

PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRINCIPALS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF PRAGNA IMPLEMENTATION IN GUJARAT

Dr. Santosh Yadav¹, DR. Suni M. Mathew²

santoshdy83@gmail.com¹, sunimariamathew@gmail.com²

¹Associate Professor & HoD, Department of Special Education, Sh. Shah K. L. Institute for the Deaf - Bhavnagar,

²Former Director & Faculty of Education, Department of Education, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech & Hearing Disabilities (D), Mumbai

ABSTRACT

The present rapidly changing world demands basic requirements of 21st century proficiencies and skills for all of us including general educators, special educators, principals, teacher educators and other stakeholders. School provides the basic foundation to explore the knowledge for the children. Principal of school provides the leadership, direction, co-ordination and healthy conducive environment to promote and maintain the effective exploration of the knowledge in holistic manner (Rolon, W.C 2017). Due to reduce the burden of learning of learners the paradigm shifts as the connecting the knowledge to life outside the school, which has helped in attracting students of all types to learn the prescribed content in a most flexible and friendly manner. Pragna is an activity-based learning approach implemented by state of Gujarat in 2010 for practice in mainstream primary schools. Pragna is the process of exploration and discovery of acquiring knowledge. It gives importance to children's experiences, expressions and their dynamic participation and give an opportunity to learn according to their own pace and level. In order to ensure maximum educational outcomes by this unique programme in mainstream school, the principal needs to have the necessary knowledge, sincerity, and alertness. Hence, the present research was undertaken with an objective of studying the professional characteristics of the principals at different stages of pragna implementation in Gujarat. Survey method was followed. A Researcher made test developed by the present researchers was used as the tool for data collection. A total of 173 'school principals' means head of the primary school who is responsible for implementation of pragna were participated in the survey. The study revealed that no significant difference in the professional characteristics was observed among male and female principals involved in pragna. The present study once again affirms that gender does not have any influence on the teaching profession. Thus, SwSDs in mainstream schools can have learning experience from either male or female principals.

KEYWORDS: *Professional, Characteristics, Pragna Programme, Students with Sensory Disabilities.*

INTRODUCTION

Education seen as eminently practical perspective, developing good health, socio-emotional skills, developing the ability to think, make the rational choices and decision in the society. It must occur in an integrated and holistic in manner. Learning means is not merely gathering information but (i) is the development of self, (ii) of our relationships with others, (iii) being able to discriminate between different forms of knowledge and (iv) being able to fruitfully apply what is learnt for the benefit of individual and of world (NCF 2022). Today we are in 21st century and peripatetic in its dazzling light, we have TV sets, jets, and internets all these things are going towards progress but still somewhere we are unable to develop humanity. To protect humanity and strong nation building we should ensure the holistic development of child through the early childhood education (NBT 2022). In order to this our Indian thinker like Swami Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo's focuses on holistic education, Rabindranath Tagore's emphasis on nature, Mahatma Gandhi's three Hs (Head, Heart & Hand), Jiddu Krishnamurti's idea on freedom, Gijubhai Badheka's child-centered education are directly and indirectly benefiting to our education system (NCF 2022).

Primary education enables the children to full participation, equal opportunity in life as a child and to realize their potentials. The RTE 2009 ensures free and compulsory education to all children, including children with special needs. In order to further schools, provisions of the RPwD Act 2016 and RTE Act 2009, implies that all children with disabilities should be supported to realize their full potential within the society. Total number of disabled in India is 26,810,557 which constitute more than 2.21 percent of total population. In the Gujarat state total disabled were 1,092,302. Amongst them, 214,150 have visually impairment, 190,675 have hearing impairment, 60,332 have speech impairment and 75,111 have multiple disability (Census, 2011).

Pragna is an activity-based programme that opens the classrooms as active working stations for children. Teaching is an art as well as science. As an art, it propels the teachers to acquire some characteristics which are called professional characteristics (GCCE, 2020). Principals must be well-informed about the programme that they are dealing. They must understand the principles and practices of pragna and must have the knowledge to occupy students and to evaluate their learning achievement. They should carry the required skills for performing the duties (NCERT, 2022). According to Ponglimanont (2010), the professional characteristics of teachers are a prime factor in predicting or expecting the quality of learner. Anitha (2007) reported that the professional characteristics of teachers influence the student's achievement directly or indirectly. The professional characteristics of principals and teachers with respect to (i) planning and organizing,

(ii) Implementation, (iii) Classroom management, (iv) Monitoring of students' progress and (v) Professional development were taken into consideration for evaluation Karaolis and Philippou (2019), showed that teachers' characteristics are related to teachers' professional identity. Yadav, S., & Mathew, S. (2016), pointed that recently recruited principals and concluded that participative, influential, and managerial skills are necessary for principals to work as successful school leaders. Badawood (2015), reported the characteristics of effective English teachers in Saudi Arabia and revealed that teachers having pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, and socio-affective skills influence can achieve the English proficiency, socio-affective skills, and pedagogical knowledge.

School education to the needy, both special and mainstream schools have opened their doors in several parts. RPWD (2016) estimated that it is necessary to train and aware to all professional and staff of children with sensory disabilities to support inclusive education at all levels of school education. In order to offer barrier free and conducive environment, it is fully dependent upon the principal that how he/she will provide the way to achieve the success (NEP 2020). Hence, the present research study was initiated with study the professional characteristics of the principals at different stages of pragna implementation.

METHOD

Descriptive survey method was followed.

PARTICIPANTS

One seventy-three principals working in mainstream schools and following pragna as a methodology for teaching-learning and administration were randomly selected from the state of Gujarat as the participants of the study. The characteristics of the participants are given below.,

Table 1: Participants' characteristics

Gender	Experience in teaching-learning & administration through pragna			Total
	up to 2 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 9 years	
Male	56	43	24	123
Female	25	17	8	50
Total	81	60	32	173

TOOL

Based on the review of available literature and brainstorming with the experts, units were selected under each of the above-mentioned subareas. Deductive approach was followed to divide the total number of items and allocated to the selected units based on the relative importance. Following tables 2 show the details.,

Table 2: Professional characteristics of principals: Units and number of items

Sub areas	Units	Weightage	No. of items
Professional characteristics related to	Planning and organizing	25%	5
	Implementation	20%	4
	Classroom management	15%	3
	Monitoring of students' progress	20%	4
	Professional development	20%	4
	Total	100%	20

A Researcher Made Test (RMT) focusing on evaluating the professional characteristics of the principals at different stages of pragna implementing in mainstream schools was developed by the researchers. Out of the 20 items planned, equal weightage was given to the selected areas. Based on the selected areas and subareas, the statement for answering as tick mark (\checkmark) only those characteristics which are there in you were developed. Face validity of the developed RMT was drawn with the support of 10 experts (Experienced Teacher Educators, Principals, Educators, Researchers) in the field of teaching SwSDs and mainstream primary education with and without pragna programme. Split half reliability was drawn using Cronbach alpha score (0.760) and found the tool reliable. The sample items included in the RMT are mentioned in table 3.

Table 3: Sample items in the questionnaire for evaluating the professional characteristics of principals

Area	Sub-area	Statement	Yes	No
Professional characteristics of principals	Planning and organizing	and Maximizes the physical aspect of the school environment including classrooms		
	Implementation	Supports teachers in arranging the students' milestones in a ladder		
	Classroom management	Establishes instructional and non-instructional procedures for teachers & students		
	Monitoring of students' progress	of Takes parent communication on student's progress seriously		
	Professional development	Attends professional development programme like conferences & workshops		

DATA COLLECTION

Based on the permission received by District Education Officers of all the districts of Gujarat to allow data collection from the pragna practicing schools under their administrative control and developed the data collection schedule. The RMT was administered on the selected participants. The principals were requested to follow the instructions and answer all items by tick marking (√) only those characteristics which are there have. All the duly filled response sheets were collected. One mark was allotted to each correct answer; while zero mark was allotted to each wrong answer. The quantitative data was then coded and analyzed using ‘Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)’.

DATA ANALYSIS

Percentage, mean scores and standard deviations for each group was used for analyzing and compared by computing the obtained data. Inter-group comparisons were done with descriptive statistics. One-Way ANOVA and z-test were applied to test the hypotheses framed based on the set objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

(i) Professional characteristics at different stages of pragna implementation

The rating scale developed by the researcher was administered on a sample of 173 principals working in mainstream schools. The data collected was then analysed. The maximum and minimum scores calculated under each of the selected stages were based on the number of items and the scoring keys used for rating. For the present research, it was decided to study the professional characteristics under three different levels namely (i) minimum, (ii) moderate and (iii) maximum. The range of scores selected for deciding the professional characteristics is mentioned in table 4

Table 4 Principals’ professional characteristics and the range of score

Level of characteristics	Range selected				
	Planning and organizing	Implementing	Classroom management	Monitoring of students’ progress	Professional development
Minimum	01-02	01	01	01	01
Moderate	03	02-03	02	02-03	02-03
Maximum	04-05	04	03	04	04

Based on table 4, the levels of professional characteristics of principals at different stages were calculated based on the obtained scores. Table 5 shows the details.

Table 5 Professional characteristics of principals at different stages of pragna implementation

Characteristics (variable)	Sample Size	Professional characteristics of principals		
		Min.	Moderate	Max.
Planning and organizing	173	4 (2.31%)	7 (4.05%)	162 (93.64%)
Implementation		7 (4.05%)	142 (82.08%)	24 (13.87%)
Classroom management		5 (2.89 %)	35 (20.23%)	133 (76.88%)
Monitoring of students’ progress		5 (2.89 %)	122 (70.52)	46 (26.59%)
Professional development		3 (1.73%)	120 (69.36%)	50 (28.90)

From the table 5, it is observed that out of 173 principals of mainstream schools participated in the study, 4 (2.31 %) of them had ‘minimum, 7 (4.05%) had moderate, 162 (93.64) had maximum professional characteristics with respect to planning and organizing pragna programme for SwSDs. On the other hand, 7(4.05 %) of them had minimum, 142 (82.08%) had moderate and 24 (13.87%) principals had maximum professional characteristics with respect to ‘implementation’ of pragna programme. Further, 5 principals (2.89 %) had minimum, 35 (20.23%) had moderate and 133 (76.88%) had maximum professional characteristics with respect to classroom management. As a part of monitoring the students’ progress, a total of 5 principals (2.89%) had minimum, 122(70.52%) had moderate and 46 (26.59%) had maximum professional characteristics. In professional development, 3 principals (1.73%) had minimum, 120 (69.36%) had moderate and remaining 50 principals (28.90%) had maximum professional characteristics. Thus, the result obtained based on the research question framed was “*With respect to pragna programme, the principals carried professional characteristics at different stages of pragna implementation namely; planning & organizing, implementation, classroom management, monitoring the progress and professional development. The professional characteristics of principals involved in pragna are at different levels ranging from minimum to maximum*”.

(ii) Gender wise comparison on the professional characteristics of Principals in Pragna

At the beginning of the study, the assumption drawn by the researcher was that “there exists no significant difference in the professional characteristics of male and female principals involved in pragna”. As it was comparative in nature, ‘z’ test was applied for testing the hypothesis. ‘z’-test is generally chosen and applied only if the sample size is greater than 30 and the population variance is known. In case of large sample size, sample variance approximately equals population variance. Hence, sample variance can be used in place of population variance. The ‘z’-statistic follows a normal distribution. Since the present study had the sample size of 173 and assuming that their distribution was normal, ‘z’- test was applied to test the formulated hypothesis mentioned above. The details of the analysis is mentioned in Table 6.

Table 6 ‘z’ test analysis: professional characteristics Vs. Gender

Parameter	Groups	N	Mean (x)	Known Variance	‘z’ Cal. (2 tail)	Z Crit. (2 tail)	Significance at 0.05	Ho
<i>Professional characteristics of principals</i>	Male	123	16.45	6.5123	0.381	1.9599	Not Significant	Retained
	Female	50	16.58	2.6975				

The obtained mean and known variance of male principals were 16.45 and 6.5123. Similarly, the mean and known variances of female principals were 16.58 and 2.6975. In order to find out whether the observed difference in mean value 16.45 of male and 16.58 of female principals is statistically significant or not, ‘z’ test was applied using SPSS. The obtained value of ‘z’ is 0.381. The corresponding ‘z’ (critical) value is 1.9599. The obtained ‘z’ value 0.381 is less than the ‘z’ critical value 1.9599. This suggests that the obtained ‘z’ value is not statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. Thus, the result obtained was ***“there exists no significant difference in the professional characteristics of male and female principals involved in pragna.”***

(iii) Experience and the professional characteristics of principals with respect to pragna:

Another objective of the present research was to study and compare the professional characteristics of principals based on their level of experience with pragna programme. The experience of all principals participated in the study were considered and grouped them based on the years of experience in practicing pragna. Table 7 shows the details:

Table 7 Level of professional characteristics of principals: Experience based

Category with the range of score	Professional characteristics of principals involved in pragna					
	Up to 2 yrs of experience		3 - 5 yrs of experience		6 - 9 yrs of experience	
	No. of principals	(%)	Number of principals	(%)	No. of principals	(%)
Min (1 to 7)	1	1	0	0	0	0
Moderate (8 to 13)	8	4	3	2	1	0.6
Max (14 to 20)	72	42	57	33	31	17.9
Total	81	47	60	35	32	18

From the analysis, it was found that, out of the total number of principals having minimum level of professional experience, only 1 principal (1%) had experience below 2 years. Out of the total number of principals, 8 principals (4 %) with moderate level of professional characteristics with respect to pragna programme had experience below 2 years, 3 principals (2%) had experience in the range 3-5 years and remaining 1 principal (0.6%) had experience in the range 6-9 years. 72 principals (42%) with maximum level of professional characteristics had experience below 2 years, 57 principals (33%) had experience in the range 3-5 years and remaining 31 principals (17.9 %) had experience in the range 6-9 years.

In order to study whether experience has any influence on the professional characteristics of principals, the null hypothesis framed was “Experience has no influence on the professional characteristics of principals involved in pragna”. One way ANOVA was conducted to study the relationship between experience (independent variable) and the professional characteristics (dependant variable) of principals in implementing pragna for students in mainstream schools. The independent variable principals’ experience was grouped under three levels namely below 2 years, 3-5 years and 6 years & above. The details of the analysis carried out and the result obtained are mentioned below in table

Table 8: Analysis: Experience Vs perspective of teachers

Parameter	Level of Experience	n	Mean	SD	Std. Error	F (observed)	p
Professional characteristics of principals with respect to pragna	up to 2 years	81	16.04	2.84	.315	3.607	0.029
	3 to 5 years	60	16.70	1.59	.205		
	6 to 9 years	32	17.25	1.76	.311		
	Total	173	16.49	2.32	.177		

The ANOVA table decomposes the variance of the data into two components: a) between-group component and b) within-group component. The F ratio for groups, which in this case 3.607 is the ratio of the between group estimate to the within group estimate. Since the p-value of 0.029 is less than 0.05; there is statistically a significant difference between the means of various groups at the 5% significant level. Table 9 shows the details. Thus, the null hypothesis was not retained. The alternate hypothesis was retained.

Table 9 ANOVA: Experience Vs professional characteristics of principals

		ANOVA					
		Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Square	F (observed)	p
Professional characteristics	Between Groups		37.748	2	18.874	3.607	.029
	Within Groups		889.489	170	5.232		
	Total		927.237	172			

Thus, the result obtained was “Experience has influence on the professional characteristics of principals involved in pragna”. *More the experience better are the professional characteristics of principals.*

CONCLUSION

Variation in professional characteristics was observed among the principals in general as well as at different stages of pragna programme implementation namely; planning & organizing, implementation, classroom management, monitoring the progress and professional development. The variation observed might be due to the difference in the awareness levels of teachers and principals about pragna and education of SwSDs. Majority of them had moderate level of awareness about education of SwSDs. As years pass by, one can observe an improvement in professional characteristics of principals. As school leaders and nodal officers for implementation of prangna programme, principals take more efforts in understanding pragna and its implementation than the teachers.

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