

## WHOLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (WSIP): A FEMALE HEADTEACHER, SERVING IN PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

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### ABSTRACT

The research centered on delving into the experiences of a female headteacher in a public school who participated in a WSIP initiative and effectively implemented its teachings within her educational institution. This initiative stands as a flagship program of AKU-IED, PDCN in the specific context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Its aim is to introduce educational reforms in the region through formal in-person and distance education modes for headteachers.

The results revealed that the WSIP intervention wielded a substantial influence over the female headteacher's professional methodologies. This led to a transformation in her mindset and a noticeable enhancement of her skills. The headteacher displayed a heightened commitment to refining learning environments, specifically underscoring the significance of community involvement, fostering team cohesion, and motivating educators to attain greater results. She also displayed an increased awareness of the developmental needs of students, including portfolios development, cultivating interactive learning classrooms, and introducing innovative assessment protocols. Notably, she encountered no discernible obstacles to leveraging her professional capabilities despite her gender.

The research suggests that greater consideration should be devoted to the role of female headteachers in initiatives aimed at enhancing learning. The effectiveness of such endeavors is profoundly intertwined with their active engagement. Augmenting the competencies of headteachers in this regard could potentially optimize student performance, particularly team-building and improved academic results. Collectively, this study underscores the noteworthy influence of the WSIP intervention on the professional methodologies of a female headteacher, serving in a government school situated in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Distance Education, Instructional Leader, Curriculum Leader, WSIP, CELM, Conducive Environment

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right that should be accessible to all, regardless of gender. Historically, women have faced numerous barriers when it comes to pursuing education. However, with the advent of distance education, a powerful tool for overcoming these obstacles, multiple challenges have been resolved up to a certain magnitude.

Distance education has emerged as a great means for promoting gender equality and empowering women. By providing access to education, flexibility, safety, and the means to overcome social and cultural barriers, distance education has the potential to transform the lives of countless women worldwide. As women gain education and economic

independence, they become catalysts for positive change within their families and communities. Therefore, investing in distance education for women is not only a matter of individual empowerment but also a step towards a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

Sensing the role of school principals, especially women in such positions, it becomes essential to offer a range of capacity-building options, whether in-person or through distance learning methods. The primary objective of these interventions is to furnish these educational leaders with comprehensive knowledge and insight into the significant responsibilities they undertake within a school environment. As the primary professionals at the forefront of educational institutions, school heads bear a greater load of responsibilities compared to other team members. They are required to assume a multitude of roles that change frequently throughout the day. Concurrently, within a single day's operations, these leaders take on various personas, including that of a manager, administrator, instructional leader, pedagogical leader, curriculum leader, and coach (Day, 2004). These diverse roles necessitate a delicate balancing act to ensure the seamless operation of the school. This challenge is amplified for female leaders who also juggle certain maternal obligations. At times, school heads delegate specific roles to teachers due to prolonged engagements in particular tasks, which ultimately affects the teaching methods employed by educators.

In such scenarios, it becomes essential for the headteacher to maintain an adaptable approach to both academic and non-academic responsibilities, all aimed at enhancing the school's performance. According to Smith (2008), effective school leaders, who act as catalysts for change, cannot confine themselves to mere managerial roles. In the contemporary landscape, "school leadership is characterized by higher demands and dynamism. A principal must embody a distinct profile" (p.242).

Recognizing the pivotal roles of headteachers, various donor agencies, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and public-sector institutions have introduced diverse initiatives for enhancing schools' effective roles in the Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan region. These organizations offer both center-based and customized distance education courses to headteachers, targeting improvements in schools located in remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. Through these initiatives, they aim to elevate educational standards through innovative strategies. Given their role as change agents, the success of these initiatives hinges largely on the skills of headteachers, as they are directly or indirectly responsible for implementing these initiatives within their schools. As Fullan (2001) notes, "the principal has historically been the 'gatekeeper' of change, often determining the fate of external innovations or internal teacher-led initiatives" (p.59).

In Gilgit-Baltistan, the Professional Development Centre North (PDCN) stands as the leading institution in the educational realm. Operating since 1999, this institution serves the educational landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan and is an integral part of AKU-IED, focusing on the northern context of Pakistan. The institution aspires to be a leading and widely acknowledged academic establishment, especially in the realm of professional development for education. It aims to positively impact the socio-economic conditions of the northern territory through fostering peace, harmony, and unity. The institution's functions encompass leadership and management training for school heads, middle and senior managers, curriculum enrichment, and research (Kanji & Ali, 2006). To realize this vision, the institution dedicates significant attention to enhancing the capabilities of headteachers in both public and private schools across Gilgit-Baltistan.

Since 2000, the institution has adopted a tailored WSIP model (see figure one) that places considerable emphasis on providing professional training for school heads. In this context, it creates avenues and environments to involve headteachers, particularly female leaders

from project schools, in transformative reform activities, proposing in-person and distance education courses. During its inception phase till date, the institution has served over 1000 schools across all the 10 districts of Gilgit-Baltistan, including the district of Diamer, Hunza, Ghizer, Skardu, Gangche, and Astore. These services persist, with numerous headteachers and teachers of all genders enhancing their professional competencies and bringing visible improvements to their schools. These improvements encompass areas such as academic achievement of students, increased participation of parents and communities in school affairs, effective team-building initiatives by school heads and teachers, and advancements in the physical infrastructure of the schools.

Given this context, the study aims to delve into the perceptions and experiences of headteachers regarding the WSIP initiative. Specifically, it focuses on exploring the post-participation experiences of a female headteacher from a public school, who has successfully translated the acquired knowledge into practice within her school setting.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study transcends the immediate audience of school headteachers, encompassing a broader spectrum of stakeholders including policymakers, educational researchers, and interested parties committed to enhancing educational practices and results. The study's findings possess the capacity to shape the development of policies and initiatives tailored to bolstering headteachers' endeavors in enacting transformative changes and enhancing overall school achievements.

Furthermore, the study holds the potential to enrich the reservoir of knowledge pertaining to effective leadership practices and strategies for managing change within educational contexts. The insights garnered from the study can serve as a compass for researchers to identify gaps in the current understanding and pave the way for future investigations in this domain. Ultimately, the study's significance lies in its potential to align with the continuous endeavors aimed at elevating the caliber of education and fostering improved learning outcomes for students.

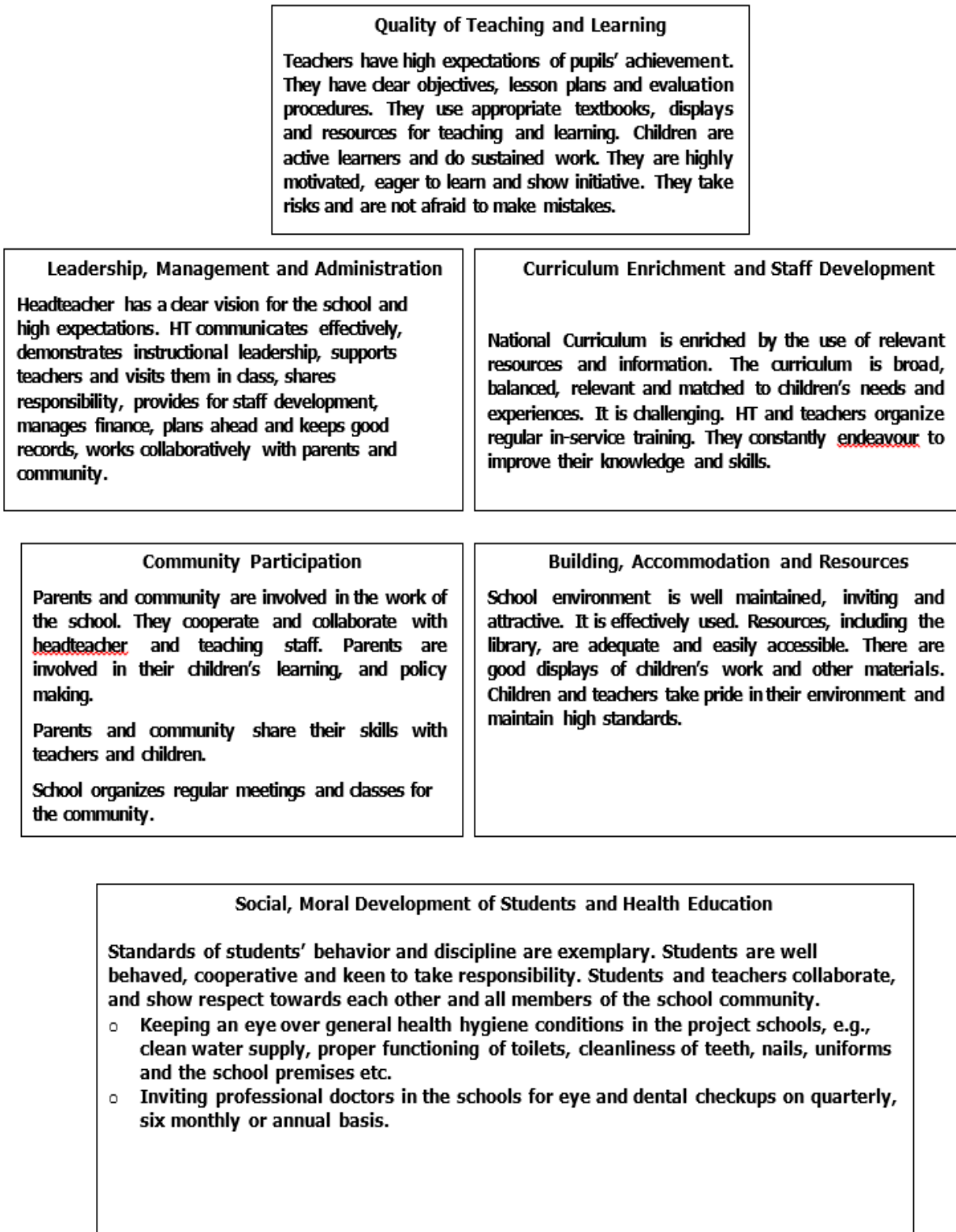
### **PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of a female school headteacher who have participated in the whole process of WSIP and implemented the whole learning in the school. So, the study was guided with the following main and subsidiary questions to probe the subject matter:

How does the female headteacher perceive WSIP intervention and its implementation in school, specifically with regards to the challenges faced and coping strategies employed?

### **SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS**

1. What specific challenges did the headteacher face during the WSIP intervention and implementation process?
2. What coping strategies did the headteacher employ to overcome these challenges?
3. How did the WSIP intervention and implementation process impact the headteacher's leadership practices and approach to education?
4. What improvements in the school's practices and student outcomes did the headteacher observe as a result of the WSIP intervention and implementation?



**Figure 1.** WSIP MODEL

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**WSIP, the school improvement model is an approach aiming to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and students' outcomes by concentrating the school as a learning organization and a community of practice. The program involves the participation of Professional Development Teams (PDTs) in all aspects of school life that impact student learning, and it focuses on six areas:**

- 1. Quality of teaching and learning**
- 2. Leadership, management, and administration**
- 3. Community participation**
- 4. Curriculum and staff development**
- 5. Building, accommodation, and resources**
- 6. Social and moral development of students and health education**

**Its overarching principle is to treat the school as a unit of training rather than the individual, with the long-term aim being the development of effective group dynamics and collegiality amongst teachers, students, and communities for the purposes of ongoing educational dialogue and improvement (Muhammad et al., 2000, p.4). By focusing on these six areas, WSIP aims to improve opportunities for children to learn through whole school improvement, which involves the entire school community in a collaborative effort to enhance the learning environment and student outcomes.**

**The program intensively focuses school for whole academic year with less intensive support in the following year. A designated Professional Development Teacher (PDT) works in four days a week. They work with all stakeholders including teachers, headteachers, students, and parents. Jointly, they work on finding appropriate strategies for improvement. Through collaborative efforts with all stakeholders, the PDT aims to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that is conducive to student learning. This approach, besides improving the quality of teaching and learning fosters a sense of collegiality and collaboration among whole school community. Ultimately, WSIP is a comprehensive approach to school improvement that aims to enhance student outcomes through the active participation of all stakeholders.**

**During the intervention stage, intensive school-based support is provided to all project schools. This included co-planning and co-teaching of lessons and organizing regular workshops on selected topics and arranging workshops for teachers of all schools in the cluster. This is supplemented by brief centre-based orientation sessions for all teachers. More importantly, a formal field-based training programme is organized for headteachers of WSIP schools at PDCN.**

**To see the effectiveness of the programme, few studies and reports undertaken on WSIP reflect that this programme has shown a good impact on the participating schools. Studying the impact and sustainability of WSIP, Shamim (2005) found out that this programme has shown an impact in all the elements of WSIP, particularly enhancing the teaching and learning processes in classrooms. Teachers have shown tolerance towards students and students have developed confidence. Another component of WSIP for headteachers, CELM has brought about a significant development in headteachers' knowledge and skill (Madhani, 2003).**

**Similar kind of evidence are also provided by various reports (WSIP annual report 2004-08) produced internally by PDCN and other external funding agencies. Studying the effect of the Educational Leadership Programmes for headteachers, Ahmad (2004) explores that it remained helpful in creating enthusiasm among the headteachers as it provided maximum opportunities for them to look at their potentials by involving them in small**

groups, whole class activities and presentations. They are encouraged to think and find out solutions to problems by themselves instead of depending on others.

Northern Pakistan Education Project (NPEP) 2007 report on Phase 2 monitoring mission found sustainable impact of WSIP. For example, at the government high school Sarpa<sup>1</sup>, they witnessed strongly enhanced enrolment and exam results. They discovered that the programme has reached over 10,000 children. They report that the success of the programme has led to the development of schools that could serve as key cluster schools as part of an integrated education strategy for the area after the project.

The monitoring report of European Commission (EC) 2006 on support to the NPEP states that WSIP and other programmes conducted by PDCN have shown a larger effect than so many other intensive programmes and an obvious change in schools which means that they are acting as the 'lighthouse or beacon' schools in their area. Similarly, the EC (2003) report on evaluation mission depicts that the WSIP approach with both WSI and CELM courses made a substantial change in schools.

Headteachers, being the crucial players in bringing improvement reforms, the literature on headteachers' practices has widely been studied. In this regard, the literature proposes multiple perspectives about the role and practices of headteachers in school improvement process. For instance, various studies (Morse, 2001; Hoban, 2002; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006) advocate for holistic approach of headteachers for school improvement and to increase students' outcomes. Similarly, Sergiovanni and Starrat (1998) also emphasize on role of headteacher as an instructional leader for developing, improving and promoting teachers' and students' progress.

Reflecting of causes of students' failure, I consider that parents show lacking attitude towards their children learning at homes. It is established that the success stories of student's achievement are those where parents engage with their children at homes (Alma & Janet, 2008; Nicky & David, 2005). Here, the head plays crucial role in educating parents. It is the headteacher who acts and invites parents as, principal behavior influences parental involvement and the role of school principal is crucial in embedding parental involvement work in school policy and culture (Dayson, 2007; Griffith, 1999).

Contrary to the developed world, research studies pertaining to Pakistan context shows another picture of a headteacher's role for improving schools. In this connection, Memon (2003) studies ratify important role of school headteacher but he found very limited role of school heads.....they interact with students to resolve conflicts and maintains students' fee record. Likewise, Khaki (2005) mentions that..."the public school systems in the developing nations allow heads little room for leadership enforcing more managerial approach" (p.69). Retallick et al., (2004) and Memon (1998) highlight the reasons of limited roles as lack of professional capacities of headteachers and they are limited by the rules of the system which encourages top down approach. Probing other limitations, Memon and Bana (2005) mention that "headteachers are recruited and promoted on the basis of their teaching rather than their leadership and management experience or qualification. Hence, most schools are functioning without qualified and trained headteachers" (Memon & Bana, 2005, p.163).

To overcome those obstacles, Kanwar (2000) suggests that "principals need to be aware of the latest approaches in school leadership" (p.101). Likewise, Shafa (2005) expressed that "it is possible for headteachers to engineer creative solutions if they have a compelling vision for their schools" (p.275). Practically, the fulfilment of official requirements pay primary importance than student's development. As Akhtar (2007) rightly argues that in developing countries individuals need to work hard and look back to see whether or not

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym used for the real name of the school.

requirements of a particular job have been fulfilled. And the heads should focus on pupils' learning as a vital factor for school improvement (Riaz, 2008).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on studying the WSIP experiences of the headteacher who played leading roles in implementation of her learning, therefore to generate richer experiences, case study method seemed pertinent. As Creswell (1998) advocates that, "Case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to involve multiple sources of information which are rich in context" (p.61). Therefore, these multiple resources under case study method helped in triangulation of the data which ultimately enhanced the validity of research findings.

While selection of the research participant, following criteria has been developed:

1. Schools have undergone WSIP intervention
2. School headteacher has participated in the whole cycle of WSIP (one-year program)
3. The selected school headteachers must have one year of working experience after taking part in WSIP intervention
4. They show willingness and volunteer to participate in the study and are interested in sharing their experiences.

An in-depth interviews protocol was used to gather the essential data. This tool allowed to ask open-ended questions and probe for elaboration and clarification. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) propose that, " By probing an interviewee's responses, we are likely to add to the richness of the data, and end up with better understanding of the phenomenon we are studying" (p.95). The interview process was conducted through a pre-defined interview guide along with recording of whole responses.

Besides formal interviews, observations were also carried out bridge the interview data with actual practices and to gain deeper understanding of headteacher's roles, as "actions can be best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; p.30). Similarly, analyzing the pertinent documents continued to relate the experiences with the actual happenings in the school.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study remained helpful in generating beautiful practices of a female headteacher, gained through participating in the WSIP intervention and its implementation. While analyzing the gathered data, following overarching themes were generated as findings of the study:

### CHANGE IN PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDE

The data revealed that WSIP has been instrumental in bringing about changes in the female headteacher's perceptions regarding school improvement measures. This was seen as leading change in her practices, resulting a profound improvement in various dimensions of school improvement areas.

One of the essential pillars of WSIP is the involvement of community members in school matters. The data presented that the headteacher realized that she possess a strong authority in the school to lead the whole team of stakeholders including community members, teachers and students. She can perform her roles if she involves all these stakeholders in school matters. This creates motivation in the community, and they can

play their part successfully.

Headteacher discussed that she considers teamwork as a vital force to achieve success. Regarding school management, the head mentioned that when she joined the school, there was no deputy headteacher, and whenever she had to go to the office for meetings or remain outside the school premises, teachers were facing problems in managing the school. Through WSIP, she was convinced about the effectiveness of teamwork. To address this issue, she designated a deputy headteacher, prepared various committees by the teachers and assigned different responsibilities according to their interest, expertise and readiness. She involved them in all the school related tasks. All these activities ultimately remained useful to develop students in their academic and non-academic activities. Overall, the adoption of a participatory approach by the headteacher has the potential to create a more collaborative and effective learning environment, benefiting both teachers and students alike. Headteacher admitted that encouragement of teachers is a significant factor in proper implementation of planned activities. She shared that before WSIP intervention, she was unaware about providing encouragement to teacher, considering that teachers have to obey her orders. WSIP informed her professional practices to involve all the teachers in various dimensions of improvement areas with proper encouragement on their improved practices. She shared her practices as:

To encourage teachers, I acknowledge the teachers as a whole. There was no encouraging procedure before WSIP but now I have changed this. I found that all the teachers do not perform their duties in the same way. They knew they get same reward for whatever they do. This was de-motivating many teachers who were working with total commitment. To encourage them, I planned a new strategy. I announced that I will declare best teachers in the next annual day. I developed criteria. This included teachers' attendance, quality of teaching, subject results and best day mistress who cares all the school tasks in a day. Only 7-8 teachers got awards on the annual day. This created motivation among all the teachers and they also started to compete with the other teachers. (Interview)

One of the major changes the headteacher regarded was the beliefs about student's critical role in schools. She believed that activities should be developed that could foster students' development every day. She acknowledged that WSIP guided her in changing the traditional practices which emphasized on teacher-centered teaching and considered students as passive recipients of information. Now, the trend has changed and all the activities regarding students learning has been recorded and needful changes are made accordingly. For example, one of the important procedures to monitor student's progress is the introduction and preservation of portfolios. The head mentioned that she learnt about the concept of student portfolio for the first time in WSIP. She began to realize the importance of portfolios for tracking students' academic development. Now she has motivated her teachers to work on portfolios and make it a regular practice.

The analysis of some of the documents showed that school observe different approaches to monitor students' progress. While exploring certain teachers' diaries, it was found that teachers have maintained proper records of students' co-curricular achievements along with academic results tool.

### **ENHANCED CHILDREN LEARNING**

Major contributions of WSIP from the headteacher's perspectives can be seen in the degree to which students are involved in learning activities. To improve the learning capabilities of students, the head continuously arranges meetings with her teachers. They develop lesson plans together, co-teach lessons and observe each other's in the classrooms and make needed amendments in their teaching approaches to improve students' learning.



The head further shared her school practices aimed at students' involvement in the learning process. She commented:

Earlier, I used to transmit information through lectures. I treated students as empty vessels. WSIP guided me towards adopting a child-centered instruction. I came to believe in the fact that whatever happens in the school, it is meant for learning and developing students. Without their active involvement, the activities we carry out are useless. (Head Interview)

She added that to meet the students' learning needs, she planned different activities with the teachers to ensure maximum student participation in classroom activities. To do this, she used different tactics in the school. For example, once students were given a topic to make displays and prizes offered to winners. This created motivation among students. To add their understanding, students search library books and other resources at homes to find out attractive material regarding the topics. For deciding the winners, they call one of the local artists. On the annual prize distribution day, they distribute prizes among the successful students. So endorsed WSIP pillar 6, focusing on social and moral development which aided her skills on how to enhance students' motivation and confidence in learning.

In this regard, many displays in and outside classrooms indicated that students are involved in development of various displays. While observing some of the classrooms, it was found that, besides displays on the walls, different models were made by the students by using local materials. These all resources are well-organized in respective classroom and are readily accessible.

#### **CREATION OF CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING**

The data suggested that headteacher has attempted to establish association between student's learning and a supportive school or classroom environment. Pointing towards her school environment, the head claimed:

Through WSIP, along with learning about management related tasks, I also realized the importance of facilitative environment inside and outside the classroom. I focused on improving classroom management alongside working for improvements in various areas for school improvement. To achieve my objectives, I conducted various sessions for the teachers and we planned different strategies together. (Headteacher Interview)

The headteacher shared an example that being the most populated school of the region, furniture in the classrooms has been a bigger problem for her in the last few years. To overcome this situation, she paid sincere attention towards this problem and put this plan at the top of the list. For this she also consulted with the chairman of SMC who is also the member of the Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC). She picked this idea from WSIP theme, endorsing community participation for school improvement. Applying this concept, and by generating multiple resources, she was able to resolve this concern and now all the classrooms are equipped with furniture and students do not have any problem regarding their seating arrangements.

The teaching approaches in and outside the classrooms in schools indicated that teachers use different teaching styles for better lesson delivery. For example, in an observation, it was seen that students were relaxed at work in the school ground. Moreover, a supportive culture was reflected when teachers were moving around the classes helping them in their assigned tasks.

## **INSTIGATION OF NEW ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

A notable aspect of evaluating students involves the creation of examination papers to gauge their comprehension and knowledge. This is a prevailing practice in numerous schools, particularly those affiliated with government educational systems. These schools often tend to emphasize students' ability to memorize information by rote. Students are often required to reproduce notes on specific subjects. Success in this approach hinges on whether students have managed to memorize the given questions. Unfortunately, this method of assessment hampers students' inherent potential, as it assesses them not based on their grasp of concepts, but rather on their ability to recall factual details. The head pointed out:

Through WSIP, I realized the importance of test development and assessment procedures following latest methods. After that, I also arranged various workshops on development and assessment of papers and currently my teachers follow the same pattern. This method also remained instrumental in modifying old practices of students which were based upon rote learning. To ensure transparency, I had made different committees of teachers to review assessment processes and results. (Head Interview)

Responding to a question about test designing, the headteacher said that teachers give equal share to each chapter and select important topics from these chapters. The analysis of few question papers suggested a change in the paper pattern and showed that teachers have tried to use new methods of developing papers including short questions which were based upon the conceptual evaluation of students.

## **MOTIVATION TOWARDS INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The narratives shared by the headteacher showed that the head had internalized change processes for improving learning areas. In this connection, the headteacher shared that WSIP was helpful in enabling her to see prospects for change in their schools. She did not have a clear idea about their important portfolio in the school earlier. During the implementation of WSIP learning, she conceptualized and developed school's vision and mission to guide their activities. Referring towards the school vision, the head specified:

Before the intervention, I have little knowledge about vision. I considered that I am the only person in the school and whatever I propose is right. I have to guide the teachers to complete the given textbook syllabus. In my opinion, teachers are my followers having no right to resist. They were also following the traditional approach of "the boss is always right". Now I realized that we have to work together for a collective goal. (Headteacher Interview)

She considers WSIP as a visionary approach in her career. She commented that vision provides direction about the future. The headteacher is the visible authority in the school and directs all the members of the school as the front leader. She further explained that she, along with the teachers, SMC members and the professional input of PDCN faculty members made a vision for their school. It is based on developing students' thinking, refining their opinions and developing their confidence, and developing leadership qualities in them to guide the society.

The headteacher further explained that, following the directions in vision statement, they developed activities to move towards achieving the vision. She said that during the WSIP intervention, they knew about how an SDP is made. Following that path, they prepared the SDP and activities were indicated which were directly leading towards the vision.

## **INITIATION OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (SDP)**

Headteacher believes that SDP plays an important role in smooth functioning of school activities. In this regard, the headteacher' responses and displayed school development plans pointed out that they perform their roles and responsibilities in an organized way. The SDP in school was reflecting achievable targets within given periods. Sharing her views about the SDP, headteacher said:

Before WSIP, I possessed little knowledge about SDP but did not have any idea about realistic plan. If I would have tried to make it, it was just to decorate my office. My plan for school development would not include any change in real practices of the school. For example, I was taking so many areas of improvement at a time and planning many activities in a year, but at the end of year when I looked at it, I had hardly accomplished any of the tasks. WSIP workshops helped me to learn about development plan. I involved all the stakeholders in the SDP and observed that many objectives were achieved as I had selected those targets which were achievable within my resources and timeline. (headteacher Interview)

While probing to various aspects of learning, it was noted that the school works under a pre-planned SDP made at the beginning of the academic year. Their plans showed the activities which were directly related to school improvement and student's developmental needs. The SDP was representing various events to celebrate at different stages of academic year. For example, Environmental Day, Independence Day, and Defense Day celebrations were shown in their appropriate dates. These events also indicted the task delegation for relevant persons to involve in the events and the main focus was given to students in different activities.

## **IMPROVEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY**

The headteacher believed that WSIP has led to develop professional capacities. It has caused revolutionary changes in her beliefs and practices. The head highlighted certain areas experiencing significant changes in professional dimensions. Some of the important areas showing a remarkable shift are discussed in the following sections:

### **IMPROVED PRESENTATION SKILLS**

The headteachers was of the view that WSIP has immensely affected her professional lives. Elaborating on this, the head commented that in her early years, her father would advise her insisting that "learn to stand on your own feet". She learnt this practically in WSIP. She explains how her presentation skills got improved:

Before the intervention, I had the knowledge but I did not have the confidence and fluency to present something in front of an audience. Through different presentation in WSIP, I developed the confidence along with presentation skills. Various delegations from AKU-IED, PDCN and other donor agencies visited my school. During their visits I presented my success stories after WSIP. All these activities improved my presentation skills. (Headteacher Interview)

The headteacher further explained that through her enhanced presentation skills, she started assisting other teachers in improving their skills. She, quite frequently arranges workshops in the school and encourages teachers to lead the sessions according to their subject competencies. This also provided the teachers with a platform to improve their presentations capabilities.

In headteacher's view confidence is one of the key tools for meaningful interaction with

different stakeholders. This confidence is developed as a result of improved professional skills. WSIP helped in boosting up of self-confidence through various activities including presentations during WSIP sessions. Additionally, to build the confidence of teachers, she asks teachers to lead morning assemblies and present their views on different topics. This practice helped the teachers to improve their power of expression and enhanced their confidence.

### **IMPROVED OBSERVATION SKILLS**

Headteacher views that WSIP remained instrumental in developing observation skills. She considers that being the heads of the school it is essential that they must possess strong observational skills to see the successful implementation of the initiated programmes. Presenting her views the head said:

**I improved my observation skills by visiting classrooms along with the PDTs. This also developed leadership skills among students and teachers as their teaching approaches were modified through PDTs feedback. Before the intervention, I developed personal skills by participating in CELM, but WSIP developed these skills both in teachers and students. (Headteacher Interview)**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF MOTIVATIONAL SKILLS**

While revisiting her improved practices, the head reflected that their existing success stories are linked with strong motivational skills. She considers that through different activities in WSIP, she has developed these skills. To reinforce her feelings, headteacher shared an example:

**A year after WSIP action implementation phase, I guided the teachers to prepare lesson plans on modern approaches which supports maximum encouragement to students. They sometimes resisted the idea with the excuse that they cannot complete their syllabus. I provided support by arranging consecutive workshops. I showed the procedure; for example, divide the courses into terms, then into months and weeks. I used some model examples to motivate them to plan their daily lessons. This has now become a routine practice in our school. (Headteacher Interview)**

While carrying out informal discussions with the teachers and observations, it was found that the successful implementation of various activities showed a link between headteachers and teacher motivation. The school depicted a very cool and busy environment where teachers and students seemed engaged with different activities.

### **IMPROVED REFLECTIVE PRACTICES**

The notion of reflection was quite new for the headteacher before joining in WSIP. She shared that she possessed little idea about reflection and its important role in school life. Referring towards improvement in such practices, the headteacher remarked:

**Before WSIP, I did not know what reflective practice was about because I never engaged in reflection process. WSIP informed me about the importance of this aspect in school life. I encouraged teachers to maintain reflective diaries on a regular basis and write their views after classes and share them with all the teachers for feedback. By doing so, they improved their plans by making needed amendments. I consider the successive success in my school is due to revised activities based on reflection. (Headteacher Interview)**

The headteacher further elaborated that although she and her teachers do not follow proper reflective diaries, they share successes and challenges among themselves on a regular basis. They discuss the causes for failure and amend their activities to overcome them. Thus they find a way to engage in reflective events that take place in the school.

### **EFFECT ON TEACHING PRACTICES**

Headteacher considers that WSIP not only improved their understanding in various dimensions of school, it also helped them to improve their teaching practices as well. Different activities, for example, observing classrooms with PDTs remained helpful in improving their teaching capabilities. Discussing about her changed attitude towards teaching, the head presented:

Through WSIP intervention, I did not only develop my teaching capabilities with the teachers, but they also helped me in sustaining change in their practice. After intervention, I involved the teachers in developing local low-cost and no-cost materials by using available resources. All these activities further strengthened my teaching skills. (Headteacher Interview)

She further expressed that a year after WSIP intervention school-based workshops continued to improve teaching practices. This practice helped teachers to develop lessons full of interesting activities for students. Now her teachers are developing stories and other appealing pictures and students show lot of motivation towards these activities.

The headteacher explained further that WSIP workshops focus on different topics pertaining to school improvement. Certain times, subject specialist teachers are also involved in leading specific sessions. She reflected that all these actions not only improve the teaching capabilities of teachers, they also boosted their confidence as well.

The informal discussions with some of the students showed that they enjoyed the way they were being taught. Analysis of various documents, for example, teachers' lesson plan diaries reflected that the teachers deliver in a planned way. Moreover, students' confidence in responding to my questions and observation of the teacher exhibiting friendly attitude towards student suggest that serious efforts are carried out at school level to positively improve students' learning.

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Capacity-building interventions either formal in-person or distance modes play a crucial role in developing professional competencies of headteachers. The distance education programmes are even more important for female professionals who cannot attend face-to-face due to various barriers, particularly in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Distance education for women is a vital educational approach that provides accessibility, flexibility, and safety. It breaks down barriers, enabling women to pursue education without geographical or cultural constraints. This approach empowers women by offering the flexibility to balance education with other responsibilities, enhances safety by eliminating travel risks, challenges societal norms, promotes economic independence, and contributes to gender equality and social progress. Overall, distance education for women plays a crucial role in empowering and advancing women's education and societal development.

The research centered on investigating the experiences of a female headteacher in a public school who has overseen the implementation of WSIP within her school. It delved into the impact of this obligatory program on the female headteacher, a perspective that had not

previously been examined, in order to uncover the experiences of headteachers who actually drive transformative efforts in educational institutions.

The study revealed that WSIP, offering in-person and distance education models, has been a significant contributor in bringing change in attitudes and professional capabilities of the headteacher for leading their schools. It shows a link between the headteacher's learning in WSIP and the initiatives she has taken in her school. The head faced certain barriers while implementing school improvement activities, but she felt that being a women didn't hamper her plan. Mostly, the challenges were pertaining to organisational policies, societal practices and traditional practices of teachers in the classrooms. The head handled these barriers by applying situational leadership approach which emphasizes on acting in accordance with the demands and needs of the situation (Snowden, 1998).

The headteacher regard WSIP approach and learning as very essential input for developing the visionary attitudes, which is equally important aspect to lead a team of diverse groups in schools. It proves Sergiovanni (1998) views that visionary leadership provides vision, motivates and inspires schools to change. While carrying out interviews with the headteacher, deliberations with the teachers and students, it was found that the visionary approaches have shown a positive impact to bring change initiatives in their schools. Some of these changes are reflected in the form of strategies to improve students' academic and non-academic aspects, modifications in teachers' attitude towards their profession, and developments in cultural and structural aspects of the schools.

The effective practices adopted by female headteacher in a public school challenged the general delusion about public schools where headteachers work under the umbrella of dominant bureaucratic rules and structures, follow top-down approach and having limited choices to bring improvement reforms (Memon, 1998; Memon, 1999). It informed that following the structures, how a headteacher can integrate new ideas into existing practices. It can be said that the headteachers who are equipped with professional skills can bring improvement in their schools, despite working under strict policies and gender-based misconceptions.

The effect of WSIP intervention, in-person and distance education modes was evident through attitudinal changes of headteacher, enforcing her to realize the importance of students within their school buildings. She has changed her traditional assumptions which were based on certain fallacies, considering students as receptors of information. One of the sharing of the participant in changing the attitude of "jug and mug theory" (Boomer, 1992) was quite impressive. The activities carried out in the school showed that WSIP remained very effective in revising this theory. The students seemed relaxed in their tasks by actively participating in new approaches of teaching.

A general trend in developing countries is that instructional leadership functions are relatively rare in schools and the heads are likely to adopt a stance in favour of management and administration (Oplatka, 2004). But WSIP approach remained effective for the headteacher to invite her for creating an encouraging environment to improve students' learning through instructing teachers. It endorsed Barth (2001) that various dimensions of improved practices depict the notion of effective leadership where effective school leaders foster rich learning environments for students and adults in their buildings. The headteacher has developed an attractive learning environment inside the school and classroom environment was quite facilitating where students were motivated towards learning and teaching approaches. Although the headteacher's job also demands for some management roles but the success always relies on the balancing approach between instructional and managerial perspectives and as a professional, a head must possess the aptitude to maintain a balance between various important roles.

While applying the distance education activities effectively, the female headteacher was aware about the true sense of change. It is a difficult task in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan to bring change initiatives due to societal pressures, gender-related stereotypes and conventional practices in the schools. Being professionally sound, these hurdles didn't seem to have any negative impact on female head's approaches. According to Hargreaves and Hopkin (1991), "change always challenges current assumptions and practices. Schools have to choose which changes to make and then devise strategies for implementing them in the interest of school improvement but without damage to existing good practice" (p.84). The SDP in the school showed that it was developed according to needs of the school and activities were designed which motivate communities towards school. It can be concluded that development of SDP, a major emphasis of WSIP for school improvement is being carried out in schools. Certain discussions with the headteacher revealed that WSIP provided her the kind of learning which remained instrumental in looking for real needs of the school and she has shown it through development of meaningful SDP.

One of the objectives of CELM, demanding heads to adapt their learning in distance education approaches is to develop headteachers for leading their schools professionally. This professional attitude demands for the creation of supportive culture where team members show their cooperative hands to each other. Various practices in the school depicted that the headteacher has created a supportive culture through arranging in-school workshops for professional development of teachers. In workshops they focus content areas, teaching strategies and other needed school based developmental activities. As, Ali (2007) points out, "a supportive school climate inspires and facilitates the development of the value and practices, such as shared understanding of learning, opportunities for dialogue or interaction, mutual support, and the will to innovate" (p.283). The activities carried out in the school also verified the notion of good schools which "foster collegial interaction by creating professional environment that facilitates the work of teachers" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p.96).

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