

Perspectives of Public School Head Teachers about a Foreign Funded Capacity Development Program in Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

Very limited research focusing on the implementation processes of foreign funded educational interventions has emerged from Pakistan. Therefore, the present study examined a foreign funded capacity development program of government head teachers in Pakistan. While integrating the perspectives of head teachers and project staff, the study exclusively focused on five factors: the role of implementing agencies; the training need assessment processes; the knowledge level of resource personnel; and the content of training. The study noted that due to the weak institutional capacities of the implementing agencies and the absence of monitoring and evaluation on behalf of the donor agency, the productivity of the intervention was questionable. Trainees were explicit while expressing their reservations about the quality and standard of this project. Although the program was initiated to enable the head teachers to bring changes in the teaching and learning processes of their schools, the content, teaching methodologies, and knowledge level of resource persons were not instrumental in developing these competencies. It seemed that the program was initiated without proper planning and designing. This study recommends that both the aid agencies and recipient countries need to explore new actors and entities in order to make such interventions productive. Additionally, a comprehensive professional development program focusing on the instructional dimension of school leadership needs to be introduced through the application of intensive empirical research.

Keywords: Foreign educational assistance, pakistan, head teachers, professional development; government schools

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Introduction

Although both the developed and less-developing countries recognize that the provision of job related training for head teachers is one of the pre-requisites of ensuring quality instruction in schools (Bush, 2008; Grauwe, 2004; Herriot et al, 2002; Bajnud, 2000), the lack of resources prevents the implementation of sustained capacity development programs, particularly in developing countries (Hotta, 1991; Nagel & Cynider, 1989). Pakistan, one of the developing countries, also faces the challenge of limited resources in terms of providing job related training to its educators. As a result, both the teachers and head teachers of Pakistan rarely have the opportunity to participate in professional development programs. While acknowledging the limitations of capacity enhancement programs for school heads in Pakistan, Khan (2004) mentioned the following: “There are some training programs, which provide in-service training to head teachers, but this happens rarely and benefits only a very limited number [of educators]. This usually takes place under foreign funded projects” (p.100).

The limited number or non-availability of training opportunities has many implications on the overall quality of education, particularly in the public educational system of Pakistan. Khan (2010) pointed out that the lack of professional development programs has led Pakistani school administrators to develop a vague understanding of their position. Rather than contributing to the instructional processes of their school, such as through supervisory techniques, in-school professional enhancement programs, or curriculum enrichment, they confine themselves to administrative tasks (Khan, 2010; Memon, 2000; Memon et al, 2000). However, a recent realization at the policy level regarding the importance of school heads and their capacity development has resulted in the initiation of some local and foreign funded capacity development programs for schools heads in Pakistan. The current study is one example of such a leadership development program, which was carried out with the financial assistance of an international donor.

For many recent years, the developing country of Pakistan has received foreign assistance, donations, and grants from international donors, multilateral agencies, and developed countries, especially for the development of its educational sector. However, the implementation processes, outcomes, and productivity of these foreign interventions have received limited research focus. Researchers have also voiced their concerns about the gaps in the implementations of foreign funded interventions in developing nations (Riddell, 2012; Harmer et al, 2011; Johnson, 1995; Nagel, et al, 1989).

Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the implementation processes of a foreign funded program, which aimed to provide professional development opportunities to elementary school head teachers in Pakistan. The study was an attempt to examine those essential factors that had relevance to the overall productivity of this program. While integrating the perspectives of head teachers and project staff, the study exclusively focused on five factors: the role of implementing agencies; the training need assessment processes; the knowledge level of resource personnel; and the content/module of training.

Context and Background of the Study

This study was conducted in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region of Northern Pakistan, where a training program of government elementary school head teacher was initiated with the financial support of an international donor. The Rs 90 million (\$991,770) project, which aimed to provide training for 870 head teachers, had two broader objectives: 1) To improve the leadership and management skills of head teachers and 2) To enable the head teachers to provide professional support to the teachers in the classroom. At the national level, a federal unit representing Federal Ministry of Education, was the executing agency because this project was also in progress in other regions. In the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region, the federal unit assigned the regional Directorate of Education the responsibilities of implementation of the said project. The Directorate of Education appointed a team of four individuals, including a project director and three resource persons, for this project. In fact, the role of project director and three resource persons was central in overseeing, supervising, and conducting the training programs. The project director, who recently retired from the services, worked as a deputy director of education, principal of a college of education, instructor of a college of education, and administrator of various government schools. Unlike the project director, the three resource persons had limited teaching experience.

The Development of Head Teachers in Pakistan: Literature Review

Pakistan has three different educational systems-public, private, and religious-that cater to the educational needs of its population of 200 million (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The majority of Pakistani children attend government owned public institutions, not private or religious schools. A number of issues, such as the low allocation of budget, inadequate teaching practices, absence of accountability mechanisms, and limited opportunities for the development of educators/administrators, negatively affect the educational processes of these public schools (USAID, 2006; Rahman, 2004; Khan, 2004; Kardar, 1998; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Because of these issues, the private sector, which has a higher quality of education and a better level of accountability, has become more attractive for those parents who can afford to send their children to a private school (Khan, 2010).

In the centralized public educational system of Pakistan, the Certificate of Teaching (CT), Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC), and Bachelor of Education degree are the primary requirements/qualifications to become a teacher. According to a UNESCO report (2003), Pakistan, when compared to other countries, has minimal requirements in terms of duration and entry qualification for individuals wanting to become teachers. The total duration of the above-mentioned programs is one year after the completion of higher secondary education (Khan, 2004; Iqbal & Sheikh, 2003). Not only do researchers question the short duration of these programs, but they also have expressed serious reservations about the quality of these programs, especially their content, methodology, relevance, and implementation in real life situations (UNESCO, 2003; Kizilbash, 1998; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Therefore, incompetent teachers, as well as other factors, explain the poor quality of education in government schools (Saeed & Mehmood, 2002 as cited in Oplatka, 2007; USAID, 2006).

In order to become a head teacher of a public school, an individual needs to fulfill three requirements in terms of 1) teaching experience, 2) length of service, and 3) a well-written Annual Confidential Report (ACR) (Kandasamay & Blaton, 2004; Khan, 2004). Despite these requirements, researchers have identified numerous gaps in the selection criteria of school heads in Pakistan and other developing countries. For instance, Giorgiades and Jones (1989, as cited in Harber & Davies, 1997) pointed out that since these school heads come from the teaching staff, they lack basic leadership skills. Similarly, Khan (2004) questioned the validity of these ACRs: "The concept of the ACR is based on 'fear and subordination' rather than performance and objectivity. Within this backdrop, it is very difficult to expect any improvement in the quality of educational management in the country" (p. 99). Therefore, the school heads find themselves handicapped in managing the routine office business of an administrative position (UNESCO, 1984, p.8). Chapman (2005) asserted that the development of quality schools is linked to the development of head teachers through a coherent and systematic leadership preparation program.

However, school heads in Pakistan at the primary, middle, and secondary levels receive either limited or no professional development opportunities (Khan, 2010; Kandasamay & Blaton, 2004; Khan, 2004; Memon, 2000). While characterizing the Pakistani head teachers, Warwick and Reimers (1995) mentioned the following: "With no clear definition of who they are and what they are supposed to do, schools heads are adrift in the educational system they were not trained to be leaders, did not see themselves as leaders, and did not act like leaders" (p.101). Memon (2000) noted that Pakistan has never explicitly defined its government educational policies concerning the importance of schools heads and their capacity development. Therefore, head

teachers “lack a sound understanding of concepts such as vision development, participative decision-making, sharing and delegation of powers, evaluation and assessment, pedagogical methods, parental and community participation, and other educational and leadership issues” (Khan, 2010, p.3). Kandasamay and Blaton (2004) asserted that Pakistani head teachers are not familiar with the managerial skills since the B.A and Master’s level programs do not encompass school management. These programs also do not cover such essential concepts as monitoring and evaluation, modern management techniques, and planning (Khan, 2004).

In the context of developing countries, Rodwell and Hurst (1985) highlighted five major issues that influence the leadership preparation programs: 1) absence or lack of a coherent national training policy; 2) neglect of research into training needs and effect of training; 3) inadequate budget; 4) shortage of suitable training material; and; 5) under-trained trainers. The observation of Rodwell and Hurst (1985) is congruent with the findings of Kizlibash (1988), who noted a number of gaps in the indigenous teachers’ preparation programs in Pakistan. It is pertinent to mention here that eventually these inadequately prepared teachers assume the responsibilities of head teachers. Kizlibash (1988) pointed out that the following issues make the productivity of teachers’ preparation programs questionable: 1) lack of empirical research; 2) implementation of traditional and not innovative methods of teaching; 3) inadequate content and programming; 4) lack of commitment; and 5) absence of follow-up mechanisms. Not only do these programs lack certain standards, but these programs are also transmission-oriented: “Even when they are advocating more creative and innovative ideas and methods, the teachers’ educational approaches are likely to be formal and transmission-based. For the teachers-in-training, whether in pre-service or in-service courses, the medium is most of the message” (Kizlibash, 1988, p.535). For improving the efficiency of schools in developing countries, Chapman (2002) suggested that the head teachers should be provided with the knowledge of instructional processes because “to improve the quality of schooling will demand school managers to understand the elements of good instruction” (p.24).

While emphasizing the development of well-integrated professional development programs for school heads in Pakistan, Khan (2010) suggested that the training needs of head teachers should be determined with the help of a sustained research culture: “On the basis of this research, it could then be decided what kind of professional development school leaders need and how professional development programs could be best delivered in a cost effective way” (p.4). Erasmus and Westhuizen (1996) mentioned that rather than applying traditional methods, it is imperative to introduce new approaches for the development of head teachers in

developing countries. Huber and Pashiardis (2008) asserted, "Given the importance of leadership in the current education policy environment around the world, better knowledge about effective leadership and its development should be a high priority" (p.296). In this regard, Chapman (2005) suggested that not only should the school heads be exposed to continuous professional development opportunities, but that the training programs also need to be innovative through the participation of higher educational institutions and schools.

Methodology

The application of qualitative approaches led the generation of data for this study. Some of the tools used to accumulate data were formal interviews, informal conversations, document review, content review, and observation of training sessions. The program was exclusively designed for the capacity development of primary school head teachers, but the training session, which was attended by the researcher, had only ten head/assistant head teachers; the remaining 20 participants were teachers of primary, middle, and high schools. Therefore, through an opportunity sampling, the researcher selected six samples (two male head teachers and four female assistant head teachers) for formal interviews. The duration of the formal interviews was 30-40 minutes; all formal interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition to the formal interviews, the researcher conducted informal interviews of both the head teachers and other participants of the training session. The opinions of the project director and three resource persons were sought through both formal and informal interviews. The following documents were reviewed: training need assessment form; pre- and post-test questionnaire; project related documents; training manual developed by the federal unit; transparencies/content developed by the resource persons; registration forms; and annual assessment report developed by the federal unit. Additionally, the author observed different sessions for seven days. The primary aim of these observations was to examine the knowledge level of resource persons, their teaching approaches, the level of their preparation, and the involvement/participation/interest of the trainees.

Findings

According to the official documents, a total of 535 head teachers, against the target of 870, received training and the budget utilization was 92 percent, which was seen as a success according to the annual analysis report developed by federal unit: "Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) can be considered as an efficient stakeholder" (p.33). The analysis report also stated briefly that the training helped the head teachers to develop the following skills: a) group work, b) presentation skills, c) interactive learning, and d)

teacher centered approaches. These achievements led the project director and the resource persons to claim that it was one of the most successful foreign funded interventions in the history of GB. However, researcher's personal observations and the opinions of trainees did not confirm the claims of the project director and his staff. Trainees reported that they had great expectations from this opportunity because the name of a well-known international donor was involved, but their expectations were not met. One of the head teachers commented as follows:

We have no idea what the objective of this training is because we did not receive the goals and objectives. We were told that this training has been exclusively arranged for the primary school head teachers, but we are only ten head teachers and assistant head teachers; the remaining 20 participants are teachers. I am not reluctant to say that this program suffers from disorganization and a lack of communication.

The reservation of the head teachers was genuine because the program was exclusively designed for the capacity development of primary school head teachers, even though the participation of this group was minimal. When the researcher sought the opinion of the project director and his staff about this situation, they blamed the nominating authorities, who were the deputy directors of education, for this situation. The project director and his staff asserted that their responsibilities were limited to the provision of training for those individuals who came from the government schools. Both the trainees and the project staff agreed that a communication gap among the project office, trainees, and the directorate of education deprived the right persons from these opportunities; they also agreed that no mechanism that could inform the trainees in a timely manner, thereby resulting in an "eleventh hour" communication in most of the cases. The following statement of the project director reflects how the officials of the directorate of education viewed this program: "Sometimes I sent reminders to the Deputy Director of Education for the nomination of the right people and eligible head teachers...it happened on many occasions when head teachers came to attend training three days after the inception of the training sessions."

Most of the trainees reported that they received a verbal invitation, either from the officials of the directorate of education or their respective school heads/colleagues, about the event one or two days before the inception of a training session. One of the female head teachers mentioned that she did not know that the training was arranged exclusively for the head teachers because she was asked to attend the session without receiving further details:

Since I was not provided with the details, I attended sessions arranged for the school teachers [for two days in the same location] with the understanding that this is where I had to be; on the third day, one of the resource persons informed me that I needed to be in another location where the training of head teachers was already in progress.

Another assistant head teacher stated the following:

I was attending the session when the deputy director of education, who had earlier recommended me for this training, paid a visit to my school. When he learned that I was attending the training, he expressed his displeasure by saying that my presence was required in the school, not in the training session. He only calmed down when my principal reminded him that he was the person who had recommended me for the training.

The trainees reported numerous gaps regarding the proper implementation of this foreign funded project. They believed that despite the availability of abundant financial resources, the trainees were not getting maximum benefits. Because the participants did not receive the program schedule before the start of a training session, they could not get information about the resource persons and their topics. Trainees only came to know about the resource persons and their topics when they reached the venue of the training. On one occasion, the researcher heard the three resource persons stating that they were not sure who would take the morning session. After some time had passed, an IT expert, not any of the three resource persons, oversaw the session. Trainees blamed both the project staff and the officials of the directorate of education for not properly planning and designing the project related activities. One of the head teachers said the following about the situation:

The people who are sitting in the directorate of education or involved in this project are not competent enough to run these kinds of programs. Look at their ways of nominating trainees; look at their ways of selecting resource persons. They don't have any clear vision about this program.

However, the project director and his staff showed their confidence by claiming that they carried out the training sessions very systematically and used a training need assessment (TNA) form and a pre-test questionnaire to determine the needs of the trainees. On the basis of these two instruments, they not only decided the content of a particular training but also the selection of the appropriate resource persons. The project staff shared with the author the completed TNA forms and pre-test questionnaire of previous sessions. In addition to some personal information, the

TNA form contained three questions: a) Did you previously attend any training? b) What do you want to learn from this training? and c) Do you have any suggestions? When the researcher asked the participants of the training session whether the three questions were enough to determine their training needs, they informed me that they had not received the TNA form before the training. When the researcher raised this issue with the project staff, they could not provide with a satisfactory answer. The trainees also stated that they had received a pre-test questionnaire; it was written in English, although the participants came from the Urdu schools. The pre-test questionnaire was used to judge the previous knowledge of trainees about such concepts as leadership styles, classroom observation, qualities of a head teacher, multi-grade teaching, school improvement plans, and curriculum.

The trainees reported that since the questionnaire was in English, the majority of them did not understand the questions included in the instrument. One of the assistant head teachers stated, “There were only two or three participants out of thirty who understood the nature of the questions; the other participants copied their work. Also, most of the participants provided answers in the Urdu language.” The same trend emerged in the pre-test questionnaire of a training session where the trainees not only responded to the questionnaire in the Urdu language—the national language of Pakistan, but also provided wrong answers to certain questions due to the language challenges. For example, in one question trainees were asked to explain the steps of classroom observation. Most of the participants provided the wrong answers, as evident from the following answer given by a head teacher: “1) Maintaining good behavior with the students; 2) Asking students to focus on their studies; 3) Ensuring cleanliness within the classroom; and 4) Maintaining discipline within the classroom.” Another head teacher provided the following answer: “1) Taking attendance after entering the classroom; 2) Teaching students after attendance; and 3) Giving regular homework to students.” One of the head teachers elaborated about the curriculum as follows: “Developing patriotism; explaining the importance of national resources; developing a sense of cooperation; developing a love for national culture and religion.” Another head teacher explained the curriculum in these terms: “Opening and closing of school on time; ensuring teachers are punctual.” Because of the gaps caused by a lack of understanding of the English language, the trainees assumed that that the project staff was not successful in determining and assessing the needs of the participants.

However, the project staff was adamant in stating that the above instruments and their personal experiences helped them to identify the genuine needs of the trainees and to design the content of different sessions based on these needs. After reviewing the content, examining the processes of the selection of resource persons, noticing the level of the resource persons' preparation and knowledge, and observing their teaching approaches, the researcher realized that his personal observations including the perspectives of trainees were quite different from the opinions of the project staff. The trainees reported that rather than using modern strategies of teaching/learning, the resource persons adopted traditional approaches that were neither thought provoking nor interesting. They pointed out that it would be helpful if the resource persons integrated real life situations as a strategy of learning by arranging some exposure visits. The project staff admitted that they might better address the concerns of trainees if they were provided with some kind of orientation before the inception of this program. In this regard, one of the resource persons commented as follows:

We were not provided with any training; instead, we were asked to initiate the training activities with very short notice because of the pressure from the donors. We did not receive a roadmap in terms of planning the project activities. Even the project director was recruited two months after our appointment. As a result, we initiated our activities without any orientation or planning.

Another resource person mentioned the following: "It would have been helpful if we had received at least one week of training or orientation because it is not easy to teach the adults. The head teachers have different needs compared to children; they require different preparation from the trainers. Additionally, I have no previous experience of training male head teachers, so that was very challenging for me." One of the head teachers commented about this situation: "One can see substantial disorganization in the implementation of this intervention; it seems that they secured the donation, and now their ultimate aim is to utilize this donation in one way or another." These circumstances had serious implications on various components of this program. The ensuing paragraphs further discuss various gaps identified by the trainees and noticed by the researcher.

As mentioned earlier, the trainees expressed their dissatisfaction about the knowledge level and teaching methodologies of the resource persons. In addition to the three resource persons who were permanently affiliated with the program, the project staff also included the resource persons from other departments whose contributions were questionable. It was noticed during the sessions that these resource

persons would start their lectures by admitting that they had only been informed about the sessions earlier that morning or the day before; therefore, they might not be able to address or satisfy the participants' needs. These resource persons utilized their time by discussing a variety of issues, such as the salary scale of government teachers, efficiency of government schools, and accountability, and by sharing personal stories, instead of addressing the assigned topic of the session. One of the visiting resource persons, who was not part of the project, stated the following: "The project staff did not officially ask me to lead a particular session; instead, they asked another faculty member who was taking care of the financial matters of this project. Since he was busy, he asked me to substitute for him. Thus, I took a session on very short notice...I did not get enough time to develop a good lecture." One of the trainees expressed her reservations about this session as follows:

We did not get any schedule before the inception of training...we did not know about the resource person until he showed up...what can you expect from a resource person who was informed one hour before the training session or who starts his lecture with a dialogue that he is not prepared to address our needs...after hearing this introduction, we lost our interest.

When a resource person was asked to deliver a lecture on the objectives of education without prior preparation, he shared his personal stories with the participants. One of the assistant heads reacted to this by stating, "People come and share their personal stories one after another, which is boring. To some extent one can listen to these stories, but for one-and-a-half hours it is not possible... it is really frustrating."

As mentioned earlier, the project director claimed that the content of training is not only based on TNA and a pre-test questionnaire, but also on the training module developed by the federal unit. This training module, which was very precise and well written, primarily focused on developing the competencies that could enhance the administrators' understanding about the teaching and learning processes. However, none of the resource persons, whether affiliated with the project or other departments, followed the training module. The resource persons justified their choice by insisting that since they were already covering the content mentioned in the module, they did not need to consult the module. One of the implications of this situation was that resource persons were not focused on addressing various dimensions of school leadership that exclusively relates to teaching and learning processes.

Not only were the resource persons less mindful of the instructional aspect of leadership, but the selected topics were also theoretical ones that mostly focused on the administrative responsibilities of head teachers. The following topics were covered during the different training session: 1) responsibilities of head teachers; 2) school development plan; 3) head teacher and communication; 4) lesson planning; 5) administrative skills; 6) leadership and management; 7) leadership styles; 8) community participation; 9) co-curricular activities; 10) classroom observation; 11) school culture; 12) time table; 13) curriculum; and 14) objectives of education. The presenters shared minimal information with the trainees while covering these topics. On one occasion, the project director held a session on the responsibilities of head teachers. He presented a single transparency that contained 12 points about various functions of head teachers, but he did not make a single point about the head teachers' instructional responsibilities. One of the head teachers, who had earlier attended a training arranged by a private institution, criticized the project director's way of delivering lecture:

In the past, I attended a training arranged for school heads by a private institution. The same project director was one of the resource persons. I remember he gave us a very good presentation for two hours. He was well prepared, and he developed many transparencies. Did you notice he came and wanted us to prepare the presentation? Later, he shared a transparency that contained similar points that we had already discussed.

Another head teacher commented about the limited importance extended to the instructional dimension of headship:

I attended a training arranged by an NGO for the school heads. The focus of the training was the instructional development of schools. I remember that the trainers would involve us in lesson planning on daily basis and other instructional matters. I would never forget whatever I learned during that session. Today, lesson planning is an integral part of teaching practices in my school.

In addition, the resource persons only briefly shared general information with the participants. For instance, a resource person define a leader as "a person whose main concern is effectiveness, whether the right things and directions have been established..." On another occasion, a resource person, who delivered a lecture about a school development plan (SDP), shared three slides with the participants that contained a definition of SDP, a format about a school development plan, and a framework about the SDP. One of the trainees commented about the knowledge level of resource persons in the following way:

The knowledge and information they shared with us is outdated and obsolete. Look at the color of the transparencies used by the resource persons; they are blurred, and the information the transparencies contain is 10 or 20 years old. Today's schools need to do more than fill students with knowledge; these schools must also address the curiosities of their students. Unfortunately, this training is not instrumental in addressing the needs of students of this era.

Another assistant head teacher stated, "They [resource persons] failed to generate our interest in these sessions because we are not learning new knowledge from these sessions."

Resource persons reported that their teaching approaches are iterative ones that involve the participants in classroom discussions. In most of the cases, resource persons preferred to split the trainees into small groups and to ask them to prepare a presentation about a major topic. After discussing the given topic within their group, the trainees would develop a presentation on a flipchart. During the presentation, the team leader would read the flipchart without engaging in any discussion. The resource persons neither facilitated the discussion nor encouraged the participants to ask questions or share comments on the presentations of their colleagues.

The trainees frequently and honestly shared their concerns with the resource persons. For instance, during a session, a resource person asked the participants to share their thoughts about the content, processes, and methodologies of different resource persons. None of the participants mentioned that they were satisfied with the training or that the content of the training addressed their professional needs. They were straightforward and explicit in stating that the knowledge they acquired through these resource persons was not new. When a majority of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction, the resource person turned his attention to those five or six trainees who had never before experienced any training opportunities. The new trainees acknowledged that the session was a fruitful one that taught them a few relevant things. During a formal interview, I asked a new trainee (head teacher) what particular skills she had learned and how she will incorporate those skills into her school. She replied, "I learned many good thing. For example, I learned the need to be punctual. I also learned how to develop a time table." When I tried to push her further, she could not provide additional comments. One of the head teachers commented about this situation in the following way:

As long as someone had not previously had a good training, the present training could be a positive experience for him/her. However, if someone knows what characterizes a good training, then the present training cannot satisfy him/her. The knowledge level of the majority of resource persons is below average...as indicated by their teaching methodologies; they write a phrase/concept on the board and ask the participants to prepare a group presentation...when we look at their level of preparation, we prefer not to ask questions or engage in classroom discussions because we know they have nothing to share with us.

Another head teacher commented:

I have 10-15 years of teaching experience. The knowledge they [resource persons] are sharing with us is outdated...we came here to learn new techniques... but they have old stuff... I am using modern techniques in my school, which I did not hear from these resource persons. Frankly speaking, I know more than these resource persons... they should invite experts from the private sector because we know these individuals will be knowledgeable... also they should use their resources to arrange for experts from other organizations.

Trainees stated that their interactions with each other were more enriching than the knowledge they received from the resource persons. One of the trainees said, "We learned a lot from other trainees... we shared our experiences...we shared whatever knowledge we have...I discussed many new thing with colleagues."

The project staff and the participants agreed that the trainees did not take these sessions seriously. The project staff pointed out that trainees perceived these sessions as opportunities for financial benefit. The researcher frequently noticed the late arrival and/or absence of trainees during the training sessions. On one occasion, the project director warned the trainees not to repeat these practices, but they did not pay any attention to his words. Ironically, the attendance sheet that maintained the daily record of participants presented a 100 percent attendance (daily), which questions the vigilance of the project staff. One of the assistant head teachers commented about this situation:

Neither the trainees nor the project staff is serious. You can notice people come late; they disappear when the session is in progress; they sporadically show up, but the attendance register shows their continuous presence. So far the project staff has not done anything to keep this house in order.

The project staff admitted that they cannot do beyond warning the participants about attendance and punctuality. One of the trainees attributed the non-serious attitude of participants to the quality of the training: “If the trainees are not serious, then something is wrong with the resource persons and their sessions...we have been listening to these talks for the last many years...we came here to learn new things...therefore, it does not make a difference whether we attend or do not attend these sessions.” Although the project staff complained about the non-serious attitude of teachers, the researcher noticed the same attitude within the project staff. On one occasion, the project director, unaware of my presence, asked his staff to end the training session due to rain. However, when he noticed me, he changed his statement by saying that light showers should not terminate the session.

The project staff also linked the lack of interest of trainees to the absence of any follow-up mechanism. In this regard, the project director mentioned the following: “The trainees know that no one will come to check whether or not they have implemented whatever they learned; therefore, they do not take these opportunities seriously.” Similar opinions came from the trainees, who mentioned that the lack of follow-up mechanisms neutralized their efforts to implement change. One of the head teachers reported the following:

I have more 30 than years of teaching experience; during these years, I have attended numerous trainings arranged by both the government and private sectors. Those opportunities were very enriching in terms of my own learning, but in terms of implementation they were not as successful. Sometime our head teachers were the hurdles because they did not agree with our new knowledge, and sometime our senior colleagues did not want us to bring about any change. Moreover, the higher authorities did not check to see whether or not we had implemented the skills we had learned.

The project staff reported that they developed a follow-up instrument to evaluate whether or not the training had changed the practices of the trainee head teachers. They asked the deputy directors education of different districts to evaluate their trained head teachers according to the approved evaluation instrument. Despite repeated reminders, the project staff reported that the deputy directors of education did not provide the required information. Additionally, the role of the donor in monitoring and evaluating the project was missing because the project document stated that the role of donor was limited to ensuring the proper utilization of funds. The project staff reported that a team of FPMU paid a single visit during the span of this project, which enabled them to determine the satisfactory progress of this project; the annual analysis report included the same information and conclusions.

Discussion and Analysis

Researchers always cite financial limitations to explain why sustained capacity development programs for both the teachers and head teachers have not been offered in Pakistan. However, in this particular study, the implementing agencies seemed unsuccessful in achieving maximum benefits, despite the presence of required financial resources. Ironically, the project staff falsely assumed that the success of the project was only limited to the maximum utilization of the budget and the number of head teachers trained against the given target. The observation of Riddell (2012), which also analyzes the effectiveness of foreign educational aid in less-developing countries, supports the finding of this study. Riddell pointed out that most aid agencies provide the details of their interventions but take the easy route by only focusing on the numbers assisted. From the selection of resource persons to the nomination of trainees to the training related activities, numerous issues led the participants to express their utter dissatisfaction about the quality and standard of this foreign funded intervention. Researchers have noticed several gaps in terms of the methodology, content, delivery, and outcomes of indigenous educators' preparation programs that the state owned institutions in Pakistan generally offer (Mohammad & Jones, 2008; Rarieya, 2005; Kizlibash, 1998). This study reflects the same observations that question the productivity of this foreign funded intervention.

Primarily, two factors played an important role in determining the productivity of this program: 1) lack of proper orientation of the project staff and 2) limited capacities of the officials of the centralized educational system whose role was crucial in the implementation of this project. It seemed that the project was started hurriedly because the project staff [three resource persons] reported that they were asked to initiate the project related activities with very short notice, even before the appointment of the project director. This situation suggests that the program was initiated without proper planning, which is evident by the absence of leadership [project director] and by lack of training/orientation given to the project staff and other stakeholders before the inception of this program. Instead, it was assumed that the previous knowledge and experience of the project director and other stakeholders would help them to achieve the overall objectives; this prior knowledge and experience, however, might not be enough to successfully run this kind of intervention. Research is explicit when emphasizing the central role of leadership and the proper training of stakeholders for the success of these kinds of programs (Rodwell, 1988; Hurst, 1983). Although the project director had decades of teaching and administrative experience, his performance was not up to the mark. His way of dealing with the project activities did not demonstrate enthusiasm, efficiency, or innovation; instead, he, like the three resource persons, tended to embrace more traditional approaches.

Another contributing factor that reduced the efficiency of this program was the involvement of a centralized educational system in which educational officials lacked required competencies to manage and run the foreign funded interventions. It has been pointed out that in a centralized system, where the staff is not properly trained, one cannot guarantee the success of these kinds of programs (Johnson, 1995). A communication gap between the officials of the directorate of education and trainees, weaknesses in the nomination of suitable individuals for training sessions, poor implementation, and the absence of follow-up mechanisms are some examples of the limited capacities of officials in a centralized system. Researchers have already demonstrated concerns about the effectiveness of educational officials in terms of maintaining the quality of education in the public educational system of Pakistan (Komatsu, 2008; Khan, 2004; Warwick & Reimers, 1992; UNESCO, 1984; Nwankwo, 1983). Under these circumstances, one can wonder why such an important project was handed over to educational officials whose performance was already questionable. Rindell (2012) noted that during the period 2005-2010, Pakistan remained a major recipient of educational aid from multiple donors, such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, USAID, Japan, and the United Kingdom, but due to the weak capacities at the federal, provincial, and district levels, very limited success was achieved.

Therefore, in order to address the above-mentioned situation, both the government and international donors need to explore new approaches and engage new actors/entities. One of the important entities is the country's higher educational institutions, which currently have minimal involvement in these kinds of programs. Higher educational institutions need to be involved because they not only have expert faculty, but they also have resources to carry out these programs. Another entity that needs to engage in the process is non-governmental organization (NGOs); some of these NGOs have made significant contributions towards the educational development of Pakistan, particularly in less-developed areas. Not only are these NGOs instrumental in providing quality education, but they also have set-ups where they provide capacity development opportunities to teachers and head teachers through a well-developed and coherent mechanism. These NGOs have adopted some of the innovative approaches for the capacity building of teachers and head teachers, which have received international recognition from such donors as the World Bank (Sales, 1999). One of the strengths of these NGOs is that they are located in both the rural and urban areas of Pakistan. Therefore, efforts should be made to involve the non-traditional actors and stakeholders. Although bypassing the national government involves some limitations, both the donors and host government need to figure out how to deal with these issues. Rindell (2012) suggested, "If aid is to have a lasting

effect, it needs to have a longer term time-frame; much more attention needs to be paid to the educational system as a whole, including the institutions, organizational practices ...” (p.50). Therefore, as the largest service provider, the Pakistani government needs to revamp its educational system because a traditional organizational culture is no longer compatible with the needs of the modern era.

Research attributes the robust educational progress of some of the Asian countries to the effective educational management at the ministry and district levels (Chapman, 2002). As this study noticed, the lack of such effective management in the educational system of Pakistan has many implications, as illustrated by the limited efficacy of the project director who once functioned as a part of this system. Both the project director and his staff claimed that the content of the training, delivery methods, and selection of resource persons were determined through the application of systematic procedures pointing to the need assessment procedures and pre-test questionnaire. Most of these claims could not be substantiated because there was no agreement between the opinions of trainees and the claims of the project staff. Participants did not receive an assessment form in order to determine their training needs. Likewise, the pre-test instrument did not allow the trainees to reflect upon their needs because the instrument was in English, a language in which the trainees had limited proficiency. Therefore, it could be assumed that the pre-test instruments did not properly determine the genuine needs of the trainees. Researchers have noticed that foreign funded projects in developing countries become neutralized either due to the inappropriate instruments that assess the training needs or to the irrelevant curricula (Jones, 1989). Since a sustained professional development program for school administrators has not been an integral component of the educational processes in Pakistan, little attention has been paid to develop an instrument that could identify the training needs of educators. In most of the cases, particularly in government schools, educators attend training sessions that do not relate to their subjects; sometimes educators attend training programs on the basis of their boss's preferences (Khan, 2010). The project staff extended limited attention to the assessment of the needs of the trainees. Under these circumstances, it is essential to introduce a new culture of professional development for educators in Pakistan. The new culture should ensure that the system in place has the mechanisms needed to address every aspect of professional development. In this regard, Khan (2010) suggested that the centralized educational system of Pakistan could be helpful in assessing the needs of head teachers through a survey mechanism at the national level: “On the basis of the findings of this survey, a generic program of professional development compatible to the requirement of every school leader could be developed” (p.270).

It has been suggested that since the duration of capacity development programs is brief, the content knowledge that these programs transfer should contribute to the previous knowledge of the trainees (Peterson, 2002). In other words, the programs should emphasize illuminating the existing skills and expertise of the participants. Instead of following this rule, the resource persons preferred to introduce a variety of topics, which were not only theoretical and overwhelming, but which also focused on developing administrative skills rather than instructional skills. Although Pakistani school administrators suffer from the lack of proper orientation that enables them to become more administrative-oriented (Khan, 2010; Khan, 2004), the resource persons still failed to integrate topics that could enhance the knowledge of trainees about the instructional dimensions of leadership. During the different sessions, the resource persons only covered a total of fifteen major topics and sub-topics; only three topics addressed the teaching and learning processes, such as lesson planning, curriculum, and classroom observation; the remaining 10 topics were administrative and theoretical in nature. The resource persons provided brief and seminal information about these concepts to the participants. By emphasizing the administrative competencies, the resource persons negated the goals of this program, which stated that the program would enable the head teachers to bring changes in classroom practices. In other words, the program seemed to focus on “preparing the heads for maintenance of the schools rather than on bringing change” (Abdalla & Onguko, 2008, p.722). In this regard, Bredson (2002) asserted that activities/programs that only focus on “maintenance functions” are not considered professional development. While examining the leadership preparation programs in Kenya and Tanzania, Abdalla and Onguko, (2008) noticed a similar trend that emphasized the development of management skills:

Probably, the inclination towards the management skills may reflect the local practices whereby principals function more as managers than leaders. This might be the result of hierarchical leadership structures in both the public and private education sectors in these countries where real powers lies above the principalship and well beyond the schools since the two countries operate highly centralized education system. (p.723).

It could be assumed that the same “hierarchical leadership structures” also provided an impetus to the planners of this program to become more focused on management skills. Huber and West (as cited in Abdalla & Onguko, 2008) asserted that the people involved in the planning and designing of preparation programs for school leaders should foresee “the range of knowledge, skills, and competencies that the next generation will need” (p.717). Similarly, Bredson (2002) and Peterson (2002) suggested that capacity development programs should be designed in such a manner where they address the students’ learning/ achievement and reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.

Therefore, it is essential to review the concept of administration in Pakistani schools; emphasis should be placed on developing leaders, not administrators. Khan (2010) suggested that the role of Pakistani school leader, which is a traditional, isolated, and administrative-oriented one, needs to be discarded because these tendencies cannot develop a school culture that is mindful of pedagogical development and school improvement. He added that a preliminary framework for developing a leadership development program, through the application of intensive empirical research, is also needed. Although a significant number of quality research papers has recently been published in national and international journals, one cannot be sure to what extent these research papers and their recommendations have become part of Pakistan's national educational policies. The country's higher educational institutions have played a major role in developing these papers. However, there is no mechanism that allows for the country's higher educational institutions and ministry of education to work together for the development of education in Pakistan. Such a mechanism needs to be developed so that these entities could work together not only for re-defining the role of Pakistani school leaders, but also for developing national educational policies. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2003), who favored a strong school-university partnership, asserted that both of these entities could develop an updated and robust knowledge: "In particular they can produce more practical, contextual grounded theory and more theoretically grounded, broadly informed practices" (p.3). In this regard, concerted efforts are required to create awareness about the possibilities of developing such a partnership among the practitioners involved in educational reforms and policy-making at the national level.

In addition to expressing their concerns about the content of the sessions, the trainees also voiced serious reservations about the resource persons and their knowledge, level of preparation, and teaching methodologies. Instead of spending time explaining the topic of the workshops, the resource persons asked the trainees to discuss the topic in small groups; they then invited the trainees to explain their charts. From these practices, I assumed that the resource persons neither provided the trainees with new knowledge nor did they expand the trainees' existing knowledge. The trainees confirmed this conclusion by reporting that their interaction with each other was more enriching than their interaction with the resource persons. Likewise, the transparencies, with their blurry shapes and outdated information, indicated that the resource persons spent little time preparing their lectures. The training sessions conveyed the message that maintaining the status quo mattered more than implementing change. One of the ironies was that the trainees left the venue believing that they were more informed about the classroom processes and school management than the resource persons, most of whom were senior educational officials and faculty. The findings of the study suggest that professional development initiatives become effective only when the participants are equally involved

in the planning of the activities and only when the intended outcomes serve the interests of clients (Bredeson, 2002; Brennen, 2001). It might be helpful if the trainees were consulted about the mode of delivery and teaching methodologies before the inception of the sessions. However, due to certain reasons, this was not possible.

Additionally, it seemed that the resource persons, while designing their instructional strategies, either did not pay too much attention to the principles and philosophies of adult learning or had limited knowledge about these concepts. Recognizing that adults have different learning needs from children is one of the basic ingredients of effective professional development: “Adults prefer learning situation which are practical and problem-centered...guard against becoming too theoretical...”(Brennen, 2001, p.10). While identifying different instructional strategies of effective professional development programs, Peterson (2009) suggested that trainees should be engaged in thinking, reflection, and analysis during these sessions. He added, “Pedagogy should be varied, engaging, and use the most current and effective approaches for helping adults, and especially administrators, learn their craft”. It is imperative that the professional development programs in Pakistan should replace traditional practices with more modern ways of learning. Pakistan can learn from the experiences of those countries where leadership and its preparation have a long history of success. In this regard, Khan (2010) suggested that since limited research related to leadership and professional development is available in the Pakistani context, Pakistan could benefit from the leadership development programs of those developing countries that have some relevance to the socio-economic conditions of Pakistan. In this way, “national and international norms could be established and applied in developing principals so these principals could manage their schools effectively and efficiently” (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Khan (2010) added that a hybrid of local and foreign models would be helpful in designing a generic leadership development program. Furthermore, as this particular study notes, extensive empirical research that focuses on the organization and structure of education [with the aim of bringing changes] is required because these dimensions have an everlasting impact upon the productivity of any kind of educational intervention.

Research suggests that the success of professional development programs is also contingent upon an effective follow-up mechanism (Brennen, 2001). However, whether or not the trainees used the lessons they learned after attending foreign funded capacity development programs has received little attention (Rodwell, 1988). In this study, both the trainees and the project staff attributed the limited outcomes of the training session to the absence of a follow-up mechanism. The trainees mentioned that the absence of a follow-up mechanism diminished the importance of the program for them; this was evident from their late arrivals and sporadic attendance. Their attitude and behavior confirms the findings of those researchers who reported that educators in Pakistan not only take these sessions as an opportunity for getting some

financial benefits, but also bring a holiday mood to these sessions (Khan, 2002; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). It could be assumed that the trainees were confident that no one would ask them whether or not the sessions led to changes in their practices. This assumption was validated by the behavior of the deputy directors of education who failed to carry out evaluations of the trainees, despite being asked to do so. Lamb (1995 as cited in Sullivan, 2002) attributed the limited implementation of training in the school context to the absence of a follow-up mechanism in developing countries. Since the recipient countries are the beneficiaries of foreign funded interventions, it is their responsibility to convince the donors that a follow-up mechanism should be an integral component of professional development program and that money should be allocated for this activity.

Not only did the local implementers place little value on the importance of a follow-up mechanism, but the donor agency also had a limited role that only focused on the proper utilization of financial assistance. Therefore, the project staff made the proper maintenance of finances, not the quality of training, its priority. The project staff was successful in keeping accurate financial records because, as previously mentioned, an annual analysis report included an official acknowledgement of the financial records. Furthermore, the donors did not engage in either the monitoring or evaluation of this project. A USAID report states that when a monitoring and evaluation system are not in place, there is a greater chance for corrupt practices to occur, especially when the implementers have limited capacities: “When large amounts of money are infused into an education system that lacks sufficient numbers of trained personal...both the intentional and unintentional misallocation of funds is easy” (Chapman, 2002, p. 20 as cited in Rose, 2009). While acknowledging the limited roles of donor agencies in the monitoring of educational projects, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Pakistan, Harmer et al. (2011) pointed out that these conflicting circumstances have posed many challenges to the donor agencies who prefer not to visit these areas because of the security concerns: “This leads to challenges both in the monitoring and quality control of the projects and in ensuring aid effectiveness” (p.216). Under these circumstances, it is essential that a third party [preferably indigenous] that has both credibility and expertise should be involved in the monitoring of implementation processes. The USAID has adopted this approach to monitor its projects in conflict-affected areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan (Harmer et al, 2011). Since developing countries have scarce resources, these nations need to take appropriate measures that should result in the judicious use of foreign assistance. Although Pakistan has been the recipient of foreign educational assistance for many years, it still lacks a match between the level of investment and the development of education. Therefore, it is essential that the government in Pakistan, with the help of other actors and entities, devise policies that could ensure the proper utilization of foreign assistance.

Concluding Remarks

Although small, the present study made an attempt to highlight some of the core issues and draw some important conclusions. Both the government of Pakistan and the donor agencies need to explore and engage non-traditional actors and entities, such as non-governmental organizations and higher educational institutions within Pakistan, for the implementation of foreign assisted projects. While engaging different entities, donors should “audit the level of their efficiency, honesty, and commitment before giving grants or loans” (King & Buchert, 1999). The productivity of these kinds of intervention could be enhanced if donors play a proactive role in the monitoring and evaluation of their projects, especially during the designing, planning, and implementation phases. Because the institutional capacities are limited, as noticed in this study, donors need to engage their partners in such a manner that nurtures an enriching partnership between the two actors. The lack of resources is one of the bottlenecks in offering training programs for educators; therefore, Pakistan needs to ensure the proper utilization of the foreign funds that it receives for the benefit of different components of education.

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