

# A Profile Of Government Elementary (1-8) School Principal: In The Case Of Adama Woreda in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia, East Africa

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## Abstract:

Elementary school is the fundamental entity of the educational system of any nation that serves approximately major portion of the total school population. Hence the chief responsibility for the efficient operation of elementary school rests on the shoulder of the principal. School principals who are the decision-makers, implement school policies, curricula and monitor faculty performance. The major purpose of this paper is to study the profile of the elementary school principal and assess its effect on the principal ship position. The sample comprises randomly selected 11 newly appointed and 8 out posted principals of elementary schools as well as 53 elementary school teachers in “Adama woreda. 21 Items of questionnaire are framed in accordance with the basic notion and assumptions of the problems. Questionnaire is distributed to a total of 72 respondents of which 70 (59.8%) filled in and returned. Data obtained from the respondents using questionnaire are tabulated, interpreted and analyzed.

This study revealed, Principals’ position is very extensive and obliged to carry responsibilities for leading and directing of such a broad institution needs to pass through extensive training and should obtain the necessary academic qualification and leadership skills. It is observed that the effect of training, years of teaching experience, age and tenure on the leadership are significant in determining the leadership capability of the principal. It is also noted that the newly appointed principals vastly differ from their subordinates in their overall qualification aspects. Prior to resuming the principal ship position the importance of academic qualification, years of teaching experience and professional training is to be considered.

**Keywords:** Elementary schools, principal profile, decision making

## A. Introduction

As it is evident from different research findings the elementary school is the fundamental unit of the school system which may serve approximately about 80 percent of the total school population. Hence the chief responsibility

for the efficient operation of elementary school rests on the shoulder of the principal.

In school where number of personnel and students are smaller administration is relatively simple. But as the number of students and teachers increase, administration likewise grows in complexity and increase in difficulty. The elementary school principal may confront daily with the necessity of solving highly complex problems which may have social, Economic and psychological components. No problem he may face is simple. They also keep an eye on staff’s professional development, school budget, student disciplinary matters and interact with the public as a representative of their school. In some cases there are times when evening works often require. As compared to teachers who often have months of vacation, principals work year-round.

According to Jenson et.al (1967) pointed out regard qualification of elementary school principal, “a principal must have equal or somewhat higher mental ability than his subordinates to function with maximum effectiveness”. Instead of simply promoting an elementary school teacher to a principal ship position it is better to look into the biographical characteristics of a person.

## B. Objectives of the study

*The major objectives of this paper are*

1. *To study the profile of the elementary school principal and assess its effect on the principal ship position.*
2. *To assess the degree of implementation of administrative functions by elementary school teachers*

3. *To assess female participation in principle ship position*
- 4.

### C. **Review of the related literature**

The functions and duties of principal is numerous and varied. Besides the leadership issues that a principal is encountered with are enormous. The exact duties performed by the principal vary depending on the influence of the situations, school size, policies, that efficiency of the principal and other factors with regard to the principal's role.

**Janvis Oscar T. (1969:95) states that “the elementary principal performs many leadership roles. The success which he achieves in his leadership position likely will be directly related to how effective he can be in harmonizing the role expectations of the institution which he heads with that of the need dispositions of his staff, he makes decisions, serves as an agent of change, and delegates authority in fulfillment of his leadership role in an effort to make the goals of the school and these of the teacher's congruent so that the staff can become truly effective and efficient in their professional endeavors”.**

Stoops, Emerge etal (1981:89) underlined that **“the principal's leadership role draws all staff member like a magnet towards an improved educational program. Otherwise sometimes the lack of leadership quality is a wet blanket that stifles teachers' creativity.”** Literature on the subject revealed that a major function of the principal is to weave different units of school activities into a balanced, coordinated and fully functioning factor that can maintain optimum achievement.

Lovell,Join T. (1983:239-40)states that **“ the principal not only provide leadership to indentify and utilize appropriate personal to promote adequate system of psychological &**

**technological support for teachers, but must also participate in the process.”** As is evident from various studies, there has been growing support for the view that the importance of the principal to school quality and improvement is great

Stoops, Emerge etal (1981:91) viewed the functions of principal as a summary statement other then leading, organizing, communicating and supervising schools activity, the principal has to be in charge of activities such as playing the role of a practical psychologist, inspire teachers & motivate the students. He must also be as a financial business manager, prepare the school budget, avoid unnecessary expenditures, administer equipment and supplies, direct the maintenance and operation of the school plant and keep accurate and adequate records of personnel's.

#### **Qualification of elementary school principal**

The duties which principal of elementary school are now expected to perform require outstanding personal qualities, broad academic and professional training and school experience prior to the assumption of administrative responsibilities.

In this regard Beave ,William.C.(1953: 295 - 96) states **“ if the principal of an elementary school is to lead his staff democratically and yet effectively is performing superior educational service for pupils and parents, he must not only posses essential personal qualities, but develop the professional attitudes and abilities that the importance of position demands. ‘As to what should be the qualifications for elementary school principal ship”**

Besides, the needs of a back ground of experience in class room teaching, and comprehensive preserves study of curriculum, methods, and guidance, the principal should early in his career acquire an abundance of specialized training in principals and practice of educational administration. A survey made in the

United States of America by the department of elementary school principal disclosed that 64% of the principal possessed Masters Degree (Spain, Charles R. et al. 1956:41).

The important factors that are related to the appointment trends are the educational level of elementary school principal. According to Jenson, Theodore J. et al (1967:448) views **“it is estimated that at least 85% of the current employed elementary school principals hold the Masters Degree.”** As study had revealed in develop countries, appointment of principal for elementary school most frequently follows successful elementary class room teaching experience.

### **Training of elementary school principal**

In view of the responsibility which the principal of elementary school carry on and the kind of the professional leadership that are expected of him, it seems relevant to examine his training as one index of his qualifications for the position he holds. As study reveals, as organization for administration and supervision of school grow, there exist demands for qualified (trained) elementary school principals who can render the professional leadership services.

Studies made by different writers showed that the need for better preparation on the part of principals increased as they are delegated larger supervisory responsibility and as the general level of training of class room teachers rises.

In this regard to training Lovell, Join T. (1983:76) stated that educational work has become specialized field and the training demanded of the principal, while including that required for class room teaching goes far beyond it.

Glatter, Ron, et al. Ed (1988:43) had viewed that **“though, the principal will not be required to be a specialist; he is expected to have training or preparation in general requirements demanded for all teaching positions in the elementary school principal ship.”** In short individual considering a career in the elementary

school principal ship should therefore acquire a clear conception of the kind of training and the amount required.

### **Certification and appointment of elementary School Principal**

The importance of certification is highly related to elementary school principal ship. It is further evidenced by the fact that some counties require special administrative certificates of those who wish to be principals of elementary schools. , teaching experience along with the eligibility certificate is required by all applicants for a principal post. Besides, a candidate for an elementary school principal’s certificate must have completed a certain amount of college or university education plus obtain elementary school teacher’s certificate.

As studies indicate, process of selection or appointment of principal ship, undertake process of analyzing general impressions of the candidate, while other assign points to personality, general education, professional training, and experience in an effort to give full consideration to all the factors that enter into the success of the principal. And still others make selections on the basis of general impression of the candidate secured in the interview. Some verify favorable impressions by visiting the candidate at work in his/her position when possible.

### **The Effects of age, experience and tenure on the Leadership quality**

No study revealed that there is common conceptualization regarding age contribution to productivity. According to some writers, there is a wide spread belief that productivity declines as age increases. An individual’s skills particularly speed, agility, strength, and coordination decay over time, and prolonged job burden and lack of intellectual stimulation contribute to reduce productivity (Robbins, Stephen P 1989:42).

As a comprehensive analysis of the literature indicates that older workers are more satisfied

with their jobs and have better attendance records as well as less likely to quit.

According to Flippo, Edwin B (1984:76, 550) to retain older workers in job, age discrimination in employment, act passed in 1967 and 1968 respectively. Employment act passed in 1967 prohibited discrimination in employment based upon age with respect to individuals who were at least 40 years of age but less than 65 years where as act 1968 prohibited discrimination against employees between the age of 40 and 65 for reason of age.

However the age discrimination act of 1968 was amended in 1978 and raised the limit to 70 years. Thus, it is curtly illegal to require an employee to retire solely for the reason chronological age prior to reaching 70 years. in general as analysis of different literature indicate, people's age at different rates in terms of performance, energy and creativity. Hence, forced retirement would result in significant losses of real talent.

Studies of elementary school principal show that teaching experience is considered essential in the profession of principals and that teaching experience after assuming the principal ship is frequently regarded as valuable for professional development. As is evident from literature on the subject the length of experience varies according to academic and professional training for the principal.

#### **Required personal characteristics of elementary School principal**

According to Spain, Charles R.et.al (1956: 19) a good leader should display qualities such as high intelligence superior scholarship, enthusiasm, friendliness, affection for people, an abundance of vitality and nervous energy, and a good sense of humor. He adds that elementary school principal should establish for themselves patterns of living which will continually support basic human values and lead to sound emotional growth and intellectual vitality since most of the work of the principal will bring him into contact

with people, he must be well balanced, courteous, and fair in his dealings with others.

#### **Position of women as a leader in educational institution**

The literature on leadership in educational institution of women reveals that, the proportion of women in administrative positions is very low. The scarcity of women participation in administrative positions in education and in other social sectors has contributed a major obstacle to the advancement of many countries.

Rimmer, Charlotte and Bronwyn Devise (1985:157) states that **“in almost every other area of working life, women are underrepresented in managerial positions.”**, Rimmer, Charlotte and Bronwyn Devise (1985 : 159) summarized the typical reasons given for not promoting women and factors why women themselves do not seek promotion respectively as (1) **“women are less likely to be committed to their work (2 ) they are likely to get married and so will stop or at least postpone their career,(3) their main responsibility is to their home, husbands and family, and that these will always come first in their thinking.”** He adds that **“women can't handle responsibility. They are too emotional, they are not natural leaders, they lack confidence in competitive situations and they are not clearly work oriented.”**

In general the majority of studies on leadership style report that women administrators seem to indicate that women may well be at least as effective as men in leadership positions while other studies differentiate between men and women in the competitive situation.

#### **Economic status of elementary school principal**

Jenson, Theodore J.et.al (1967: 450 – 451) underlined that **“ although the advantages of a position and the rewards it offers to an individual cannot be measured entirely by**

money income, it is important that the money income be sufficient to warrant the expenditures for preparation and to enable the individual to maintain a social and economic status commensurate with the position.” As study shows in most developed countries the variations in salary depend upon a variety of factors, such as local policies, cost of living, size of elementary school units, the duties assigned to principals, training and experiences.

Besides, as principals become qualified, their salaries will become more comparable to the income of persons in other professions which demands similar amount of preparation. However, there is no universal salary schedule for the principal that can be used in all situations.

**Effect of marital status and number of depend on managerial Positions**

Even though studies are not available to draw conclusion regarding the effect of marital status on managerial positions, married person holding an administrative position is more response with his /her job of leadership.

On similar condition there are no enough literatures related to the effect of number of dependents on leadership qualities. However, a bit of research emphasis that the number of children an employee has is positively correlated with absence especially among females. Similarly the evidence seems to point to a positive relationship between number of dependents and job satisfaction. Hence, in general number of children can influence the performance of the leadership qualities.

**D. Research methodology adopted**

The major purpose of this paper is to study the profile of the elementary school principal and asses its effect on the principal ship position. The nature of the study is of a descriptive type where the documentary information and questionnaire were employed as tools of data collection .The sample comprises randomly selected 11 newly appointed and 8 out posted principals of

elementary schools as well as 53 elementary school teachers in “Adama wereda 21 Items of questionnaire are framed in accordance with the basic notion and assumptions of the problems. Questionnaire are distributed to a total of 72 respondents of which 70 (59.8%) filled in and returned. Data obtained from the respondents using questionnaire are tabulated, interpreted and analyzed.

Data are analyzed based on the data obtained. The items are arranged in group of five tables based on the major problems of the study.

**E. Result and Interpretation**

**Table I:** Years of experience,

(N = 11 newly appointed, N =8 out posted principals, N= 53 Teachers)

Years of experience	Newly appointed				out posted principals			
	As Teachers principal		As		As teachers Principals		As	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than one year	-	-	8	73	-	-	-	-
1 - 5 years	10	91	2	18	5	62.5	1	12.5
6 - 10 years	1	9	1	9	2	25.5	5	62.5
11 - 15 years	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	2	25.0
greater than 16 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	11	100	11	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0

SOURCE: RESEARCHERS OWN COMPUTATION

With regard to years of experience, 73% of the newly appointed elementary school principals have less than one year of experience. While 62.5% of the out posted principals had six to ten years experience of principal ship positions. Prior to principal ship position 91% of the newly appointed principals have one to five years of teaching experiences. As shown in the table few of the out posted principals that is 12.5% of them had eleven to fifteen years of teaching experience and 25% of them served eleven to fifteen years as elementary school principals.

As the above finding shows, the newly appointed principals have less experience in every aspect compared to the out posted one. Hence, it might be assumed that lack of sufficient experience may contribute to the inefficiency of school performance. However, it is observed from the finding most of the newly appointed principals of “Adama wereda.” Have teaching experience which is frequently regarded as valuable for professional development. It is also further indicated that experience seems to have been given less attention by the supper intendments.

**Table II:-**Respondents’ opinion regarding the degree of implementation of administrative functions. (N = 11 newly appointed principals. N = 8 out posted principals N = 53 teachers).

Administrative functions	RESPONDENTS											
	Newly appointed				Out posted principal				teachers			
	High	moderate	low	Total	High	Moderate	low	Total	high	Moderate	low	Total
Planning	54.5%	655%	–	11 (100)	–	337.5%	561.5%	8100	917%	3668%	815%	53 (100)
Organizing	655%	545%	–	11 (100)	–	337.5%	562.5%	8100	815%	3872%	713%	53 (100)
Co-ordinating	982%	218%	–	11 (100)	112.5%	225%	562.5%	8100	1325%	3260%	815%	53 (100)
Controlling	873%	327%	–	11 (100)	–	337.5%	562.5%	8100	59%	2038%	2853%	53 (100)
Evaluating	764%	436%	–	11 (100)	–	225%	675%	8100	1426%	2751%	1223%	53 (100)

SOURCE: RESEARCHERS OWN COMPUTATION

As show in Table II, respondents have been differing in viewing the degree of implementation of administrative functions. 55% of the newly appointed principals viewed that the degree of implementation is at moderate

level while 62.5% of the out posted principals indicated that the degree of implementation of planning function is low whereas 68% of teachers responded that the level of performance is moderate.

With regard to organizing school activities respondent insignificantly differed. About 55% of the newly appointed principals viewed that their performance in this area is high whereas 45% of them felt that it is moderate. In the other side 62.5% of the out posted principals indicated that the degree of principal’s performance in organizing the school activities is low while the remaining 37.5% acknowledged the level of performance is moderate.

72% of teachers viewed the level is moderate. In viewing degree of coordination, respondents differ significantly. 82% and 60% of the newly appointed principals and teachers indicated respectively that the level of condition is moderate where as 62.5% of the out posted principals viewed that the performance of the school principals in area of co-ordination is low.

73% of the newly appointed principals viewed high while 62.5% and 53% of the out posted principals and teachers respectively indicated that the degree of implementation of controlling activities is low.

With regard to evaluation respondents opinion varies significantly. 64% of the newly appointed principal viewed high while 75% of the out posted principals felt that the performance in the area of evaluation performance is low. Similar opinion (23%) of teachers revealed that the degree of performance is low. On the other hand, 51% of teachers rated moderate.

As it is clearly observed from the finding, respondents opinions regarding the administrative practice are differed significantly. These variation might have come because of (1) fear of loss of power by the newly appointed principals. (2) the newly appointed considered their performance is more satisfactory, (3) the out posted principal and teachers considered

principals as inefficient to carry out the administrative functions, Hence, it seems that the administrative functions are not properly implemented at elementary schools levels.

**Table III:-** Respondents opinion regarding prerequisite requirements of principal ship.

(N = 11 newly appointed principals. N = 8 out posted principals N = 53 teachers).

SOURCE: RESEARCHERS OWN COMPUTATION

As shown in Table III above, the importance of prerequisite requirements such as academic training, teaching experience and Professional

Alternatives	RESPONDENTS					
	New principals		Out posted principal		teachers	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Broad academic training	1	9%	0	–	0	–
Teaching experience	0	–	0	–	0	–
Professional training	0	–	1	12.5	0	–
All of the above	10	91%	7	87.5	53	100
total	11	(100)	8	100	53	100

training are highly essential to be more efficient in order to render professional services.

Data from this investigation show that 91% of 10 newly appointed and 87% of 7 out posted principals and 100% 53 teachers have underlined the efficiency of academic qualification, teaching experience and professional training prior to principal ship position.

**Table IV: -** Respondents view with regard to appointing school principals.

(N = 11 newly appointed principals. N = 8 out posted principals N = 53 teachers).

Alternatives	RESPONDENTS								
	New principals			Out posted principal			Teachers		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Selections	9	2	11	3	5	8	12	41	53
	82	18	100%	37.	62	100	23	77	100

criteria are correct	%	%		5%	.5%		%	%	
Seniority must be given priority	6	5	11	6	2	8	44	9	53
	55%	45%	100%	75%	25%	100	83%	17%	100
Age and tenure can be effective in productivity than younger employees	7	4	11	6	2	8	45	8	53
	64%	36%	100%	75%	25%	100	85%	15%	100

SOURCE: RESEARCHERS OWN COMPUTATION

As shown in Table IV above, 82% of the newly appointed principals (9) viewed that criteria used to select elementary school principal is correct but 62.5% of the out posted principals responded that the selection method is not correct. Similarly, 77% of teachers have similar (not correct) views with that of out posted principals.

In relation to seniority aspects the respondents nearly have similar opinions. That is 55% of the newly appointed, 75% of out posted principals and 83% of teachers supported the idea of giving priority for seniority during appointing a person for a principal ship position. Nevertheless, insignificant percent of the respondents opposed the idea of giving priority for seniority. In this regard 45% of newly appointed, 25% of out posted principal and 17% of teachers voiced against giving priority for seniority.

As shown in the same Table IV above, respondents have viewed that tenure and older individuals could be effective in performing well. As it is clearly observed from the data tabulated, 64% of the newly appointed, 75% of the out posted principals and 85% of teachers indicated that relation of employees for longer period would benefit the organization whereas some respondents (36% , 25% and 15% respectively) are against such opinions.

**Table V:-** Respondents view regarding Female participation in principal ship position

(N = 11 newly appointed principals. N = 8 out posted principals N = 53 teachers).

Alternative	Respondents					
	Very high	High	Low	Very low	Total	%
Newly appointed principals	0	0	0	11 100%	11	100
Outposted principal	0	0	1 12.5%	7	8	100
Teachers	–	1	4 8%	53	53	100

SOURCE: RESEARCHERS OWN COMPUTATION

With respect to females’ participation in principal ship positions, the majority of the respondents have voiced that female participation is very low compared to males.

As shown in Table V above, 100% of the newly appointed and 87.5% of the out posted principals as well as 92% of teachers viewed that females’ participation in principal ship positions is very low. Similar findings in other studies have revealed that in every type of work females are underrepresented. This could be a signal that would awaken policy makers and government bodies to make more efforts to encourage in-order to increase female’s participation in every type of position too.

#### F. CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

Elementary school is the fundamental entity of the educational system of any nation that serves approximately about 80 percent of the total school population. Hence the chief responsibility for the efficient operation of elementary school rests on the shoulder of the principal.

In a school where number of personnel and students are smaller administration is relatively simple. But as the number of students and teachers increase, administration likewise grows in complexity and increase in difficulty. Consequently, school principals confront daily with the necessity of solving highly complex problems which may have social, Economic and psychological components. It could be assumed that no problem he/she may face is simple.

Strong leadership skills requires to becoming a school principal. School principals, are the decision-makers who implement school policies, curricula and monitor faculty performance. They are obliged to serve as leaders as well as supervisors of schools. Principals manage and assist teachers and all other staff the school they are leading. They also keep an eye on staff’s professional development, school budget, student disciplinary matters and interact with the public as a representative of their school. In some cases there are times when evening works often require. As compared to teachers who often have months of vacation, principals work year-round

As study on this subject reveals, Principals’ position is very extensive and obliged to carry responsibilities for leading and directing of such a broad institution needs to pass through extensive training and should obtain the necessary academic qualification and leadership skills. It thus obligatory that before promoting an elementary school teacher to a principal ship positions it is better to deeply look into the uniqueness of the candidates in line with abilities of implementation of the administrative functions.

As it is revealed in this study too, the effect of training, years of teaching experience, age and tenure on the leadership are significant in determining the leadership capability of the principal. From what has been discussed in the preceding chapters, it could be learnt that the profile of elementary school principals in “Adama wereda” are tend to be young male undergone short term professional trainings. It is noted that the newly appointed principals are vastly differ from their subordinates in their overall qualification aspects. This study has also revealed that the importance of academic qualification, years of teaching experience and professional training prior to resume the principal ship position is highly underlined. In

light of the basic questions the following conclusions are drawn.

1. As it has been observed from the findings obtained based on the biographical characteristics of the newly appointed of elementary school principals, the majority of them seem to lack maturity in administrative skills to carry out administrative functions
2. The variety of roles that the principals are compelled to assume seem make a heavy demand on the importance of academic qualification, class room teaching experience and professional training prior to the assumption of principal ship position.
3. Opinions of the respondents regarding the capability of the principals to implement the administrative functions seem differed significantly. The difference might have come because,
  - (1) Fear of loss of power by the newly appointed principals.
  - (2) The newly appointed principals considered their performance is acceptable one
  - (3) The out posted principals and teachers consider the newly appointed principals as in efficient to carry out the administrative functions.
  - (4) Even though there is no reliable findings that female differences in problem solving ability, the position of females in elementary school principal ship seem hardly exist.

#### G. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings the following recommendations are forwarded hoping that the concerned bodies would give attention and modify them or otherwise.

1. As it is observed from the data obtained based on sex distribution of the elementary school principal, females' are

hardly represented. Hence, in order to encourage their participation in managerial position, promotion of females should be given attention.

2. Various studies indicate that experience increases productivity. But as it is revealed in this study experience seems not given much attention. Hence, in-order to consider the importance of experience, priority should be given for an employee who has better experience.
3. The study indicated that the concerned elementary school principals seem in efficient to implement administrative functions. Therefore in order to improve the efficiency of the principals, professional training should be considered.
4. Regarding prerequisite requirements (training) majority of respondents viewed that adequately trained person is efficient to render professional services. But as it is revealed in this study, most of elementary school principals are not well trained in administrative functions. Hence, further training in all aspects may improve the conditions .
5. It is observed that the way a new elementary school principal is appointed is not matching with what the school environment demands. So it advisable if appointing principal be in accordance with the kind of principal that professional task demands.

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