What is Under the Layer: Leadership Practices of Public School Headteachers in Pakistan

Nishat Riaz and Shahida Sultan

Bahria University, Islamabad

There is a strong consensus in the literature about the key role of school leadership for the improvement and promotion of students' learning outcomes in secondary schools. British Council Pakistan conducted a study to identify the situation of school leadership practices in Pakistan between 2015 and 2016. This situational analysis involved selected government secondary schools in Islamabad, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Sindh and Balochistan. The study aimed at documenting good practices, lessons learnt and challenges concerning school leadership practices. The purpose of the study was to help inform policies and practice on school leadership; and add to existing body of knowledge around school leadership. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data collection. In-depth, one-to-one interviews with 15 preselected headteachers were conducted using interview guide in line with qualitative case study method. To enrich data collection, an online questionnaire was also developed and distributed to around 2600 teachers and headteachers through BC schools network. The findings from the case studies reflected that there are positive aspects of school leaders. These aspects appear to be similar across the country; for example having a strong moral commitment to inculcate patriotism and good citizenship values among students; distributing day to day administrative tasks among school teachers to encourage teamwork; improving school physical environment; and having a clear focus on co-curricular activities. However, at the same time, it was found that headteachers had a limited focus on academic development. This might lead to oversight towards emphasis on teacher collaboration for professional learning, curriculum enrichment activities and promoting conducive learning environment for students. There is a clear rationale to unfold and identify challenges and the underlying factors hindering headteachers academic leadership. Based on results, it is therefore recommended to conduct further research. The series of proposed research pieces are expected to contribute and help develop a holistic understanding of academic leadership, which is essential for improving learning outcomes for all students and ultimately enabling them for a successful life; both in personal and professional careers.

Keywords: academic leadership, learning outcomes, good practices, gaps

There is a strong consensus in the literature about the key role of school leadership for school improvement and for promoting students' learning outcomes. For example, Day et al., (2010) assert that headteachers are more effective schools are successful in improving pupil outcomes through their personal values, dispositions, attributes and competences and by using more suitable

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Nishat Riaz, Director Education British Council Pakistan PhD Scholar, Bahria University, Islamabad (nishat.riaz@britishcouncil.org.pk)
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and specific strategies for school improvement according to their unique contexts in which they work (Day et al., 2010). Most studies have been conducted in the developed world and there is limited research evidence available in the context of Pakistan to guide leadership polices and practice.

In spite of the government commitment to Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) earlier and now Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs), Pakistan still lags behind in meeting the targets of Education For All. Education Statistics reveal that enrolment in primary schools has seen a steady decline over recent years. Of all primary age children (5-9 years), only 68% are enrolled in primary school, with wide variations across provinces and between boys and girls. Even for those children that are enrolled, transition from one level of education to the next is not certain. Apart from Punjab and ICT, where only 80% of children progress from primary to lower secondary levels and the problem persists between lower and higher secondary school levels. Learning outcomes for children are significantly low. Therefore, a focus on school leadership is essential to ensure a positive change in school leadership practices towards improving learning outcomes for all children.

British Council Pakistan works with government and private schools in Pakistan by providing a range of professional development and leadership courses designed for teachers and schools leaders. It is expected that these programmes will help contribute to improve quality of learning outcomes for all children. Therefore, British Council values and provides technical assistance to understand and enhance the quality of education through teacher training and continued professional development. Working in over 100 countries around the world- BC utilises the evidence and research to help design and implement programmes that represent on-ground realities and are workable in practical contexts. In this connection, British Council commissioned a study to identify the situation of school leadership practices in Pakistan between 2015 and 2016. This situational analysis involved government secondary schools in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Sindh and Baluchistan.

Literature Review
A thorough review of the recent relevant and available local and global literature was carried out to identify current trends in school leadership practices and to develop a theoretical framework for designing tools for the study.

It was learnt from the review that most of the studies were conducted as small-scale case studies in specific geographic contexts in Pakistan. Also, the previous research pieces were focused more around the leadership styles and approaches of the headteachers, whereas this study sought answers to more practical questions. Questions like how headteachers perform as leaders to bring about change for school improvement. It is therefore, expected that the findings will contribute to knowledge gap by generating findings on good practices and challenges in school leadership.

Below is a brief description of themes that emerged from literature review.

Understanding School Leadership in the Global Context
Leadership plays a key role in improving school effectiveness. Harris (2003) argues that "While the education challenges are considerable and the route to reform is complex, the potential of leadership to influence pupil and school performance is unequivocal" (p.9). School effectiveness

research proves that effective leadership has a positive impact on students' learning outcomes (Leithwood, & Steinbach, 2002).

Mostly studies and known effective leadership models include: *Transformational* leadership (Burns, 1978; Leithwood, Doris, & Steinbach, 1999) is considered to have a direct and an indirect effect on teachers' teaching and their commitment to change. *Moral leadership* (Sergiovanni, 1992) focuses on moral purpose of leadership where leaders show an altruistic motivation to make a difference in the learners' lives. Fullan (2001) argues for moral purpose of leadership and that the best leaders create "learning communities" (Retallick et al., 1999; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000) to transform schools. *Pedagogical leadership* emphasizes building social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers (Sergiovanni, 1998). Recently, distributive leadership has been identified to have a positive impact on students learning (e.g. Hargreaves and Fink, 2008; Harris, 2008). Harris (2011) states that collective or *distributive leadership* is a contributor to organisational growth and success. Begley (2010) focuses on *moral leadership* and argues that school administrators today need to understand basic purpose of education in their context and make right and relevant decisions and do more focused activities for school improvement.

A practical framework on school leadership is the report from Leithwood et al., (2006) titled *seven strong claims about successful school leadership* now advanced as 10 claims about successful leadership by Day, et al., (2010). The seven claims provide clear guidelines to assess leadership roles and practices in total pragmatic settings.

Brining the focus back to the country context, following are some of the emerging themes on school leadership from the literature available in the context of Pakistan.

Leadership Research in Pakistan
Personal and Contextual Influences on Headteachers *Leadership Styles*
A range of studies carried out in the context of Pakistan reveal that personal and contextual values of the headteachers influence their leadership practices. These practices are relevant in cultivating a school culture, establishing structures, and fostering relationships with school communities. For example, Baig (2011) found in his study that the school culture seemed to reflect many of the values the two headteachers upheld. Earlier, Tim Simkins et. al. (2003) found that national culture and community expectations, personal history and organisational culture and systems were important variables in influencing leadership behaviour. A number of other studies conducted in Pakistan also confirm the same findings (e.g., Tajik, 2013; Khaki, 2013; Law, Walker & Dimmock 2003).

Moral Leadership and Having a Clear Vision for Education
Khaki (2013) found that the headteachers acted as *prophetic professionals* as they were running their schools professionally while balancing both their moral and professional roles. He further states, "the principals in his study led their schools with singularity of mind, totality of heart, and a missionary spirit (p.123)". Tajik (2013) asserts that one of educational leaders in his study, had a strategy of moral persuasion and he acted as a moral agent of change to bring about improvement in the school system. Literature from developed countries also reconfirms the importance of moral leadership for school leaders. For example, Begley (2010) says that school administrators today

confront as routines work a veritable quagmire of reform initiatives and most often they do wasteful tasks and become vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by external activities.

Headteachers' Democratic Approach and Distributed Leadership

Khan, Ahmad & Iqbal (2014) found that effective headteachers delegated powers to teachers; they knew what teachers do in the class and thereby evaluated teachers' performance logically. Niazi (2012) conducted a study on the impact of leadership behaviours of headteacher on teachers' collaborative learning. concluded that there was a sign of improvement in the educational system and their teachers were also satisfied in situations where headteachers were cooperative and enthusiastic . In terms of distributed leadership practices in developed countries, Harris (2010) states that collective or distributive leadership is a contributor to organisational growth and success.

Leadership for Learning /Instructional Leadership

Khan, Ahmed & Iqbal (2014) observed that headteachers intervention make considerable difference towards school improvement efforts by focussing on students' progress. Tajik (2013) and Khaki (2013) assert that effective educational leaders focussed on teacher development and students learning mostly putting them in the centre of educational change and engaging them in cooperative learning, inquiry and reflective practice in schools. They focused on creating a conducive environment for learning in their schools. Niqab et. al. (2014) found that the private school headteachers provided more focussed support to students and teachers for effective learning than government teachers. Memon (2003) also found that the headteachers of government schools in his study were primarily engaged with financial and administrative matters and they rarely spend any time on improving quality of education and creating learning environment in schools.

Relationship with School Community

A number of studies found that effective headteachers has a close relationship with the school communities within the school and outside the school as well (e.g., Khaki, 2013, Niqab, 2014; Baig, 2011). The nature of relationship includes several activities headteachers carryout with communities for involving them in school development process. Niqab (2014) states that when instructional leaders keep ties with local community, they can solve most of the problems through consultation. Baig (2011) found that in his case, the headteachers participated in several community gatherings to interact with parents and communities. Further, they had established a formal system of keeping parents engaged. For example, parents were invited on open days to discuss problems. They sought parents support for organizing annual sports days as well. They also invited parents for discussing their children's' progress.

Leadership Capacities /Training and Qualification

Memon (2013) argues that, "majority of the school heads in Pakistan are developed through an apprenticeship model and seemed to be more task oriented than leadership oriented (p.290)". He further says that these heads are not ready to face uncertain situation to solve the problems with informed decisions and thus they end up dong managerial tasks. Similar studies (e.g., Niqab et. al., 2014) found that leadership training was essential for a headteachers to run a school efficiently. Alam (2012) explored that the trained teachers had become more effective because of their increased skills in reflective practices and analytical thinking.

Method

The study was conducted by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods and tools. The tools were designed in line with the emerging themes from literature. Online questionnaires were sent to 3000 teachers and head teachers in all the provinces, out of which 2600 responses were received. Most of the schools participated in the online research were BC partner schools. These schools were selected based on the criteria that they had access to internet and had the wiliness and skills to complete the tool. In total 15 in-depth interviews were held with head teachers to generate qualitative data to support overall findings. This whole exercise provided a reasonable snapshot of school leadership issues and opportunities across the country. This paper particularly focuses on the qualitative aspect of the study, on 15 interviews, to identify lessons learnt from the study.

Creswell (2012) describes qualitative research to be suitable to address a research problem in which one does not know the variables and need to explore. Further, in qualitative research, the researcher focuses on understanding the phenomenon by collecting the data from the participants through interviews and audiotapes which are analysed line by line to interpret meaning (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative approach is justified in this case also because rapid social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives that deductive methods fail to reveal the local perspectives and realities (Geertz 1983, cited in Flick, 2009).

To bring a global lens and add balanced views to the study, British Council developed a team of two lead researchers; an education consultant based in Pakistan and the second one from the UK. The research was facilitated by BC network of school contacts across the country. Due to easy access and availability of data, the research process was completed within a couple of months. To ensure quality, a lead researcher from the British Council research department in Pakistan kept supporting the research' team through technical inputs and quality assurances.

The Participants

Out of total 15 headteachers, there were eight male and seven female headteachers. All the headteachers had more than 10 years of experience as school leaders with a minimum qualification of B.Ed with Masters in Education and few with M.Phils. and Ph.Ds.

Data Collection Tools, Methods and Analysis

Tools and questions: The tool was comprised of open ended questions i.e.; how they view leadership and what is the vision for their school? What duties they perform as head teachers on daily basis? How headteachers ensure staff participation in professional development? How they view student leadership and what they do for it? How community and parents are being involved in school? How the district education department supported schools?

Interviews: Eleven interviews were held face to face in the schools while four interviews were held telephonically as schools could not be visited due to some emergent security issues. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Interviews were mostly in Urdu and in the local dialects which were translated into English without distorting the actual meanings and expressions.

Documents such as meetings minutes, policy documents, memos and posters and photographs were collected and analysed to collect evidence.Data analysis was iterative which began

on the initiation of one on one interviews. Field notes were transcribed and shared with the colleague researchers for discussion. The transcribed data was then analysed according to the questions. Emerging themes were categorized broadly under common good practices, gaps and challenge and differences.

Limitations

Some of the research sites could not be visited due to fragile and uncertain security situation, for example, Quetta in Balochistan. Long distances and time constraints were also limitations during the study in some cases. This led to lack of direct observation of the school environment and face to face interviews with the headteachers in few cases. This might have a constraint and limiting impact on the findings of case studies in specific instances.

Summary of The Findings

The following table presents common good practices, gaps, challenges and differences about the leadership practices of the headteachers, which emerged from the study.

Figure 1.

Commonalities and Differences

	Common Good Practices	Common Gaps	Common Challenges
Commonalities	• Moral commitment to students wellbeing and success • Focus on improving physical environment of school • Focus on team work and delegation of tasks to teachers • Daily monitoring of school activities • Celebration of events and holding co-curricular activities • Involvement of School Managements Committees(SMCs) in budget related decision making	• Absence of inbuilt school based systems to improve pedagogy and enrichment of curriculum • Lack of school based support for staff professional development • Lack of focus on strategic planning for school development • Lack of participation of parents and community in curricular and co-curricular activities	• Lack of effective monitoring and support mechanisms by the district education departments • Lack of parental awareness about their children's education particularly girls education • Poverty, child labour and students absenteeism.
Regional Differences	**External Impetus Leading to Good Leadership Practices** • Headteachers of the selected schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, KP and ICT demonstrated a clear focus on improving pedagogy and students' learning outcomes. When it was further explored, it was learnt that there was external support available for schools from government or non-government organizations through school improvement programmes. These initiatives engaged headteachers in instructional leadership where they had a focus on teacher professional development and students learning activities. **Regional Challenges Faced by the Headteachers** • It was learnt that there was a lack of focus for girls education in AJK, GB and Baluchistan by parents and communities • In both schools in the inner city of Karachi, headteachers faced issues such as lack of cooperation from parents for their children's education. There were issues of child labor as well. According to the headteachers, parents thought that schooling has no value since it doesn't help children in getting any kind of employment as they grow up. • In Baluchistan, the headteacher was facing a key challenge from Madrasa school system which was more influential among parents. Madrasas attracted young male students towards madrasa education which increased absenteeism and dropout in regular schools.		

Findings and Discussion: Common Good Practices

The section presents common themes emerged from the study. This includes examples of good practices, gaps, key differences and challenges.

The interviews with the headteachers revealed the following themes as common good practices across all schools

Commitment to Making the School and Students Successful

All headteachers expressed their feelings that they wished their schools to become *successful* schools. They wished their students to become successful in their studies and in their lives as well. They further focused on moral purpose of education to develop Islamic principles and good citizenship qualities in students*:*

> *We are answerable to Allah for our deeds and responsibilities. When our students become successful, it is a big source of motivation for us… I have studied from this school and I have personal affiliation with it and I want to give it back by providing my services to the school. I wish to see it growing into a successful and well known educational institution (Male Headteacher AJK).*
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> *We focus on students grooming by teaching them social skills and Islamic values. For example, greeting your elders, thanking Allah for his blessings, becoming helpful to others. Our students are blood donors as well. We also invite doctors for lectures on different health topics (Male Headteacher GB).*
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> *Our children come from poor and uneducated families who highly deserve and who solely depend on our teachers. I wish them to learn everything in school so that they are satisfied and there should be no need for them to depend on their parents (Female Headteacher AJK)*
>
> *Our vision is to develop students with excellent performance, focussing on their ethical development and providing an attractive environment for students (Female Headteacher GB)*

A Focus on Improving School Physical Environment

Most of the headteachers believed in attractive and colourful physical environment. They considered it necessary for motivating parents and children towards school and education. Therefore, they had taken many initiatives to improve the infrastructure. For example, renovation of buildings, construction of classrooms and boundary walls. However, there were still a few schools where the situation of the school building was not good with broken windows, no lightings and no displays on walls.

> *We have provided all the possible facilities to students for their effective education. We have art and music centre, electric workshops, wood workshop, agriculture workshop…we have play group where we have games and play equipment for children….we have computer lab… we are making every effort to make the environment attractive and conducive for learning for all children. The president of Pakistan visited the school last time. He could not believe that it was a government school. He thought it was a private school (Male Headteacher AJK).*
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> *I provided basic facilities in terms of school environment …its aesthetically beautiful now…all building was renovated… walls painted…the school is shining … there was no space for support staff to sit… I built an equally beautiful room for them which matches with the actual building. Our school doesn't look like a government school; it looks like Beacon House School (Female Headteacher Punjab).*

Team Work, Teacher Motivation and Task Delegation

All headteachers without any exception expressed an appreciation for teamwork. They delegated activities related to academic administration among teachers and made them responsible to deliver it. Further, they involved them in decision making. *sub ko saath le kar chalna hey*. "*Take everyone along with you*" was one of the expressions came from almost all the headteachers. Another view that strongly emerged from the interviews was that headteachers' belief in understanding their staff needs, recognising their talents and dividing tasks among them as per their interests was important for effective team work.

> *I deal with staff as family members…sometimes I give them examples from God Almighty and from the life of the Holy Prophet as (Khuda aur Rasool ka wasta deta hun). There was one teacher who was not punctual and he was transferred to my school as punishment but now he is working with interest in my school. Once the EDO came and he saw the teacher dusting the school flower pots… the EDO could not believe that he was the same teacher (Male Headteacher KPK).*

> *We give awards to best performing teachers in the form of certificates and mementoes within the school. Awards are given to best teachers who lead co-curricular activities as well. Our students won best Shairi (poetry) award at provincial level… previously my teachers lacked ownership of the school…It has taken me 8 years to make my team and to motivate them for improving professionalism … many challenges faced in the way but that always pushed us forward. If we have a determined and honest goal, challenges help us grow otherwise we are stagnant (Male Headteacher Baluchistan).*

However, it was observed that tasks were mostly related to administrative and co-curricular activities. There was very little focus on activities related to teaching and learning.

Daily Monitoring of School Activities

Almost all headteachers said that they spent 70% of their time on monitoring daily school activities which included academic and non-academic activities:

Figure 2: Daily Routine

Academic Administration and Monitoring	Daily Time
• Taking round of classes to check if all teachers are present	70%
• Ensuring that alternate teachers are arranged for classes if any teachers are absent	
• Checking that teachers take classes on time	
• Checking that teachers organise their classrooms well and maintaining discipline	
• Checking students' homework to ensure that homework is given and properly checked by teachers.	
• Checking that teachers conduct co-curricular activities as planned	
Non-academic Monitoring	**Daily Time**
• Monitoring of construction work and security situation where needed	30%
• Coordinating with PTA/SMC for construction and renovation work mostly	
• Correspondence with Department	
• Desk or office work including record keeping	
• Planning and coordinating key events / activities	

Findings and Discussion
A Lack of Clear Focus on Curriculum Enrichment and Students Learning Outcomes

Literature on effective school leadership confirms that effective school leaders have a clear focus on improving students learning outcomes. However, it was observed particularly   in non-BC partner schools that headteachers appeared to be less engaged with teaching and learning practices. During the interview, there was no mention of any school based initiatives to improve classroom instructions, enhancing students' life skills and providing carrier counselling opportunities for students to ensure their smooth transition to next level of education or career. Though the schools arranged many co-curricular activities, they were not geared towards individual achievements and learning outcomes of the students. When headteachers were asked how they ensured learning outcomes for all students, they came up with the following hindrances and challenges which were common in poor urban settings and in rural areas mostly.

> *We are facing a big challenge in terms of students' absenteeism … crop harvesting times are more problematic because children help their parents in the fields. We wish to give them extra time for their learning improvement but they do not come to school to attend extra classes. In the evenings they go to madrasa for religious education which is another challenge for us…they never miss madrasa but they miss school…there are trends to follow the madrasa more and follow extremist views… we try to have dialogue with them (parents) in a peaceful manner …we cannot force them…otherwise it will create problems for all of us…even they take 5 years old children and train them in madrasa… our voice is very weak in front of the religious authorities of madrasa (Male Headteacher Baluchistan).*
> *We want children to learn but we face many challenges ourselves… young girls are married off in class 9th or 10th. Parents do not take their girls education seriously. Parents think that girls' education is not important as they are supposed to look after family. We go to their homes to motivate them to send their girls to school .. children do not bring books…they do not do homework… girls even drop their board exam paper (Female Headteacher AJK, a rural school).*
> *I have poor children who mostly work to support their parents in making their living. They often remain absent from school. Girls mostly work as cleaners in other homes helping their mothers and boys work with their fathers in the streets who work as hawkers, vendors and labourers. I want to give them some good skills such as embroidery, cutting and cooking so that they earn an honourable living. (Female Headteacher Karachi)*

A Lack of Support for Staff Professional Development

School based professional development opportunities for teachers are central to improve professional practices of teachers. Spillane & Louis (2002) suggest that without an understanding of the knowledge necessary for teachers to teach well – content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, content-specific pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge and knowledge of learners – school leaders will be unable to perform essential school improvement functions such as monitoring instructions and supporting teacher development (cited in Day & Sammon, 2013).

Most of the headteachers interviewed did not seem to be aware of and gone through structured and regular activities for professional development. There was a lack of evidence of teacher's lesson planning.

I want to give more time to teaching and supporting staff but I cannot focus due to time constrain and other office activities. Also, we do not have any systems for teacher assessment and monitoring to support teachers. Our department does not give us any mechanism. I briefly visited classrooms, check student's classwork. I also discuss professional development topics in staffroom when we have time. Professional Development Centre North (PDCN) whole school improvement programme was really good. It helped us a lot on teacher training. I wish the government dependent or any other organization could give my teachers more training like this (Female Headteacher GB) We have no school based professional sessions and training. Some teachers make lesson plans but not all of them. Primary teachers cannot make lesson plans as they are not qualified. (Female Headteacher AJK)

Lack of Focus on Strategic Planning / School Development Planning

Strategic leadership is one of the key factors of effective leadership. However, a significant number of headteachers seem to overlook strategic planning for school development. Out of 11 schools personally visited, only one school had a whole school improvement plan. It was a school in GB which was a partner school of AKU-IED. However, most of the BC partner schools had a well-developed annual school calendar. Generally, there is a lack of focus on school based strategic planning/school development planning based on the concept of whole school improvement.

Most of school heads did not have any school leadership training. They acted as administrators simply maintaining the status quo then initiating and institutionalizing any activities for educational change (Memon, p. 285, 2013).

Lack of Community and Parental Participation in School Activities

All schools had a functional School Management Committee (SMC). These committees seem to support headteachers in non-academic matters. The activities were mostly around improvement of school physical environment and utilisation of funds. Parents were invited to participate in school events such as annual parents' days. However, parents and school partnerships can be stronger for mutual benefits and learning. Further research needs to be carried out to explored successful models of parents and school partnership in public school settings.

Lack of Academic Support from District Education Offices

Headteachers show their dissatisfaction with the department for lack of academic support and ineffective monitoring.

They visit once in the year…sometimes they even do not visit in two years…when they come they check record and also ask questions from students about the taught lessons. There is no support for teachers' professional development (Female Headteacher *AJK)*

The department supports us in settling teacher issues. But sometimes they also feel helpless to deal with teachers issues who are politically influential and pressurize the department to make decisions in their favour (Male Headteacher *AJK)*

You (researcher) should reframe your question to ask how the department robs you…bribery is a better word. They embezzle the allocated budget. Corruption of all kind is at its peak…teachers use their political power and make postings of their own choice. (Male headteachers *Sindh)*

They visit my school frequently and they are pleased with my school performance. they ask me to develop other schools as models like this… I tell that they should use my experience as a head to develop at least ten schools in the cluster (Male headteachers *KPK).*

They do monthly visit and check student's homework copies, ask questions from them… We have annual inspections as well…where they spend the whole day in school and check all aspects of school. Provincial government has announced cash awards of Rs. 50000 for best performing teachers and Rs. 100,000 for best performing headteachers*. But if the performance is not good, no increment will be given to teachers…there is internal monitoring unit who does through inspection of school using tools. But one problem is that we do not have any proper support from them to improve weak areas of teachers and students. This is really worrying for us (Male Headteacher KPK).*

Regional Differences

Data from different regions (GB, AJK, KP, Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan) demonstrates that the style and situation of leadership varies in many aspects. It also appears that the style of governance and the vision of the political leaders of the provinces has a visible impact on school leadership practices as well. For example, in KPK, Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) as a political party in power has a clear focus on improving the governance and accountability of education, which is reflected in schools. However, this needs further study and robust evidence needed to establish the link between the two factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- The study found that almost all the headteachers demonstrated some positive practices as school leaders. These include having a moral commitment towards well-being and success of their students; a focus on improving school environment, team work and delegation of tasks to teachers; and organising a variety of co-curricular activities for students. There is a need to develop networking of schools where headteachers share good practices, reflect over changes and learn from each other

- Common gaps were found in terms of lack of focus on teaching and learning, professional development of staff and school based professional planning. Headteachers capacities need to be developed to enhance their academic leadership skills so they can take school based initiatives for improving students learning outcomes.

- Parents and communities should be involved more in curricular and co-curricular activities so that they have an increased awareness on importance of education to support their children.

- Post 18th Amendment, provincial and district departments are responsible to develop and implement educational reforms to ensure education of all children. However, the relevant departments appeared to to lack the will and the capacity to do so. There is a need to study the role and capacity of the provincial and district education department for future planning.

- Government provincial department of education need to develop partnerships with local public and private organizations to develop students support programmes at school level

- Further research is required for better understanding of issues around school leadership. These are linked and inter-dependent and no limited to: gender and leadership; external support through educational reforms and its impact on leadership practices; how political systems and style of governance of a particular province can have an impact on school leadership practices.

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