

## A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FOREIGN FUNDED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF HEAD TEACHERS— LESSONS FROM PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated to what extent a foreign funded project that encompassed the capacity building of elementary school head teachers was implemented and utilized according to its goals and objectives. The study, which used qualitative tools to generate data, exclusively analyzed the following three factors: 1) role and support of implementing agencies; 2) training needs of head teachers; and 3) the development of training modules and content. The findings of the study suggest that due to the limited capacities of the officials involved in the implementation process, the above-mentioned factors could not be addressed adequately; this, in turn, reduced the effectiveness of this project. The study maintains that in order to achieve the maximum benefits of international assistance, it is imperative to deviate from the traditional practices through the involvement of new actors and entities. The study especially suggests the promotion of a research culture focusing on the different dimensions of education. Furthermore, the study recommends that these kinds of interventions should also involve the country's higher educational institutions

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Foreign fund, Professional development, Head teachers

## 1. Introduction

Most researchers agree that providing training to educational managers, educational administrators, and planners is important for narrowing the gap between educational intentions and educational reality (Rodwell, 1988). Unfortunately, such a gap is very wide in Pakistan where school teachers in general and head teachers in particular do not receive continuous capacity building opportunities, especially in the public sector schools, which is the largest provider of education. Khan (2004) acknowledges that head teachers in Pakistan have very limited professional development opportunities: “There are some training programs, which provide in-service training to head teachers, but this happens rarely and benefits only a very limited number. This usually takes place under foreign funded projects” (p.100). Therefore, the previous process of policy making in Pakistan does not exclusively address the issues of the recruitment, induction, and training of head teachers.

However, for the last few years a gradual shift has occurred at the policy level. Through its educational policies, the government has acknowledged the importance of head teachers and the capacity building of these teachers for the qualitative improvement of schools (Ministry of Education, 2009). As a result, the government has started channeling some of its international and indigenous funding towards the capacity development of head teachers. Although researchers have shown serious concerns about the quality and standards of locally initiated capacity development programs for educators in Pakistan (Mohammad & Jones, 2008; Rarieya, 2005; Kizlibash, 1998), little is known about how foreign-funded interventions have been utilized and implemented. The research has also indicated certain gaps in the implementation of foreign funded projects (Johnson, 1995; Nagel, et al, 1989).

## 2. Objective of the Study

Therefore, this study examines to what extent the government in Pakistan has implemented and utilized a foreign funded project that encompassed the capacity building of elementary school head teachers according to the goals and objectives of the program. This study made an attempt to highlight some of the core issues that, if addressed adequately, might enhance the productivity of these programs. This research focused on the following factors: the support of implementing agencies, the training needs of head teachers, and the development of content or training modules. This study does not include the perspective of head teachers, a focus that will be discussed in detail elsewhere.

## 3. Background of the Study

In 2006, Pakistan’s Ministry of Education, with the financial support of an international donor, launched a project. Spread over a period of five years (2006-2011), the aim of the project was to strengthen the capacities of the government’s Teachers’ Training Institutions as well as to initiate the capacity development of elementary school teachers and head teachers in the four provinces [Punjab, Sind, Balochistan, Khyber], federal capital, Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), tribal areas, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The government allocated a total budget of Rs 90 million (\$991,770) for the training of 1,962 elementary teachers and 870 head teachers in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region where this study was conducted. Therefore, the study does not cover the other regions mentioned above. Additionally, the study only deals with the component of professional development (PD) of elementary head teachers, not of the elementary teachers. Two of the specific objectives defined in the project documents about the PD of head teachers are: 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.

The Federal Project Management Unit (FPMU), a subsidiary of the Federal Ministry of Education, is the executing agency of this project in the areas of the federal capital, Azad Jammu Kashmir, tribal areas, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). In the GB region, the FPMU, through the involvement of the local Directorate of Education, implements the project. A local Teacher’s Training College provides the setting for the project office. With the help of three resource personnel, a Project Director oversees, supervises, and conducts the

activities of this program; the Project Director also reports to the local Secretary of Education about the progress of the project and arranges activities with the approval of the Secretary of Education. According to the project document, the government's Teachers' Training Colleges or Colleges of Education is supposed to support the activities of this project.

#### **4. Context of the Study**

The study was conducted in Gilgit, which is the capital of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), formerly known as the Northern Areas of Pakistan. With an estimated population of 1.5 million inhabitants, GB consists of seven administrative districts. The federal government of Pakistan controls the affairs of GB region. A minimal availability of employment opportunities results from 1) the absence of industrial infrastructure and 2) a mountainous region that limits agricultural land. Therefore, the people in this region have an enhanced awareness about the importance of education; they see education as a way to secure employment in both the government and private sectors. Despite the fact that the federal government began its educational interventions in this region in 1971 (Jones, Baig, Sajid & Rahman, 2005), - thirty years after the birth of Pakistan, the literacy rate of GB is almost equivalent to the national average (Aga Khan Education Services, 2008).

For the last decade, GB has experienced numerous developments on the educational front. For instance, the region has seen an increase in school enrollment and in the number of private schools; unlike in the past, female students now outperform male students on all levels (Sales, 1999). One educational development milestone is the establishment of Karakoram International University, the first public sector university that has made higher education available to the people in remote areas of Northern Pakistan. Despite these developments, the education sector of GB faces similar issues and challenges as other regions of Pakistan, such as lack of training opportunities for educators, limited number of female schools, small number of science and English teachers, lack of accountability mechanisms, political interference in recruitment of educators, limited financial resources (budget), and the lack of political commitment towards the cause of educational development.

#### **5. Methodology**

Since qualitative methods allow researchers to explore multiple realities in natural settings (Stake, 1995; Mertens, 2005), I used qualitative methods to generate data for this study. The sample of this study included a project director, three resources persons, and two faculty members from a college of education. Primarily, these are the people who were responsible for the overall implementation of the program. I used two qualitative tools—interviews and document reviews—to generate the required information. In order to conduct formal interviews, I developed three separate interview protocols for the project director, resource persons, and faculty members of the college of education; I also engaged in informal conversations with the above-mentioned individuals. Each interview, which was conducted in Urdu—the national language of Pakistan—lasted 40-60 minutes. Once I completed the interviews, I expanded the notes I had taken during the interview process. I also asked the interviewees for clarification to ensure the accuracy of my notes.

In addition to interviews, I used document reviews as a second tool of data collection. I reviewed multiple documents in order to further expand my understanding about the various processes associated with the program. Some of the reviewed documents included the project document, annual analysis report, training need assessment forms, registration forms, pre- and post-test questionnaires, and the content of the curriculum. In order to analyze data, I developed certain themes relevant to the objectives of this empirical study. This approach enabled me to examine the patterns and consistency of the occurrence of the themes.

## 6. Literature Review-Head Teachers' Development in Pakistan

In order to become a teacher in the government schools of Pakistan, an individual needs a Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC), Certificate of Teaching (CT), and a B.Ed. degree. The duration of each of these programs is nine to 12 months, which is brief compared to programs in other developing and developed countries. As a result, these programs have questionable quality, relevance, and methods of delivery (UNESCO, 2003; Kizilbash, 1998; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). The officially defined criterion used to offer an individual the position of head teacher is length of teaching experience rather than the candidate's motivational, managerial, and human relation skills (Kandasamay & Blaton, 2004). Harber and Davies (1997) state that since the head teachers in developing countries come from the teaching staff, they lack the skills and knowledge relevant to the classroom practices. While explaining the vague role of Pakistani head teachers, Warwick and Reimers (1995) mention, "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). Therefore, these head teachers tend to focus on administrative related jobs rather than engaging in curriculum design and instructional practices (Memon, 2000).

Chapman (2005) emphasizes that the evolution of quality schools requires the education of quality leaders through coherent, integrated, consequential, and systematic leadership development programs. However, head teachers in developing countries, including Pakistan, do not get any formal training in their leadership roles (Williams & Cummin, 2005). Memon (2000) pointed out that for the last fifty years, the Pakistani government has initiated numerous educational reforms, but it did not give due importance to the professional needs of head teachers. As a result, these 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. p3). Kandasamay and Blaton (2004) asserted that Pakistani head teachers lack managerial skills because they do not learn school management through B.A and Master's level programs; additionally, no such mechanism offers continuous professional development programs to head teachers. In this regard, Khan (2004) noted that M.Ed. and B.Ed. programs that colleges of education offer do not cover a number of important concepts, such as modern management techniques, monitoring and evaluation, and planning. Khaki (2005) added that the head teachers in Pakistan often lack certain attributes essential for leadership—a strong personality, communication skills, and a Master's degree in education.

Khan (2004) attributed the lack of resources to the non-availability of professional development programs for head teachers in Pakistan. He mentioned that in the past, the school heads received limited development programs due to the assistance of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, but now "the process of capacity building has come to a standstill" (p.109). Rodwell and Hurst (1985) identified five major problems that prevent the less developing countries from offering professional development programs to the head teachers: 1) lack of coherent national training policy; 2) neglect of research into training needs and impact of training; 3) inadequate budget; 4) shortage of suitable training material, and; 5) under-trained trainers.

Khan (2004) asserted that "Head teachers should be the role model for teachers and students... [they] must be proficient in administration and academics, so that they can supervise educational problems" (p.84). However, as mentioned earlier, because the CT, PTC, and B.Ed. degrees do not provide certain standards, head teachers with those degrees still find it difficult to cope with the educational problems they face in real life situations. When addressing the shortcomings of professional development programs in Pakistan, Kizilbash (1998) has identified a number of factors that minimize the productivity of these interventions: lack of research, emphasis on conventional methods and curricula, minimal training, inadequate programs,

lack of commitment, and absence of evaluation of teacher preparation programs. Mohammad and Jones (2008) maintained that one can easily notice the reflection of a traditional bureaucratic model in the training of educators: “Even when they are advocating more creative and innovative ideas and methods, the teachers’ 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” (p.535).

Khan (2010) suggested that to qualitatively improve the public schools in Pakistan, an integrated professional development program for head teachers is needed. He added that research focusing on the roles and challenges of school leaders needs to be conducted: “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). Since limited or no attention has been paid to adequately develop the public school head teachers in Pakistan, the impact of this situation on the quality of public education is evident. Because head teachers do not receive opportunities to learn how to practice the ethos of instructional leaders, they tend to act like authoritative figures. The head teachers, who detach themselves from the instructional responsibilities, provide minimal contributions to the pedagogical processes of their schools.

## 7. Findings

The project staff, including the coordinator, resource person, and other officials, agreed that the project represents one of the most successful interventions in the public sector. An Analysis Report developed by the Federal Project Management Unit (FPMU) yielded the same result. The report, which covered the period 2007-2010, stated, “Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) can be considered as an efficient stakeholder” (p.33). According to the report, the 92% of the budget utilization illustrated the project’s success. Another landmark was the maximum participation of teachers (63%) and head teachers (61%) against the given targets. However, the report was not explicit in elaborating to what extent these interventions contributed to the competencies and skills of head teachers who attended these training sessions. Instead, the report contained a brief section under the heading “Best Practices,” which stated that the training helped to develop the following competencies in the trainers: 1) interactive learning, 2) group work, 3) teacher centered approaches, 4) presentation skills, and 5) preparation of low cost material. However, no tool or indicator confirmed that the trainers developed the above-mentioned competencies. When asked their opinion about the development of the above-mentioned competencies, the project staff did not provide a strong response. They did mention, however, that the evaluation form helped them to develop this assumption.

During the life span of this project (2006-2011), a total of 535 head teachers were trained against the target of 870. The head teachers, who attended the training program, had prior experience ranging from one to 32 years of teaching and managing. Also, they had varying educational qualifications, such as Certificate of Teaching (CT), Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC), Bachelor of Education (BE.d), and MA educations. The Deputy Director of Education had the responsibility to nominate the head teachers for the training according to the criteria defined by the project office. Only head teachers of elementary schools were eligible for this training. Although the nomination criteria mentioned that equal representation would be given to males and females, the official report acknowledged that only a very small number of female head teachers (68) participated. The project staff suggested that traveling issues due to such a scattered population might explain the low number of participating females. The project director also noted that government schools only had a small number of female head teachers.

Although the project staff (project director and three resource persons who also involved in implementation processes besides conducting training sessions) were not open in expressing their concerns and reservations about the roles of the Directorate of Education (implementing agency in GB) and College of Education (where the project office was stationed), the staff did exude a sense of dissatisfaction. They

were not happy with the level of support provided by these entities. In this regard, the Project Director mentioned the following:

*Yes, we are enjoying the full support of the Directorate of Education, but there are some issues that need to be addressed. For instance, currently, we have three resource persons, but there is a provision in the budget that allows us to appoint eight resource persons. Despite my repeated request for more personnel, the decision-makers at the Directorate of Education appear reluctant to appoint additional resource personnel. I really do not know the causes of this delay, but we still continue to carry out our activities.*

The project staff pointed out that a lack of communication existed between the project office and the officials of the Directorate of Education on numerous issues. They mentioned that the officials, who are nominating authorities, do not nominate and inform the head teachers about a particular session in a timely manner; this sometimes prevented the head teachers from attending training. In this regard, the Project Director explained, “Sometimes I send reminders to the Deputy Director of Education for the nomination of eligible head teachers...it happened on many occasions when head teachers came to attend training three days after the inception of the training sessions.” The project office also justified that head teachers were not nominated because the schools had no alternatives or the schools had their own activities. The precarious law and order situation of the region was another issue that sometimes minimized the chances of the head teachers’ participation. In order to overcome these challenges and ensure the maximum participation of head teachers, the project staff undertook an initiative, which turned out to be quite successful. Instead of conducting a centralized training, they conducted training locally where they went to a particular area and carried out sessions in small clusters. In other words, they took the training at the doorsteps of head teachers. However, for some unknown reasons, they could not carry out these local sessions in a sustained manner.

The project staff also mentioned that since the inception of this program, they were continuously moving from one locality to another, indicating the absence of permanent offices. The project staff reported that they had recently moved to the existing location, which used to be a canteen. In this regard, the Project Director mentioned,

We have been a rolling stone for many months because we did not have a regular office; sometimes we dumped our training material into one of the classrooms of a government school and conducted training in that setting. The place where we are sitting right now used to be a tea room; we cleaned the place and converted it into our office...this is how we are working.

The project staff stated that these circumstances do not offer a learning environment conducive to their trainees, which is essential for the dissemination of quality training. One of the resource persons said, “We don’t have a fixed place in which we could impart the training. Sometimes we conducted the training in a government college of education, and other times we conducted the training in surrounding schools. We had to move the learning materials from one location to another location...because we did not have a means of transportation, we had to carry the material.”

The project staff noted that the classrooms in the government schools and college of education where they conducted training were poorly equipped and furnished. I noticed the same shoddy conditions when I visited some of the classrooms. One of the resource individuals reported as follows on the improperly equipped classrooms: “We should not expect any change from these head teachers since the facilities (pointing to the situation of classrooms) we offer might be worse than those facilities in their schools. I worry that the head teachers might think that this is how we have to maintain our schools and classrooms. To expect a change initiative, we should provide them with better facilities.” According to the project

document, the college of education where the training activities were in progress would be provided with furniture, but the college had not yet received the furniture at the end of the training. While commenting on this situation, one of the resource persons asserted that the decision-makers had no concerns about the problems the project officials faced; instead, they were only concerned about whether or not the officials conducted the activities even with the limited resources. The project staff also reported that they were making their own arrangements for heating since the budget made no provisions for heating, even though the area is famous for its severe weather conditions where the winter temperature often drops to minus 10 degree Celsius.

Not only did the project staff have reservations about the cooperation of the Directorate of Education, but they were also unhappy with the non-supportive behavior of the management of the College of Education, which was one of the major stakeholders of this project. The management of the college of education had the perception that it had no direct role in the implementation of this project. On the other hand, the project staff viewed the college of education as an integral part of the program. The project staff attributed this situation to the communication gap that existed between the college of education and the Directorate of Education. They added that the Directorate of Education had failed to properly convey the message that the college of education had a central role in the implementation of this project. Additionally, it was reported that the college of education had recently sent a formal request to the Director of Education in which it demanded the transfer of the project office to a new site.

The project staff further noticed and reported that the project documents adequately addressed areas ranging from the provision of textbooks and furniture to the dissemination of training, but that they did not adequately address the ground realities. For instance, although the resource persons and director were experienced, they did not receive any orientation or training before the commencement of the project activities. They were hired and asked to develop the training module. One of the resource persons commented about this situation as follows:

*We were not provided with any training; instead, we were asked to initiate the training activities with very short notice because of pressure from the donors. We did not receive a roadmap about how to plan the project activities. Even the Project Director was recruited two months after our appointment. As a result, we planned and initiated our activities with very limited resources and without any orientation.*

One of the female resource persons added:

*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 had different skills from children; they required different preparation from the trainers. Additionally, I have no previous experience of training male head teachers, so that was very challenging for me.*

The Project Director justified the non-provision of prior training or orientation. He explained that the resource persons were appointed with the understanding that they were capable of conducting project related activities without training or orientation. He added that, except for the proper utilization of the budget, he had not received any orientation or training before the inception of the program.

Although the project document clearly mentioned that the college of education would receive books and related resources, the college of education did not get these supplemental resources. Instead, the resource persons borrowed the required books from a local library affiliated with an International Non-Governmental Organization in order to develop the training modules. The resource persons added that their previous experience and linkages with a local professional development center helped them to develop the training module.

The resource persons pointed out that the Project Management Unit (PMU)—an organization that oversees the implementation of the project in GB—asked them and the other regions where this project was in progress to submit their respective training modules [which they developed] to the PMU. On the basis of these training modules, the PMU developed books and training materials [training kits], but did not provide the project office with these resources until two-and-one-half-years after the start of intervention when the project was about to conclude. During an informal chat, the project director shared with me a training manual developed by the PMU; the manual very precisely addressed every aspect of school leadership and management. The project director claimed that with the provision of training modules, the trainers were carrying out the activities according to the content and methods defined in the training modules. The claim of the project director could not be substantiated since the trainers were still using the slides and transparencies they had developed. They justified their behavior by insisting that they were already covering whatever the modules mentioned.

The project director and the resource persons claimed that they were conducting the training activities in a very systemic manner by first addressing the need assessments of the trainees. They added that on the basis of the need assessment, they determined the curricula and other activities related to the learning needs of the head teachers. To further assess the learning needs of the trainees, they used a pre-test questionnaire that asked the trainees to provide the answers to different questions. The questions covered a variety of concepts, including the qualities of head teachers, leadership styles, multi-grade teaching, classroom observation, curriculum, and school improvement plans. After the completion of each training session, the head teachers took a post-test to assess their level of understanding about the different concepts covered during the training sessions. Both the pre-test and post-test were graded, and the results were shared with the trainees. Ninety-five percent of the head teachers scored below 30% on the pre-test; however, they did comparatively better on the post-test.

All the forms—registration forms, training need assessment forms, evaluation forms, and pre-test and post-test questionnaires—were developed in the English language. This situation had some implications. For instance, 90 percent of the head teachers responded to questions asked on the training need assessment forms and the pre- and post-test questionnaires in the Urdu language, the national language of Pakistan. The head teachers did not answer correctly in the pre-test questionnaire, one of the instruments used, in addition to the assessment form, to assess the training needs of head teachers. During the review of the 12 questions on the pre-test, it was noted that the head teachers did not understand the nature and context of the questions asked. For instance, one question asked the head teachers to elaborate on some of the steps of classroom observation. About 80 percent of the head teachers provided the wrong answers. One of the head teachers responded as follows: “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 who had more than 19 years of teaching experience provided the following answer: “1) Taking attendance after entering into classroom; 2) Teaching students after attendance; and 3) Giving regular home work to students.” One of the head teachers with nine years of teaching experience defined the curriculum in the following words: “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.” One of the teachers described the multi-grading in the following words: “A good teacher reaches his class on time, and he teaches according to the lesson plan.”

The resource persons stated that they explained the questions in English as well as in Urdu in order to ensure that the head teachers understood the pre-test instrument. However, they also added the following insight: “Although some of the head teachers had PTC and CT degrees, they still had limited knowledge about curriculum and other educational concepts. Therefore, they were unable to provide the right answers.”

When asked whether the Project Management Unit had examined and approved the training need assessment tool, and pre- and post-test questionnaires, the project staff emphasized that the PMU had not only approved the testing instruments but had also valued the efforts of the staff.

The training need assessment form was not a detailed one; instead, it contained the following three questions: 1) Did you previously attend any training? 2) What do you want to learn from this training? and 3) Do you have any suggestions? In response to the first questions, only a few head teachers mentioned that they had received training related to their position. In terms of the second question, the head teachers identified skills and competencies that could help them to improve their school; however, they were vague when it came to describing the specific skills and competencies they needed. In reply to question number three, head teachers suggested that these kinds of opportunities should be offered more frequently and for a longer duration. The resource persons and other officials of the college of education did not see this suggestion for more training as a desire to learn more; instead, they interpreted the suggestion as a reflection of the head teachers' interest in gaining some financial benefits from these programs through an extended period of time.

The resource persons claimed that they used the need assessment forms to develop the content of the training or modules. When asked how posing only one question (such as the second question) could help someone determine the training needs of head teachers, both the resource persons and project director answered that they get different perspectives, which helped them to identify a variety of topics related to the training needs of head teachers. They added that their personal experiences and their affiliation with the educational system of Pakistan also helped them to determine the training needs of head teachers. Unlike her male colleagues, the female resource person had a different viewpoint about the training need assessment tool: "It is not possible to know the genuine needs of head teachers by asking one question. We should go to the head teachers' respective schools to know the training needs of the head teachers through the application of some kind of mechanism. I think this project needs proper planning...but we started this project in very different circumstances and on an emergency basis that did not allow us to properly assess the actual needs."

The resource persons shared with me some transparencies that they developed for different sessions. They indicated that they based the concepts reflected on the transparencies on the need assessment forms. The transparencies covered a variety of concepts, such as theories of leadership and management, leadership styles, factors of school improvement, community participation, parental role, timetable development, lesson planning, effective communication, and classroom management. The content of the transparencies emphasized the theoretical perspective. For instance, communication skills taught six major themes with five to six sub- themes. The resource persons had to cover these themes in two hours, which was the duration of a single session. Therefore, the trainees only had ten days to acquire some kind of understanding about a diversity of topics. Additionally, the transparencies were written in English. According to the resource persons, both English and Urdu are used to explain the transparencies. The resource persons reported that they use interactive approaches to conduct the training sessions, such as classroom discussions, group work, and classroom presentations. The resource persons further reported that 100 percent of the training activities were carried out at the training centers; as a result, the trainees had no exposure to any real life situation.

The project staff said that they sometimes engage the faculty of the college of education to conduct a particular session. However, faculty members insisted that they only had a sporadic involvement in the project activities. One of the faculty members asserted, "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 requested 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." Many officials of the Directorate of Education, regardless of their expertise about a particular theme, oversaw these training sessions, according

to the faculty of college of education. One member of the faculty expressed serious reservations about the quality of these sessions:

*These officials led sessions without any preparation and without engaging the trainees in any kind of interactive activities. Since these educational officials were the bosses of the trainees, the trainees did not raise any questions or engage in discussions; they feared that their questions might offend the officials. A session cannot be an interactive one when the resource person is your boss, and you are supposed to listen to him without disagreeing or arguing because such dissent is unacceptable in our organizational norms. The officials came and shared their success stories without engaging the trainees in any kind of activities.*

The faculty added that on one occasion an educational official was invited to take a session on Islamic studies; he instead delivered a lecture on history. According to the faculty, the educational official only realized his error when he exited the training venue.

Although the country allocated a budget of \$447 million for the project, the project lacked an important component—a follow-up mechanism. It did not include any tool for evaluating the outcome or impact of these training programs. The project staff reported that since the inception of the project, a three-member team from PMU only visited once to monitor the progress of the project; based upon that short visit, the team expressed satisfaction. In addition, the donor agency had a limited role to ensure the proper utilization of funds according to the approved scope. The project director and resource persons expressed incredulity that this mega project lacked such a crucial follow-up component. They felt that the absence of a follow-up mechanism could make this whole process an exercise in futility. To address the absence of a follow-up, the project staff developed an evaluation form to ascertain whether or not the head teachers who attended the training had success in implementing change in their respective schools by applying what the training had taught them. They sent the evaluation form to the deputy directors of education of each different district and asked them to evaluate their head teachers according to the checklist provided by the project office. Although they sent this request last year, they did not receive any response until the completion of this research.

## **8. Discussion**

Because the qualitative improvement of schools also depends upon the capacity development of head teachers (Herriot et al, 2002), this project represents one of the best initiatives taken with the financial support of an international donor. Although the non-availability of resources to finance these kinds of interventions emerges as a major obstacle in the context of developing countries (Nagel & Cynider, 1989), Pakistan had the advantage of outside capital in implementing its project. However, researchers agree that to achieve maximum benefits from these kinds of interventions, it is essential to give importance to a host of factors, including context, utilization, provision of resources, identification of problems, and good leadership (Hurst, 1983; Fullan, 1982; Dalin 1978; Havelock & Huberban, 1977 as cited in Rodwell, 1988). It seems that different actors and entities responsible for the implementation of this program did not pay too much attention to the above-mentioned factors. Additionally, the project aimed to focus on two primary goals: 1) deviation from the traditional practices of educator preparation programs in Pakistan and 2) reiteration that the capacities of the government college of education would be enhanced. Because none of the above-mentioned benchmarks was properly addressed, the productivity of this important program was minimized.

Numerous factors—the support of different stakeholders, the provision of resources, and the delivery of training—undermined the effectiveness of this intervention. One of the ironies of this project was that it functioned under the umbrella of a highly centralized educational system that has a questionable performance record in terms of maintaining the quality of education. Research indicates that a centrally launched initiative does not guarantee the success of programs because such programs lack a skilled staff and have limited capacities (Johnson, 1995). Research suggests that Pakistani educational officials working under a centralized system are unable to contribute to the qualitative improvement of government schools (Komatsu, 2008; Khan, 2004; Warwick & Reimers, 1992; UNESCO, 1984; Nwankwo, 1983). Since the inception of this program, the local Directorates of Education did not play a proactive role, despite the fact that they had the primary responsibility of implementing this project. Researchers recognized that ineffective management remains an underlying cause of unsuccessful educational reforms (Rodwell, 1988). For example, the project office frequently changed locations throughout the program, thereby forcing the project staff to carry out training activities in different locations. Despite repeated requests, the project staff did not receive the number of resource persons it needed. Although not working in an ideal environment frustrated the project staff, the situation did not seem to bother the entities responsible for the execution of the project. Likewise, the project director, who headed the program, remained an instructor, head teacher, and district level educational administrator for many years, embraced a very traditional approach of management in order to run the project. Therefore, understanding the effect of the provision of capital is not enough; it is also essential to comprehend the influence that other factors exert in this kind of intervention (Rodwell, 1988).

It could be assumed that the project was not initiated under normal and ideal circumstances. Despite limited resources and a number of challenges, the project staff ran this project for four years. As mentioned earlier, the project staff, including the project director, had decades of teaching and managerial experience, yet they demonstrated limited capacities to run such a large program, which is evident from their practices. The gaps in the various program components question the skills and competencies of the project staff members who did not receive any training or orientation before the inception of this program. It would have been more helpful if director and resource persons had been provided with proper training about the different components of this intervention. Researchers advocated that the preparation of trainers warrants greater attention (Rodwell, 1988).

It might be helpful to explore other strategies in order to achieve maximum benefits from these kinds of interventions. One of the strategies is the involvement of the country's higher educational institutions "because the faculties of higher education institutions have expertise in different dimensions of education; their engagement in this process could be both enriching and meaningful" (Khan, 2010, p. 259). Since schools and universities share common interests and need each other to become successful (Fullan, 1991), an organized approach in which schools, training centers and higher educational institutions work together is required. In the Western countries, such a partnership has been quite successful in addressing the needs of the educational sector that directly impact the qualitative improvement of schools. Donor agencies might not find it difficult to convince the recipient countries to deviate from the traditional practices of utilizing international assistance. Therefore, programs should be developed in such a manner where new and non-traditional actors and entities should play a pivotal role in the implementation processes.

The assumption that the project was a success story was based on the number of head teachers who attended the training sessions. However, some areas, such as training need assessment procedures, content/curricula of training, and methods of delivering trainings, needed special attention; yet, the project did not properly address these areas. Evidence from the developing countries also suggests that foreign funded interventions became less successful in achieving their desired goals due to poorly defined training needs and irrelevant course materials (Jones, 1989). Therefore, professionals involved in the implementation

of foreign funded projects need to pay special attention to various dimensions, such as need identification, training modules, course content, and methodology (Rodwell, 1988). As this study notes, the educational system of Pakistan has recently integrated school leadership and its development into its policies; however, coherent policies addressing every aspect of leadership development are still missing. For example, certain gaps in the training assessment forms question the accuracy of the assessment procedures. Two instruments—the training need assessment form and the pre-test questionnaire—were used to assess the training needs of head teachers. The training needs of head teachers were determined on the basis of one question asked in the need assessment form. The other two questions asked in the training need assessment were not helpful in determining the training needs since some of the head teachers provided vague answers. Not only did the need assessment instrument provide limited information about the needs of the trainees, but the pre-test instrument, which was in the English language, also seemed to not serve a viable purpose. The wrong answers provided by the head teachers show that the head teachers did not understand the questions asked in English language. This situation raises an important question about whether or not the assessment instruments identified the genuine needs of the head teachers. The head teachers' limited proficiency of the English language might have prevented the head teachers from effectively expressing their needs. Since the success of these kinds of interventions is also contingent upon the identification of actual needs (Jones, 1989), it is essential to adopt different ways of assessing the training needs that would not only help to develop the right curriculum, but would also help to formulate the right approach of delivering training.

DeJaeghere, Williams, and Kyeyune (2008) argued that the training programs for head teachers should deviate from government initiated interventions; instead, the school leaders should be involved “in assessing their needs, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement...” (p.13). In this regard, Khan (2010) suggested that since the Pakistani culture is very diverse, a survey mechanism could be used to identify the needs of head teachers in different contexts. He added, “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). To assess the training needs of head teachers for the implementation of a foreign funded capacity development program, the Kenyan Ministry of Education endorsed a centralized need assessment mechanism (Herriot, et al, 2002). The approach, which was very successful, led the Ministry of Education to identify the actual needs of head teachers and then integrate these needs into the head teachers' educational programs. In addition, systematic research could be conducted to determine the needs of head teachers.

One of the issues associated with school management in Pakistan is that head teachers define their role as an administrative one (Khan xxx; Memon xxx); this prevents the head teachers from contributing to the instructional development of their school. While developing the content of the training, the resource persons were not explicit in emphasizing those skills that could enable trainees to gain a better understanding of the instructional processes; instead, it seemed that the emphasis was on the theoretical perspective. Not only might the head teachers have difficulty understanding the theoretical perspective, but they also may have spent too much time trying to decipher the theoretical concepts. It is suggested that since the duration of in-service programs are generally brief, the curriculum needs to be designed in such a manner where it supplements the previous knowledge of trainees (Peterson, 2002). The integration of such topics as leadership theories and styles of leadership might be difficult to understand for the head teachers who had no previous knowledge about these concepts. The gaps in the need assessment processes, as well as an overemphasis on the theoretical perspective and the inclusion of numerous other topics, made the quality of this program questionable. One of the implications of this situation was that the program deviated from its initial core objective—bringing changes into the classroom processes. To rectify this situation, it might be helpful to address and cover only those issues that impact the processes of teaching and learning in schools.

Rodwell (1988) argued that although international donors make the capacity development of educational administrators a top priority, it is still difficult to assess the effect of these programs. He added that limited attention has been paid to ensure whether or not the trainees make the effort to use new skills for the benefit of their organization. The absence of a follow-up mechanism made the stakeholders worry about the effectiveness of this program. No mechanism monitored whether or not the head teachers altered their practices after participating in this program. The absence of such an important component might make the head teachers less accountable regarding the outcomes of the training. According to Scheerens, Glas, and Thomas (2003), the tools of monitoring and evaluation are helpful in three ways in educational monitoring: 1) formally regulate desired levels of quality of educational outcomes and processes; 2) hold educational service providers accountable; and 3) support ongoing improvements in education. Thus, it is essential that a follow-up mechanism should be an integral part of these kinds of interventions. Not only could the follow-up mechanism monitor the practices of returning trainees, but it could also help to identify the genuine needs of educators, which future training programs could address (Khan, 2010).

In addition to the absence of a follow-up mechanism, other issues in this training program also seemed to neutralize the outcomes of this intervention. For example, this study reported that a majority of the trainees cared more about financial benefits than the process of training. Evidence also suggests that in Pakistan educators attend these training sessions in a “holiday mood” and they consider these opportunities as a source of earning income through travel and daily allowances (Khan, 2002; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Designing a professional development program is not only challenging, but also requires that special attention be paid to understanding structural and cultural factors (Peterson, 2002). Such an understanding could be developed if a significant degree of the research focuses on the various cultural factors that influence the processes of education is available. However, one of the problems associated with the limited productivity of these kinds of interventions is that very little research on the various components of education in Pakistan is available especially before the period 2001. Therefore, those individuals who design these kinds of interventions often ignore essential factors. However, the post-2001 period saw an evolution of a research-oriented culture in which a significant number of research papers have started to emerge from the higher educational institutions of Pakistan. One of the evidence of this concept is that recently the USAID, with the collaboration of fourteen higher educational institutions, has initiated a Teachers Education Program in Pakistan. In order to explore and investigate some of the essential components of this project, the USAID has engaged the faculties of higher education to develop research papers. It is expected that better knowledge and expertise would help the faculties to develop research papers that address the core issues facing the Pakistani educational system.

The project staff preferred to limit the training sessions to the traditional classroom approaches. Instead, the project staff might have considered other, more context-oriented options, such as coaching or mentoring. In today’s world, leadership development enables people to learn from their context or work places (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Day, 2000). It is equally important that the head teachers should have in-depth information about these strategies. One of the context-oriented programs is the Field Based Teacher Development Program (FBTDP), which the Aga Khan Education Services of Pakistan successfully created and applied (Sales, 1999). In the FBTDP approach, a school is designated as a learning center and two head teachers working as a mentor and a coach provide training to nine untrained head teachers for a period of one year. According to Sales (1999), one of the merits of this approach is that it addresses the socio-cultural issues that prevent the female head teachers from participating in professional development programs. Therefore, it is the opportune time to move away from the traditional approaches. Pakistani stakeholders should introduce new methods for professional development programs in order to adequately prepare head teachers for their responsibilities. The realization about the essential role of school heads has led both developed and developing countries to introduce innovative leadership development programs (Abdalla & Onguko, 2008; Peterson, 2002). These programs also need to be examined while developing local leadership development programs, but with caution due to variations in cultural practices.

## 9. Concluding Remarks

The inability of the public sector to provide appropriate educational opportunities and the rise of social injustices (Lingard & Ali, 2009) both provide a new impetus to fix the ailing educational sector of Pakistan. The international community and donors have joined hands to help Pakistan emerge from this precarious situation. The inception of various foreign funded educational programs illustrates this international support and commitment. Under these circumstances, it is imperative that whatever assistance comes from whatever sources must be used in such a manner that builds a foundation for a viable and tangible change in the educational sector of Pakistan.

The findings of this study suggest that the limited capacities of both the project staff and the government officials reduced the chances of getting maximum benefits from this program. They project staff and officials equated the success of the program with the program's quantitative dimensions; they had minimal concern for the qualitative aspect of the program. Therefore, it can be assumed that the success of any program is not contingent upon the availability of capital, but instead requires a level of commitment, expertise, and support from the different actors and entities. On the basis of this study, therefore, four important conclusions can be drawn. First, instead of adopting traditional strategies, it might be helpful to involve other actors and entities, such as the country's higher educational institutions that have trained faculty and the expertise to manage these kinds of programs. Second, it is fundamental that the real needs of the target population should be determined through a systematic procedure, such as a survey instrument or empirical research, because the identification of genuine needs could help to design a right curriculum and methods of delivery. Third, a follow-up mechanism needs to be developed in order to hold the trainees accountable if they fail to implement changes in their educational system after attending a particular training. Fourth, a research culture addressing multiple aspect of education needs to be promoted with the help of the country's higher educational institutions and other entities.

It has been recognized globally that the provision of proper training to the primary head teachers determines the quality of education in schools. Therefore, as a major stakeholder, the government of Pakistan needs to acknowledge not only the central role of head teachers, but it also needs to introduce reforms in the recruitment, appointment, and development of school heads. Efforts should be made to develop head teachers as instructional leaders capable of addressing the instructional quality of their schools.

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