Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

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5.0 Introduction

Secondary education is a vital link between primary and higher education system and it holds the responsibility of nurturing the basic competencies gained during primary education and preparing oneself for higher education. Growth witnessed in Indian elementary education enrollment and improvement in retention and transition rates over past ten years, are increasing pressure on the secondary level to absorb new entrants. Given the quantum of investments made by both the center and state in 'Sarva Siksha Abhiyan" which will continue in the years to come, will indeed push additional demand for secondary and higher education. Sustainable and impressive growth that India has shown for the past few years has also contributed to a surge in demand for secondary education. In attending to the growing demand the aspect of quality in education has to be equally emphasized upon.

A major challenge before educational planners, educational administrators, educational researchers, teachers and managers of education, thus, is to devise and organize a system of secondary education which would both widen access to it and simultaneously ensure relevant and quality education. A quality system has its reflections in the quality of its output, which essentially would involve quality of its input as well as its process. This applies to the secondary educational system too, and the effectiveness of such system results from its effective management and leadership.

Such effective leadership as well as management can well be developed as proven by various studies and it involves developing professional competencies of the school leaders through training, self learning and self assessment programs. And e-Learning professional development programs for skill enhancement would be an effective tool for such initiatives.

5.1 Need for Professional Development of School Principals

Professional leadership is the necessary factor for successful implementation of decentralized management of education at all levels. At this juncture, a systematic and need based professional preparation of Principals, teachers, parents and members of the community is needed. Effective leadership is exhibited by those who are continuously updated in their knowledge base, and who are capable of employing that knowledge skillfully in the day to day management of institution.

In order to be effective as a leader, the principal of a school is expected to possess certain professional competencies and such competencies can be developed through effective training program. So there is a need of some kind of support system for excellence in principals. This support system shall include identification of those competencies, basic to effective management of schools and developing self learning modules which the principals can have access too. And such modules can be in form of e-Learning system that provides the learner with adequate flexibility.

The learning techniques that are used for training programme are: Lecture, Audience Reaction Team, Listening Team, Panel, Colloquy, Brainstorming, Demonstration, Buzz Question, Case Method, Role Playing, Forum, Round Table Conference, Image Sharing, Conversation etc. Employment of such techniques required organized participation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, London identified the Department of Educational Administration at the MS University of Baroda as a nodal center to hold the Asia-Pacific Workshop on "Head Teachers Training and Resource Materials Development" and the workshop (1996) has identified three levels of training:

Awareness which should incorporate discussion on recent government initiations and policy guidelines

Enrichment which should impart the additional skills needed to become confident and competent administrators

Fine Tuning where specific deficiencies in the trainee's competencies can be identified and strategies devised to improve skills.

Self-instructional materials as developed on the following aspects of

- Self-development for educational managers

- Principals of Educational Management

- Personnel Management

- Managing the Curriculum and Resources

- Financial Management

- Monitoring School Effectiveness

- The Governance of Schools.

(Ref: Commonwealth Secretariat, London 1996)

The methodologies for the training programmes suggested were both technical and practical session consisting of role play, situation analysis, case method, self-reflection, action research etc.

To make such training programmes successful and effective as regards to its reach, appropriate use of information technology can be made such that the training programme is accessible to the principals from all corners irrespective of their distance and convenience of time.

5.2 Technology Enabled Professional Development for School Principals

The importance of training and development of school principals to enhance their professional competencies and make schools effective is well understood and recognized. But somehow such programmes are either not taking place effectively or at the worst situation it is never given its due importance. The same maybe attributed to the lack of technical expertise in sufficient numbers to deliver the training & development programmes such that it reaches each and every school principals across the country. And to effectively implement such training and development programme, the use of ICT in training & Development and more specifically e-Learning appears to be the most feasible solution which can cut across the barriers of time, money, energy and geography and yet provide the school principals with necessary assess to be updated in their knowledge base and thus be effective.

School leaders are adult learners and need to be involved in determining their own learning needs. Tusting and Barton (2006) make two key points of adult learning:

1. Adults have their own motivation of learning. Learners build on their existing knowledge and experience. They fit learning into their own purposes and become engaged in it. People's purpose for learning are related to their real lives and the practices and roles they engage in outside the classroom.

2. Adults have drive towards self direction and towards becoming autonomous learners. Learning is initiated by the learner, and one role of the teacher is to provide a secure environment in which learning can take place.

Personalized learning may also be achieved through e-Learning. Chong et al. (2003: 165), referring to Singapore context, say that information technology means that 'employees could have individualized learning programmes on demand'

e-Learning is the use of technology to enable people to learn anytime and anywhere. e-Learning can include training, the delivery of just-in-time information and guidance from experts. e-Learning is also defined as the learning which takes place in an electronically simulated environment. e-Learning program so developed, may be classified into Synchronous and Aschynronous learning.

"Synchronous learning" refers to a process where the instructor and students come together at the same time. Synchronous e-Learning lets teachers conduct classes over the Internet. The synchronous technologies also allow people to interact with peers and experts. It includes Virtual Classrooms, Audio-Video Conferencing, Chats, Shared Whiteboards, Application Sharing and Instant Messaging.

"Asynchronous Learning" on the other hand refers to the process of learning which takes place anytime, and are also referred to as Self-Paced courses. The obvious

advantage of a self-paced course is convenience. People can get the training they need at any time. This can include just-in-time training where a person gets exactly the training he or she needs to perform a task. Self-paced courses are created with e-Learning authoring tools. Self-paced courses can be delivered in many ways including: Internet, Intranet of Local Area Networks and CD-ROM or DVD.

An e-Learning program exhibits the following advantages both to its targets (learners) as well as its providers.

Lower Costs and Larger Capacity: With e-Learning, the learners don't have to physically attend classes, seminars or training programs. e-Learning is web-based and disk-based so participants don't have to spend a lot of time away from their work. They can choose how much time or what specific time to devote to learning the subject matter offered. A web-based e-Learning program is a lot less expensive to maintain. Providers need only maintain the networking infrastructure that will deliver their e-Learning content to their students and participants. Such programs allows for more participants than traditional learning methods since the number of participants is not constrained by venue limitations.

Convenient Learning: Learners can fit their learning activities easily with their daily routine. They need not leave home to participate in an e-Learning program and learning does not require complex logistics. All a participant needs is a computer, internet connectivity, access to the web-based server, and if necessary, the special e-Learning software provided by the e-Learning program operators/ providers.

Easily Updated and Upgraded: e-Learning modules can be easily revised. Activities can be easily added and incorporated. The e-Learning software can also be automatically

updated by connecting to the server. This is definitely a lot faster than retraining professors and reprinting books and manuals.

In light of the above discussion, it can very well be concluded that the e-Learning program shall successfully provide the necessary impetus to a relatively backward region of a Developing Nation, by increasing the reach at a much lower cost.

McFarlane et al. (2003: 7) review of the literature describes a range of indicators of effective practices in e-Learning:

- Providing pre programme diagnoses

- Optimizing peer to peer and reciprocal learner to facilitator communications

- Encouraging a group dynamic to promote collaborative working within an e-Learning environment

- Ensuring fast and reliable internet connection

- Building in systems that guide or pressure learners to complete the programme

- Assessing e-Learning activities so that they are an essential part of the programme.

- Ensuring that the programme has high status in the relevant community

5.3 Implications of the Review

From the studies reviewed it is clear that the position of Principal is immensely important in providing for educational standards in schools and making the school effective. In doing so the principal enacts various roles, that of a leader, facilitator, motivator, organizer, governor, business director, coordinator, superintendent, teacher, guide,

philosopher and friend. He/ she assume the role similar to the captain of a ship or the pilot of an aircraft. The researcher came across a number of studies which examined the leadership roles of the school principal in making the school effective in terms of school improvement, enhanced students' achievement, and learner's outcome (Negash 2013; Fadael 2011; Alias 2005; De Stefano 2003; Radha 2001; and Jain 2000). Studies also related to the various leadership styles namely transformational and transactional, and its impact on school effectiveness (Abgoli2009; Korkmaz 2007; Lesniewski 2003; and Ali 2003). Researcher also explored into studies to derive the meaning of effective schools and reviewed related literature which examined school effectiveness (Fadael 2011; De Stefano 2003; Shaikh 2000; Selvaraju 1993; Machura 1991; and Hmaidan 1991). A competent school principal exhibited his/ her leadership in carrying forward school reforms (Morrison 2005) and in doing so the principal is successful in creating a positive school climate, enhanced job satisfaction among teachers and overall organizations' health (Korkmaz 2007; Morrison 2005; Lesniewski 2003; Hurakalli 2003; Amoroso 2002; Arguelles 2002; Radha 2001; and Hmaidan 1991). The principal is not only expected to be the main agent of change but also facilitate organizational growth by ensuring timely professional development of his/ her staff and empower them, and provide instructional leadership (Negash 2013; Vaidya 2010; and Moore 2003).

Having developed a strong based on the leadership role of the school principal and the impact it has on the overall school development, the researcher explored further into studies that examined the key competencies that are possessed by successful school principals. Competencies in the field of developing others, achievement of set goals, and impact and influence that the principal (Hoekstra 2014) is able to exercise among various

stakeholders towards fulfilling school development plans. This also necessitated the principal to possess certain specific competencies in cultural and political dimensions (Cheng 2000), special competencies which mark the high-performing principals in the area of commitment to school's mission and concern for its image (Drake and Roe 1986). Effective principals provide leadership in the implementation of change and carry forward school reforms (Morrison 2005).

Also studies reveal that in performing/ enacting such roles, an effective Principal must possess certain cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics to become successful. Principals today are required to shift their energies to facilitating and integrating staff work activity. The necessary vision, knowledge, role orientation, goals and commitment of leaders must be dedicated to school productivity.

In order to do so, studies reveal the engagement of principal in a wide range of activities, a collective set of tasks well defined and spread across various areas. This led researcher to explore into those studies that identified the task responsibility areas of the school principal. School Principalship is associated with relentless effort towards translating the school's vision into reality, building community and culture, promote student learning, develop teacher leadership, and facilitate shared decision making (Sawyer 2010). The position of Principalship is associated with a myriad of responsibilities and hence, it is the principal who is accountable for the success or failure of the school. Principals of high achieving schools were reported to be effective in areas such as: creating safe and orderly school environment; goals focused on high levels of students learning; high expectations of students; self-confidence; responsibility; perseverance; visibility and accessibility; building positive and supportive school climate; communication and

interaction; interpersonal support; community outreach and involvement; rituals, ceremonies and other symbolic actions; shared leadership and staff empowerment; instructional leadership; norm of continuous improvement; classroom observation and feedback to teachers; teacher autonomy; support of risk taking; and professional development opportunities and resources (Cotton 2003).

Operational areas of the school principal included: Curriculum and instruction, general school management, finance and business, staff personnel, student personnel, school community relation (Onyango 2001), school plant (physical facilities), staff development, evaluation (Okumbe 2001).   Competency areas as identified in Indian context are: Pupil development, personnel management, school community interface, financial management, curriculum implementation and management of instruction, school plant infrastructure, school climate and school improvement, administrative methods and procedures (Srivastav 1999). In context of Assam also reported the areas of: financial management, general administration, academic management, personnel management, supervision, library, decision making, institutional planning and leadership (Deka 1994), discipline, performance appraisal, human relations, staff development and motivation (Konwar 1990).

The above task responsibility areas as identified by various studies broadly can be categorized into areas of General Administration and Management Tasks, Curriculum Management Tasks, Personnel Management Tasks, Community Partnership Tasks, Financial Management Tasks, Materials Management Tasks, and Management of Information Tasks. And imparting in-service training to the school principals have reported in enhancing their professional competencies (Kalai 2006). Performance of

principals over a period of time ranging from their joining as principal and leaving, in terms of managerial proficiency and hence imparting managerial training becomes a necessity (Rethinam 2008). Studies also reveal that inclusion of educational management in pre-service teacher education program (Onyango 2001; Cheng 2000).

Professional development programs across several fields from nursing education (Abbassi 2013; Abbas 2011) to developing and catering to the educational needs of library professional (Matthew 2011) have been reported to be highly successful and presented similar results about learning outcome when compared to the transaction of teaching and learning using lecture method. A recent study on the effectiveness of e-Learning on the learning achievement and research skills in educational research methodology for university students (Tongdecharoen 2014) also reported to be more effective method. Other studies related to the application of ICT and e-Learning in imparting lessons on specific subjects to secondary students also reported its effectiveness.

Also the fact that not much studies related to professional development of school principals has taken place in India. At present only a few institutions like National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and Center of Advanced Study in Education (CASE) in few select Universities in India have taken up professional development of school principals. In order to meet the requirements of quality in education, there is a strong need to create a pool of professionally competent principals to lead the changes in the scenario of education in the country. And in a vast country like India, it would take years to meet such requirements in the conventional mode.

Keeping in mind the success of e-Learning as a medium to cater to the requirement of professional development in various fields and profession has resulted in the desire of the researcher to use the same for developing professional development program for school principals. The researcher is of the opinion that an e-Learning professional development program for school principals would be of immense help in providing school principals relevant learning experiences to develop their professional competencies.

Hence the researcher undertook this study to develop a e-Learning program for enhancing the professional competencies among secondary school principals in the state of Assam.

5.4 Rationale of the Study

Traditionally, college and university based educational leadership programs have emphasized management and administrative issues rather than curricular and instructional issues which is of paramount nature in context of judging the school as a system that produces quality. Hence it is important that in service short term programs directed towards professional development of the school principal are conducted. Such programmes must have continuity and be made mandatory in order to provide the school principal continuous learning experience that equips them with necessary knowledge and skill to exercise their leadership position in the school as a system. Need based Professional development programs are designed to meet specific training needs of the school principals, which are arrived at, based upon a thorough study on the task responsibility areas, identification of training needs (skill gap). And in order to make such programs effective and reach target audience in numbers, e learning program (online and offline) inclusive of self learning material, case studies etc act as a catalyst in the learning process.

The sensitive social fabric in Assam, with diverse socio-ethnic groups having their own languages and dialects, the varied geographical nature, the average socio-economic condition of the people, the polity, the rich bio diversity, diverse traditional and cultural values and practices, its proximity to the international borders makes education a challenging task to be accomplished by the Principal, where he/she is supposed to shoulder the burden of the societal progress with limited access to the basic resources required by the system of secondary school. Burgeoning problems such as lack of adequate infrastructure, quality human resource, application of appropriate technology, drop outs and absenteeism, diverse social issues and conflicts etc makes his/her task of managing the school a much more challenging job.

The conventional training programs require huge expenditure as well as time and convenience. Hence the researcher contemplates development of e learning program which shall basically self learning modules designed and developed keeping in mind the essential principles of adult learning, such that, there is created a 'pull for education' from the side of the school leaders. And the same shall provide adequate flexibility to the learners to learn and get self equipped with necessary skills as per their convenience of time and place.

The recent Policy directions both at the Central and State level focusing on the need for Training & Development of School Principals, this study would facilitate the policy implementation in the particular regions. Researcher has not come across adequate research in the area of professional development of school principals in Assam as well as the North eastern region, as they need special focus for quality education. Assam also

shares boundaries with the seven sisters of North East India, and their resemblance with Assam shall make such modules applicable in their states too in times to come.

The recent step on Principals training and development by RMSA, Assam in association with Don Bosco Institute is indeed a welcome step. However, upon interaction with various stakeholders it was felt necessary to provide school Principals with opportunity to engage in continuous learning, and e-Learning program may be considered as one such resource.

With the boost to ICT that is expected by the recent schemes from RMSA and the presence of satisfactory access to tele-communication and internet, creating provision for e-Learning professional development program may indeed provide the much needed impetus in engaging school principals effectively and professionally. As studies have shown the benefits of continuous professional development on school effectiveness, and by use of technology enabled professional development program the requirements of the adult learner in school principals too will taken care of.

5.5 Research Questions

i. What are the professional development needs of school principals in Assam?

ii. What are the policies and current practices of Training and Development of the school principals in the state of Assam?

iii. What is the perspective of the school principals towards such training and development programmes?

iv. Will the school principal welcome an innovative system of a flexible self learning module?

v. To what extent e-Learning mode can be used for training school principals.

vi. How can the credibility of such module be established?

5.6 Statement of the Problem

Development of an e-Learning Program for Enhancing Professional Competencies of Secondary School Principals in the State of Assam

5.7 Objectives of the Study

i. To identify the Training needs of Secondary School Principals in the State of Assam

ii. To develop an e-Learning program for Enhancing Professional Competencies of School Principals.

iii. To Study the Effectiveness of e-Learning program in terms of its relevance, adaptability and professional enrichment among the School Principals.

5.8 Explanation of the Terms

Training Needs

Those needs inclusive of Knowledge and Skill required for a Principal to perform/ exercise leadership roles in school management.

Professional Competencies

In this study Professional Competencies refers to a set combination of Knowledge, Skills and Experiences that enhances the effectiveness of a School Principal to perform the task responsibility areas.

e-Learning program

e-Learning refers to the program developed by the researcher exclusively for the purpose of the professional development of the school principals based on their needs identified by considering the principles of adult learning and the techno-pedagogic interface.

Effectiveness of e-Learning Program

Here the word effectiveness of e-Learning program refers to the relevance, adaptability and professional enrichment as opined by the participating School Principals

Principals

Principals refer to the Headmasters / Principals of the Govt. and Govt. aided Secondary Schools and Higher Secondary Schools recognized by the Board of Secondary Education, and the Higher Secondary Education Council, in the State of Assam.

5.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to Principals of Govt. and Govt. aided Secondary School in the State of Assam as identified by the researcher and recommended by the Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhijan, Assam.

5.10 Research Design

This study was given due importance by the RMSA authorities as well as the Directorate of Secondary Education, Assam due to the fact that RMSA was in the process of conducting training workshops for school principals with the help of Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati.

The focus of this study was to develop and implement an e-Learning program for enhancement of professional competencies of school principals. First, the researcher set a strong basis for the study. And the study was conducted in different phases. In the first phase the researcher identified the training needs of school principals using the Principals Professional Development Need Assessment Questionnaire (PPDNAQ). The responses so obtained after administering the PPDNAQ were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In the second phase the researcher developed self-learning modules covering the task responsibility areas as identified in phase 1. In the third phase these modules were validated by seeking expert opinion and the same was digitized during the fourth phase of the study. During the fourth phase itself, the digitized modules were tried out over a group of school principals. And based upon the feedback, the researcher made necessary changes to the e-Learning program and carried out the experimentation during the fifth phase of the study. The experimentation was conducted for a period of 60 days. During the final phase i.e. the 6th of the study the researcher sought feedback and opinions about the e-Learning program using a Feedback Form, from the school Principals on the effectiveness of the e-Learning program. The following Table-1 elaborates upon the different phases of this study.

5.11 Research Tools and Techniques

1. Principal's Professional Development Needs Assessment Questionnaire (PPDNAQ):

This questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the present study and it contained a list of tasks that a Principals of a Secondary school are expected to perform in order to exercise their leadership position in the Schools.

2. Unstructured Interviews and Discussions:

The researcher conducted personal interviews to understand the various task responsibility areas of a school principal and to gain sufficient insight into their professional development needs as perceived by various departmental heads such as the Inspector of Schools, Programme Coordinator and District Consultants of RMSA, Academic Officer of SCERT and SEBA as well as the School Principals. Personal interviews were also conducted with retired principals who demonstrated commendable service record as school heads.

3. Feedback Form:

In order to study the effectiveness of e-Learning programme from the participating School Principals the researcher developed a Feedback Form to collect the opinion and their experience with the e-Learning program. The feedback from sought to explore into certain indicators of e-Learning - Learner education background, Computing skills, type of Learner, their learning style, obstacles they faced during e-Learning, e-content in terms of relevance, user-friendliness, time and pace of learning, fulfillment of purpose etc, Instructional design, collaboration, motivation, attitude and interest, performance (self efficacy) and overall learning experiences. The feedback form was administered first with during the try-out and this helped the researcher to arrive at its final shape by incorporating the relevant observations. The researcher also observed the participating principals and conducted informal interviews to ascertain their response towards using the e-Learning program as mentioned earlier.

5.12 Phases of the Study

The study was conducted in the following six phases:

Phase 1- Identification of the Professional Development Needs of the School Principals

Phase 2- Content Development for the e-Learning Program

Phase 3- Validation of the Content

Phase 4- Development of the e-Learning program and Try Out

Phase 5- Implementing the e-Learning Program

Phase 6- Effectiveness of the e-Learning Program

5.13 Data Collection Procedure

A detailed description of data collection procedure adopted by the researcher during different phases of this study is provided in the following paragraph:

Phase 1: Identification of Training Needs of School Principals: The researcher collected valuable information by reviewing previous studies on training needs identification, task responsibility of the school principals and professional competencies of school principals. Also reports and publications of RMSA were studied in order to develop a meaningful insight for this study. These constituted the secondary data for the study.

The primary data was collected in the form of the responses given by the sample of 100 school principals (as described earlier) to the PPDNAQ which was administered to them. The researcher took sufficient time to make the school principals understand each and every item of the PPDNAQ by visiting each sample at their work place and discussing

the same. In due course, the researcher also engaged in unstructured interviews to explore further into area of responsibilities of the school principals.

Phase 2: **Development of Content for the e-Learning Program:** The data/ information gathered during this phase of the study were mainly secondary in nature and involved extensive reviews of similar learning modules developed earlier by various institutions and those available as open educational resources online.

The content development was based upon the findings of the survey undertaken by the researcher during the first phase of the study and subsequent discussions with experts constituted of retired principals and academic officers of SCERT/ SEBA and RMSA. Continuous discussions especially with retired principals helped the researcher to exemplify their experiences in the form of examples and activities that were provided in the e-Learning program.

Phase 3: **Validation of the Content for e-Learning Program:** The process of validation included the distribution of the content so developed in the print form among experts including retired principals, Academic officers of SCERT, SEBA and Consultants of RMSA. The experts were asked to note their comments and the researcher engaged with continuous discussions from time to time during this phase of the study, in order to incorporate suggested corrections.

Phase 4: **Development of the e-Learning Program:** Once necessary corrections and suggestions were incorporated and the content was made ready, the researcher engaged with the software developer through constant discussions which revolved around the following aspects:

a. Design layout of the e-Learning program

b. Arrangement of content "module-wise" and its navigation

c. Providing external as well as internal links to various open educational resources

d. Continued testing and developing (Iteration)

e. Self-testing by the researcher and providing necessary inputs for changes, if any

The e-Learning program so developed, was then tried out on a group of 10 school principals for a period of 45 days, during which the researcher closely observed the participants and also engaged in discussions. A feedback form was developed by the researcher to study the effectiveness of the e-Learning program. And by administering the feedback form to collect the opinions from the participating principals during the try out period, the researcher got valuable inputs to modify and further develop the feedback form to be used finally for evaluating the effectiveness of the e-Learning program.

The researcher also derived understanding about the experiences of the participants by conducting unstructured interviews as and when felt necessary in order to extract the minutest information about their experiences of using the e-Learning program.

Phase 5: **Implementation of the e-Learning Program:** During the implementation of the e-Learning program, the researcher tried to continuously interact with the participating principals whenever they required help and support. Often such discussions were held over the phone or emails. However, if felt necessary the researcher visited the participants to sort out their difficulties and in due process secure valuable information about the same.

Phase 6: **Evaluating the Effectiveness of the e-Learning Program:** Feedback Form developed by the researcher was distributed among the participating principals in order to

extract information about their experiences in using the e-Learning program. Their opinions were solicited in terms of the relevance, clarity, user-friendliness, self-pace, self-motivation, impact on professional learning and challenges faced. The researcher also derived meaningful information by engaging with the participating principals in discussions and by conducting unstructured interviews in order to explore further into the minutest details as and when felt necessary.

5.14 Data Analysis

The nature of data obtained in this study is quantitative and qualitative by nature. The quantitative data so obtained from the 1st phase of the study using the PPDNAQ was analyzed with appropriate quantitative analysis techniques. The qualitative data obtained from Unstructured Interviews, Discussions, Observation were analyzed descriptively by anchoring the responses/ content in terms of indexes. Opinions of the participants during the evaluation of the effectiveness of e-Learning program were collected with the help of a Feedback Form and the same was analyzed descriptively.

5.15 Major Findings of the Study

1. It was found from the study that majority of the principals identified these general management tasks as the areas where professional development is needed:

   a. Managerial Tasks

   b. School Governance Tasks

   c. School Facilities Tasks

   d. Other Administrative Tasks

2. Further it emerged from the study that Curriculum Management Tasks were also one of the areas where professional development need was opined by the principals. The identified tasks were:

   a. Management of Instruction

   b. Learner Related Tasks

3. Human Resource Management Task was opined by a majority of the principals as one of the areas where they felt the need for professional development. Important tasks that emerged from the study under the dimension of human resource management were:

   a. Manpower Planning Tasks

   b. Recruitment and Selection Tasks

   c. Training and Development Tasks

   d. Performance Appraisal Tasks

   e. Motivation Tasks

   f. Conflict Management and Grievance Redressal Tasks

   g. Community Participation Related Tasks

4. The study revealed that the Financial and Material Management Tasks were identified as needs where the professional development need was highly felt. Important tasks under this dimension were:

   a. Financial Planning Tasks

   b. Financial Statements related Tasks

   c. Accounting and Audit related Tasks

   d. Materials Management Tasks

5. Management of Information Tasks was another area that emerged from the study as an area where the principals opined about their professional development need and it included:

   a. Record Keeping Tasks

   b. Communication Related Tasks

6. It emerged from the study that majority of the respondents found e-Learning program to be highly effective in terms of their professional enrichment.

7. It was found from the study that the effectiveness of the e-Learning program was rated highly by the respondents in terms of its:

   a. User-friendliness

   b. Relevance of content in terms of clarity and the content format (use of multiple media)

   c. Self-paced nature

   d. Relevant learning experiences

   e. Self-motivating nature

   f. Impact on professional learning and learning outcome in terms of knowledge transfer, intellectual skills, practical skills and transferable skills.

8. An indirect outcome that has emerged from this study was that the learner's professional enrichment in terms of learning skills on using technology for professional development. Majority of the respondents opined about gradually developing such skills while working on the e-Learning program and that enabled them to embrace technology enabled learning for their self-development.

9. Challenges in terms of obstacles and barriers in e-Learning that emerged from the study were:

   a. Basic Computer skills are felt necessary in order to engage in e-Learning and it emerged from the study that the principals gradually learnt this skill after repeated use of the e-Learning program.

   b. Internet connectivity emerged as a major barrier in e-Learning.

10. It also emerged from the study that the principals who opined highly on their self-efficacy found e-Learning more effective in enriching their learning and professional development.

11. It was found that a combination of different media's ensured enrichment of e-Learning program and that the same took into account the different learner types to draw appropriate attention of the learner towards e-Learning.

12. Networking among learners and establishing professional learning groups and forums for peer-group discussions was found to be a major consideration for effective e-Learning.

13. It also emerged from the study that establishing easy access with a facilitator enhanced e-Learning effectiveness.

5.16 Discussions:

Secondary schools in India need quality leadership in order to ensure quality in education and realize the national goals of increasing the gross enrollment ratio, RMSA and RUSA. This is borne out of the fact that, many schools are still managed by in charge school principals or principal's who are far from being professionally qualified. Further the practice of appointing senior teachers as school principals deprives the school from a

good teacher and most of the time ends up in providing a poor school administrator. Lack of a well defined framework for Principalship defining qualification and standards, further creates an environment of mistrust among teacher groups which often leads them towards seeking legal recourse in context of appointment of principals. Especially, it was observed in the state of Assam that for Principalship of a secondary school the qualification if fixed as a university graduate with B.Ed. and a minimum of 7years experience for assistant heads and 10years for head teachers. And the same for higher secondary Principalship is silent on the requirement of B.Ed. degree, with the qualification being fixed as post graduates with 10 years experience. This leads to a sense of deprivation among senior teachers in composite schools having both secondary and higher secondary sections.

Further, in India the role of Principalship has not yet emerged in all appropriateness considering the fact that there exists no policy framework on principal preparation, non-existence of pre-service professional courses on Principalship or any significant thrust for creating a continuous professional development environment/ facility for in-service school principals. Researches indicate that the present status of existing professional development programs not being able to meet desired outcomes. RMSA did initiate orientation of school principals on various aspects of reforms that have been initiated, but the progress and reach of such program is very slow considering the size of the country like India, and the lack of adequate infrastructure to carry on such training and development exercise. In the state of Assam, public-private partnership is seen in matters related to creating provision for workshops and training & development exercise for school principals, however the outcome of such initiatives are yet to be measured. Here,

it is felt necessary to evolve a framework similar to the ones adopted for teacher's in-service professional development, like identification of master trainers, training master trainers and enabling them in mentoring role at school cluster level. Qualified principals may also be trained for such mentoring roles, and professional learning groups within each block/ district level maybe formed under the aegis of the Inspector of Schools and District Coordinators of RMSA and being made to formally meet, discuss, brainstorm and engage in learning at least once a month.

Adoption of technology enables professional development program will indeed go a long way in sufficing to this huge need of creating a pool of professionally competent school leadership. It appears that there is a lack of coordinated effort at the highest level between various arms of the government, else projects like "Bharat Nirman" which envisages to establish effective broadband network at each panchayat level of the country, and the progress of which is satisfactory in terms of realizing its targeted goals. Such advances in technology enablement must be tapped to its maximum potential which in turn would have far reaching socio-economic rewards.

The role of Principalship is often burdened to extraneous responsibilities like election, census etc; which consumes vital time and energy of incumbent of a important position like the school leader, who otherwise, is expected to be responsible for creating a better tomorrow by shaping and guiding young minds. The role of Principalship is also overburdened with high expectations and low returns in terms of recognition and motivation. It is high time to introspect, where things have gone wrong, why principals today are not commanding the respect that principals and teachers commanded few decades back. Studies and research on Principalship in India are very limited and more

towards identifying their behavioral attributes, job satisfaction, organization climates etc. More researches are required in the field of principal leadership and Principalship in India.

On the lines of restructuring teacher education programmes by making it two years duration in the country with an intention to enhance the teaching competencies among the teachers, there is a dire need for creating institutions to provide management and leadership training for the school principals prior to the functioning as principals. Further it is felt necessary to engage principals in continuous professional development programs periodically in order to ensure their effectiveness on the role of Principalship. And the same can easily be implemented as a norm and practice by adopting technology enabled professional development programs which can be linked to the professional advancement of the principals based upon the credits/ certification earned by the principals attending such programs.

5.17 Implication of the Present Study

The following implications emerged from the present study:

1. It is felt necessary to identify the professional development needs of the school principals on a pan-India level.

2. In order establish quality in education, avenues for continuous professional development for school principals must be created.

3. Technology enabled professional development must be emphasized upon in order to meet the growing demand for professionally competent principals.

4. Online, flexible and self-learning opportunities needs to be created for principals to enable where they can learn on real work environment.

5.18 Suggestions

The following suggestions are forwarded

5.18.1 Suggestion for School Principals

The present study has focused on the "Principalship" in schools and the need for continuous professional development**.**

1. Principals must engage in being part of professional learning communities and network themselves with their peer-groups in order to share and discuss experiences.

2. Embrace technology for continuous professional development by keeping track of the latest developments worldwide.

3. Involve and engage in innovative practices to create life-long learning practices.

4. Sharing of professional experiences with peers and developing collaborative professional development programmes really make an impact on school development.

5. School based professional development programmes and work based learning opportunities mattes a lot in professional advancement.

5.18.2 Suggestion for Policy Makers

1. Due emphasis on identification of Principal's Professional Development Needs across the country and for different school types will help in developing strategic framework for policy intervention towards creating quality education .

2. A national frame work for the professional standards of school principals will have to be developed to assure quality in school leadership.

3. Develop a National repository for Open Educational Resources for Schools, especially focusing on the school management aspects to make accessible to all the principals to meet the emerging challenges in school administration.

4. Professional standards for school principals needs to be identified as a national framework and the continuous professional development programs must be designed to nurture the skills required for national professional standards for school principals.

5. Private schools must be brought under the purview of RMSA in order to gauge the overall development of secondary education in India and initiate necessary policy interventions to establish quality.

5.18.3 Suggestions for Further Research

1. Similar studies can be conducted in other states of India.

2. Comparative studies on the professional development needs of rural and urban school principals.

3. Comparative studies in terms of Public School Principals and Private School principals professional development needs.

4. Study of the impact of e-Learning program in terms of learning outcome employing experimental designs.

5. Impact studies related to the school outcomes due to leadership competencies o the principals can be studied.

5.19 Conclusion

In today's context with policy reforms emanating from the demand to create and provide quality education at all levels starting from the primary to secondary to the higher education. With success of Sarva Siksha Abhijan and the urge for enhancing the gross

enrollment in secondary education, the aspect of quality in education needs to be duly emphasized upon. And with each such development, there is a growing need to equip today's school leaders with necessary knowledge and skill set such that they can exercise their leadership position in the school context and contribute towards the national goal.

In a country like India, where schools are reported to be managed either by a in charge principal or a principal who is far from being professionally qualified, it is imperative of the policy makers to establish standard framework that best meets this urgent need. Professional standards are required to be emphasized upon and urgent measures of implementing the same have to be duly focused.