of the teaching-learning process and facilitates it through the use of effective management techniques. Management skills are utilized by various stakeholders, including educational administration, district management authorities, principals, teachers, social sector organization and civil society (Khadija, 2022).

A school comprises different stakeholders including principals, teachers, students, and support staff (Khadija, 2022). These stakeholders have various perceptions, attitudes, interests, backgrounds and personal objectives that often lead to disruptions, disagreements and conflicts in schools (Harris et al, 2019). School principals face conflicts in the day-to-day school management process. Principals handle and resolve the existing conflicts in school through the effective use of conflict management skills (Uzun & Ayık, 2017). The management responsibilities of principals include managing day-to-day academic activities, managing conflicts among school personnel, creating a better educational environment, meeting parents' expectations

and proper utilization of school resources (Lunenburg, 2010). Principals strive to promote teachers' performance, provide facilities, motivate students, encourage staff for professional development and satisfy the community and parents (Lijun & Te, 2024). Ultimately, the school principal's goal is to establish an effective and innovative school culture (Riveras-León, & Tomàs-Folch, 2020).

There are multiple reasons behind conflicts occurrence. The communication gap is one of the critical factor causing misunderstanding and distrust (Göksoy & Argon, 2016). Unavailability of resources, like insufficient teaching learning materials, lack of teachers, or inadequate facilities, can lead to tension and clashes among school individuals (Justino, 2016). Unclear directions and duties, disinterested leadership, lack of recognition, ambiguous policies and procedures also create conflicts in institutions. In the KP merged districts, more factors are involved, such as variations in customs and cultures, insufficient capacity building, and managerial transformation. All these factors contribute to stress and contradictions in schools that are already facing difficulties due to institutional hurdles (Orakzai & Ali, 2023).

The purpose of this study is to explore the role principals in managing conflicts through the engagement of students in curricular and co-curricular activities at secondary school level in district Khyber. This study seeks to identify various types of curricular and co-curricular strategies applied by principals for conflict resolution at secondary school level in district Khyber. The understanding of applied strategies for conflict resolution by principals has great significance for the educational policies for smooth operations of secondary schools.

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1) To find out role of principal in managing conflicts through engagement of students in curricular activities at secondary school level in District Khyber.
- 2) To find out role of principal in managing conflicts through engagement of students in co-curricular activities at secondary school level in District Khyber.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What is the role of principal in managing conflicts through engagement of students in curricular activities at secondary school level in District Khyber?
- 2) What is the role of principal in managing conflicts through engagement of students in co-curricular activities at secondary school level in District Khyber?

### **Research Methodology**

Qualitative methodology is adopted in the conduction of this research. The research design for this study was qualitative narrative. All the principals and administrators of government secondary schools of districts Khyber represented the population of the study. The sample for this study consisted on 10- principals and 10- teachers and was selected through purposive sampling technique. Data was collected through self-developed semi-structured questionnaire form the selected sample and the collected data were analyzed thematically for getting results.

### **Results and Discussion**

The approach of thematic analysis was adopted in which the gathered data was systematically converted into different codes. These codes were then converted into different concepts that were reflected from the codes. The explored concepts were then arranged for getting themes and sub-themes. The thematic analysis is presented through the following theme.

### **Thematic Analysis**

#### **Balancing Academic and Co-Curricular Priorities**

The collected data from principals and teachers has revealed that principals at secondary school level in district

Khyber are using various strategies for the resolution of conflicts through balancing academic and co-curricular activities. The collected data reflected that principals are using strategic resource management by keeping proper balance between academic and co-curricular activities in schools. Data highlighted that keeping balance between academic and co-curricular activities required intensive knowhow of management as well as academic aspect of activities. One of the responding principal has shared that co-curricular activities in their school are organized without disrupting curricular activities for making school environment engaging and giving no room for conflicts among students. As he remarked:

"I ensure that the co-curricular activities are scheduled in a way that they do not interfere with core academic hours, which helps avoid disputes between subject teachers and activity coordinators." (P-1)

Another responding principals has shared that co-curricular activities are planned in the start of academic day on daily basis in such a manner which ensure proper balance between curricular and co-curricular activities. As he remarked:

"Daily calendar equally values academic deadlines and co-curricular events. Our school prevents last-minute clashes and creates a fair balance between academic and co-curricular activities for all stakeholders." (P-7)

Another responding principal shared that the conduction of co-curricular activities helps him avoiding conflicts in his school. As he remarked:

"Co-curricular activities such as sports games, tours, scout camps and leisure time are vital for the promotion of smooth running of school. And for that they arrange regular co-curricular activities in my school." (P-2)

The co-curricular activities engage students for releasing the stress and burden of academic activities. Two responding principals reported that for the release of stress and academic pressure, they have allocated proper time to co-curricular activities in their schools. (P-8, P-9)

Some of the responding principals shared that they listen to concerned teachers about syllabus completion before approving co-curricular plans for avoiding conflicts and getting better academic outcomes and students' overall performance (P-3, P-5, P-10).

Another set of two out of ten responding principals shared that academic and extracurricular priorities are properly aligned by them for avoiding academic issues at the times of execution of extracurricular activities (P-4, P-6).

The collected data from responding teachers was also evident that principals are using various strategies in the form of balancing academic and co-curricular activities for the proper engagement and empowerment of students. One of the respondent has shared that the arrangement of co-curricular activities is the need of hour and aspiration of our students. As he remarked:

"Our students are too eager to participate in games because sports is our tradition now. Our students' aspiration is the activities of sports. Keeping close observation, our principal is rightly giving enough space in our school time table for the arrangement of co-curricular activities in our school that are too helpful in avoiding conflicts and resolution of conflicts." (T-1)

Another respondent has shared that the more engage students are in different activities, the less conflicts arise in school. As he remarked:

"The high engagement of students in activities both academic and co-curricular is letting no spare time for students to go into conflicts on behavioral grounds. Our principal is making students too busy in different co-curricular activities for keeping students fresh and focused towards studies." (T-3)

Some of the respondents expressed that their principals are following clear guidelines shared by concerned district education office with respect to timing and frequency for planning and smooth operations at school level. (T-5, T-6,)

Another respondent has appreciated the efforts of their principal for encouraging co-curricular activities as well as safeguarding academic targets. As he remarked:

"I appreciate that the principal encourages co-curricular participation but also safeguards academic targets, so neither area suffers at the expense of the other." (T-8)

Another respondent shared that their principal conducts consultative meetings for planning co-curricular activities in school and avoidance of conflicts. As he remarked:

"Conflicts over time allocation have decreased since the principal began involving teachers from both academic and co-curricular sides in joint planning meetings." (T-2)

Some of the respondents shared that already prepared and shared timetable for co-curricular activities at district level is obeyed by their principals and for that right adjustments for curricular activities are made in advance (T-9, T-10).

Another teacher responded in similar way in these words:

"The right balance is kept by our principal for achieving academic goals and keeping students busy so that conflicts based on behavior are avoided." (T-4)

The thematic analysis highlighted that proper balance between academic and co-curricular activities is kept by the principals of district Khyber by utilizing strategic planning and resource allocation skills and techniques at secondary school level.

### **Discussion**

The thematic analysis of the collected data revealed that principals as the leader of schools are using different strategies for managing conflicts in schools. In these strategies, the regular conduction and arrangement of co-curricular activities in school for conflicts avoidance and conflict resolution is one of them. The thematic analysis and data revealed that principals make sure the balance of curricular and co-curricular interventions for the conflict management and smooth operation of school. This finding is similar to the findings of Hadiza and Muhammad (2025) that the proper timetable and balance between all sorts of interventions are used as a tool for smooth running of academic environment. The findings of this study also revealed that co-curricular activities are effectively used by principals for students' engagement, behavioral change and conflict avoidance. This finding is similar to the finding of Morogo (2022) that showed student engagement and curricular activities are positively associated as well as students' engagement in co-curricular activities helped conflict resolution.

### **Conclusion**

The current study aims to explore the role of principals in managing conflicts through students' engagement in co-curricular activities at secondary schools in districts Khyber. The narrative research design was used in this study. Data was collected from ten principals and ten teachers through the conduction of semi-structured interviews which was analyzed thematically. The thematic analysis revealed that conflicts in schools was effectively resolved and avoided through the proper balance between curricular and co-curricular for conflict resolution in schools. So, it is concluded that the balance between curricular and co-curricular activities are used as strategy by principals in managing conflicts in schools. Thematic analysis and discussion have revealed that co-curricular activities were used as tool for conflicts resolution among students through the proper engagement of students. So it is concluded that principals are using co-curricular activities for managing conflicts through students' engagement at secondary schools level in district Khyber.

### **Recommendations**

From the conclusion of this study, it may be recommended that co-curricular activities may be used as tool for conflicts resolution as proactive approach of conflict resolution at secondary school level.

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