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The Impact of Educational Change on School Leaders: Experiences of Pakistani School Leaders

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Abstract
The Pakistani education system, like many other countries across the world, is going through a phase of concerted change in the first decade of the 21st century and school leaders are expected to play a crucial role in the management of this change programme. This article considers the impact of educational change on a group of school leaders who were involved in a major area of this programme of reform: the curriculum and assessment system at Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) level. This article draws from a qualitative enquiry that included semi-structured interviews with Pakistani school leaders examining their experiences, views and perceptions of the change programme. In the interviews the school leaders were asked to reflect on the process of change management in their institutions, the problems they have faced and any suggestions they have for the improvement in the implementation of the change initiative. Drawing from these findings, two aspects are explored in this article: first, the responses of the school leaders to the change initiative; and second, the implications of leading a programme of externally driven change. From this analysis an emergent, grounded model of educational change management in the context of a developing country is proposed.

Introduction: The Pakistani Education System

The education system in Pakistan comprises three distinct streams of educational provision namely the public sector, private sector and madrassa (Islamic education seminaries) sector. The public sector is administered, regulated and funded by the government at national, provincial and district levels through the Ministry of Education, Educational Departments and Directorates of Education, respectively. Alongside the public sector, the private sector, which has recently expanded

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enormously in urban as well as rural areas, also includes institutions for primary, secondary and higher education. The fees charged by these institutions vary considerably and to certain extent indicate the quality of educational provision. There are private schools charging low fees affordable for lower socio-economic class families which provide comparatively better facilities and infrastructure than the public sector institutions though not necessarily better quality education. These institutions follow the same curriculum and assessment system as the public sector. The private sector also includes schools charging high fees for upper-middle and upper classes with education based on the British system through affiliation with Cambridge or London Universities for O-level/GCSE and A-level qualifications. There are also some International Schools charging very high fees and are attended by the children of foreign diplomats and the elite of the society. In both public and private sectors in Pakistan, education has three distinct levels: primary, secondary and tertiary education. In the third stream of madrassa education in Pakistan, though private, funds are not generated through fees as majority of these institutions provide free education and even free lodging and food for some pupils. Funding comes from public donations in the form of cash and food items and from rich Islamic countries patronizing the madrassas that promote their respective religious sect. Children who attend these institutions usually come from lower socio-economic classes. In the madrassa sector, there is very limited control and regulation by the state and great variance in the curriculum and teaching even within the institutions. As there is little standardization, movement from this third stream to the other two streams is very limited, which has resulted in the segregation of this sector. Due to the issue of non-comparability of the madrassa education with both private and public sectors, it was not included in the research. Instead, the research was conducted in schools in both public and private sectors (Figure 1)

This article examines the impact of a reform programme in secondary education, which entailed the revision in the national curriculum accompanied by revisions to the assessment system through the examination boards. These changes were part of a concerted reform agenda for education system initiated in 2002 in Pakistan under the acronym of ESR (Education Sector Reforms). The ESR programme sought improvement in the overall quality of educational provision in Pakistan and comprised a policy framework focusing on improvement in school access, physical facilities, gender inequalities, governance, public–private partnership, diversification of general education, early childhood care and education, resources and literacy. Curriculum change was one of the main priorities, which led to the launch of a comprehensive exercise of curriculum revision in 2005. The target date for completion was December 2009 for the curricula revision of all subjects for classes/grades I–XII covering both the primary and secondary levels of education. The revision of national curriculum in languages and social/Pakistan studies for classes I through XII and assessment system reforms were one of the early initiatives in the ESR programme[1] and so were chosen as the focus for this study. In this article, we explore the experiences of school leaders who have the task of ensuring the implementation of these changes to the curriculum and assessment in their school (Figure 2).

Educational Change and the Role of Headteachers

Education and change are closely linked phenomena as 'change is an ever-present reality for all those working in education' (Lumby, 1998: 191) and a changing education system is inevitable (Oliver, 1996). Though being an inherent part of the education system, change and reform gained intensity in the latter half of the 20th century where the emphasis lay on improvement and, as
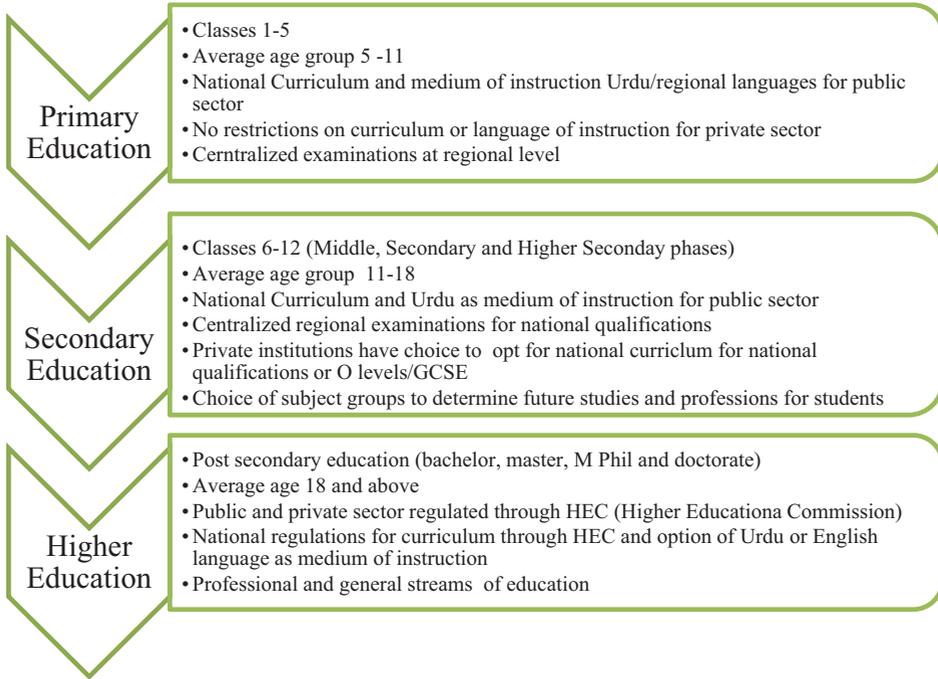
Primary Education
- Classes 1-5
- Average age group 5 -11
- National Curriculum and medium of instruction Urdu/regional languages for public sector
- No restrictions on curriculum or language of instruction for private sector
- Cerntralized examinations at regional level

Secondary Education
- Classes 6-12 (Middle, Secondary and Higher Seconday phases)
- Average age group 11-18
- National Curriculum and Urdu as medium of instruction for public sector
- Centralized regional examinations for national qualifications
- Private institutions have choice to opt for national curriclum for national qualifications or O levels/GCSE
- Choice of subject groups to determine future studies and professions for students

Higher Education
- Post secondary education (bachelor, master, M Phil and doctorate)
- Average age 18 and above
- Public and private sector regulated through HEC (Higher Educationa Commission)
- National regulations for curriculum through HEC and option of Urdu or English language as medium of instruction
- Professional and general streams of education

Figure 1. Pakistani education system: Primary to higher education.

Middle
- Classes 6-8
- National Curriculum
- No central examination and no national qualifications

Secondary
- Classes 9-10
- National Curriculum
- Central examinations
- National qualification of SSC

Higher Secondary
- Classes 11-12
- National Curriculum
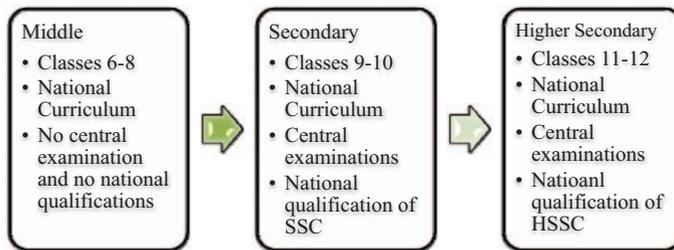- Central examinations
- Natioanl qualification of HSSC

Figure 2. Curriculum and assessment at secondary level in Pakistan.

Cheng (1996) argues, when the aim of education is improvement, change becomes an imperative. This intensification of change is evident in the reforms in Pakistani education as well.

However, approaches to the management of educational change have evolved historically and Fullan's (2009) review of reform efforts from the mid-20th century to the present identifies three distinct eras: the pre-1997 era marked by pressure for reform but few deliberate or effective strategies for successful reform; the 1997–2002 era with some evidence of improvement in student achievement through whole system reforms; the 2002–2009 era with examples of more countries engaged in system reforms with tri-level change involving government, local regions and institutions. Fullan (2009: 112) speculates that in the post-2009 era large-scale reforms would mature into systemic reforms with 'the growing professionalization of reform – self-conscious, deliberate,

attempts to use the growing body of change knowledge to continuously improve whole systems'. Although the demand for reform underpinned each of the three eras, we can identify differing emphases: the school effectiveness, school improvement and school re-culturing movements. It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the school improvement initiative emerged as a distinct body of knowledge (Potter et al., 2002). However, at this point, there remained a free-floating approach to school change through the concepts of organizational change and school-based management. The 1990s saw an integration of the concepts of 'school improvement' and 'school effectiveness' (Purkey and Smith, 1985; Riddell, 1997). It was in this decade that the standards-based reform and concern for student achievement culminated in efforts to achieve widespread and sustained improvement (Halsall, 2001; Sullivan and Shulman, 2005). More recent emphasis on school improvement has been the progress in student outcomes through the behaviour and actions of teachers and enhancement of school culture (Patchen, 1991; Potter et al., 2002). The prevailing reform agenda in Western educational systems such as US, Canada and UK is on tackling underachievement in difficult and disadvantaged circumstances (Harris, 2006) and here the pressure for reform is double-edged: both to attain quality of learning outcomes and to accommodate social diversity and its ever-changing requirements. There has been a significant amount of research and theoretical discussions related to different aspects of large-scale educational reforms (Fullan, 2005, 2009; Hargreaves, 2005; Levin, 2010a, 2010b; Levin and Fullan, 2008) and the research project reported here is an attempt to examine the initiative of large-scale educational reform from the perspective of the lived experience of Pakistani institutional heads.

Different writers (Harris and Chrispeels, 2006; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001) have studied educational reform efforts as different phases or waves of educational reform movement. However, the phases of the reform movement and the underpinning models of change have not been universal in the pattern and time scales across different national education systems. Various contexts of change can be one possible explanation for this variation, along with the substance and politics of change (listed by Dawson, 1994, as three determinants of change). Educational reform is a 'complex cultural endeavour' highly sensitive to its context (Gordon and Patterson, 2008: 33). Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) have stressed the study of educational reform efforts across different contexts and times in order to understand and address the issue of sustainability in educational change. While much of the literature on change management draws from experiences in Western educational systems, we need to examine the processes of change management in other educational contexts. Thus, in this article we examine the experiences of head teachers who are charged with ensuring change in schools in the Pakistani education system from which we propose an emergent, grounded model of educational change management relevant to the particular context of a developing country.

The crucial role that headteachers play in change and improvement is a consistent theme in the research literature: 'Numerous research studies and reports from school inspectors and others claim that leadership, especially headship, is a crucial factor in school effectiveness and the key to organizational success and improvement' (Earley and Weindling, 2004: 3). Generally, leadership is characterized as being concerned with change as opposed to management, which is commonly described as a maintenance activity (Bush, 2008; Fullan, 1991; Kotter, 1990; Law and Glover, 2000). The work of leaders is, therefore, grounded in the concept of leading to a changed and improved situation. Thus, the role of institutional heads is pivotal in the situation when the externally mandated reform has to be implemented within individual institutions. In this situation, school heads mediate between the policy (in this case, the ESR programme) and practice levels (Bush, 1995; Fullan, 1992, 2003) to implement the programme of reform. School leaders are charged with the task of implementing the change to achieve the objectives the policy-makers have

set out. At the same time, teachers expect school leaders as part of their management of the change process to appreciate and take into account their viewpoint and needs (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Northfield, 1992). Thus, in this mediatory role, institutional leaders have to create a fit between policy and practice, or at least lessen the misfit. They have to balance the external mandates and internal expectations, demands and requirements. The focus for this article is on the experience of school leaders in taking forward this pivotal role in the context of Pakistani schools in mediating change. The experience of school leaders is crucial because the success or failure of change is, as Lumby (1998: 201) argues, linked with the 'reality of the experiences of those in schools and colleges'.

The Study

The present study has focused on the curriculum and assessment system change initiated in 2002 in the subject areas of languages (Urdu and English) and Pakistan Studies for higher secondary level comprising classes XI (11) and XII (12). Twenty schools in the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were selected. Both these cities were chosen because of the concentration of institutions affiliated with the FBISE (Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education), which has taken the lead in the implementation of assessment system reforms. To identify the sample, an affiliation of the institution with FBISE for HSSC examination was the starting point. From this broad group of institutions a number of factors were then taken into account in the selection of the specific sample. These factors included the level of competition for places and administrative set-up in order to balance representation for 1) private institutions run by organizations, 2) public institutions under the control of central directorates and 3) public institutions under the control of the Ministry of Education. As education provision in Pakistan is usually gender segregated, both male and female institutions were included.

Key Factors in Identifying the Sample

- Affiliation with FBISE
- Reputation
- Gender
- Status
    1. public institutions under the control of central directorates
    2. public institutions under the control of the Ministry of Education
    3. private institutions run by different organizations

The heads of these sampled institutions were interviewed using a semi-structured format and this article examines two key aspects: first, the responses of the school leaders to the change programme and second, the impact on their role of being involved in a programme of externally driven change, particularly in a context of poor resourcing. This research is a case study of the experience of change in institutions affiliated with FBISE for HSSC examinations but there is a wider significance because the whole education system in Pakistan is passing through the implementation phase for a number of change initiatives under the ESR programme, alongside renewed emphasis for educational reform in the latest National Education Policy of 2009.

The Findings

The findings of the study have been presented as major themes developed not only around each of the interview questions but are also based on the convergence of issues from across the entire interview data for each respondent. These key themes identified for the analysis of interview data are:

- The experience of change by the school leaders.
- The problems the school leaders faced in introducing change in the institutions.
- The suggestions for improvement made by the school leaders.

It is important to clarify that this article focuses on the perceptions and reflections of the school leaders. Part of the discussions in the interviews dealt with the school leaders' views of the implications of the reform programme for teachers and it is these views that are examined here. It is intended in the next phase of the project to gather data directly from teachers that will then be compared with the views of the school leaders.

Theme 1: The Experience of Change

A key focus for discussion in the interviews was the reflections by school leaders on their experience of being involved in the change initiative. Here three aspects were identified including 1) the school leaders' attitudes towards this change initiative; 2) their views about the impact of change on the teachers, on learning and the achievement of students; and 3) their reflections on the process of initiating this change in their institutions.

Overall, the findings indicate a positive attitude to the change programme. Sixteen school leaders out of the total 20 repeatedly used adjectives and phrases like 'good', 'positive', 'healthy', 'better', 'positive and right system', to describe the change initiative, reporting that they appreciated the need for this change programme particularly in relation to the improvement in student learning. A similar positive attitude was evident when school leaders elaborated on the impact of change on teachers and students. In their view, change was well received by teachers, who after an initial short period of confusion and doubt, adopted it. Further, the school leaders proposed that this change programme was a valuable opportunity for personal and professional development on the part of teachers:

> '. . . the new system is an opportunity for the teachers that they can upgrade themselves by teaching new things. They can overcome the boredom of teaching the same things over a number of years. That is why this new system is very good for the 'grooming' of the teachers. The teacher remains mentally alert, tries to find out and prepares the lecture'. (R (Respondent) 14)

Positive aspects of the change initiative identified by the school leaders with respect to students related to opportunities for richer learning experiences with improved critical understanding, analytical thinking, conceptual development: 'It has a positive effect as the thinking ability and concepts of students have improved. Now students have a critical understanding of the topics' (R20) and so students would have opportunities to excel.

Theme 2: The Problems Faced by School Leaders

Although the school leaders largely welcomed the curriculum change programme, they also pinpointed a number of tensions, problems, gaps and challenges. The central issue was the

translation of policy into practice and this issue related to the whole process of change management from the policy formulation and to implementation in the schools and in classrooms. At the policy formulation level, the misgivings expressed by school leaders were centred around two fundamental issues: first, the lack of a systematic approach to the planning and development of the policy, and second, the lack of engagement in the planning and development by those who would ultimately implement the policy. Concerns about inconsistency and whether the policy would be subject to further changes because of political pressures within the policy formulation process was a commonly raised issue. Thus, this arbitrary nature of the development process was a deep and recurring concern throughout the interviews with school leaders commenting on:

- worries about frequent changes;
- frequent shifts in policy and ad hoc changes;
- mid-session changes;
- changes linked with political change;
- abrupt change at senior levels of education with no link to junior levels;
- sudden imposition of change without sufficient preparation time for those implementing the reforms; or
- no opportunities to shape the change process to accommodate on the ground reality.

School leaders judged that the process was not inclusive and this resulted in sketchy planning of the initiative itself and significant gaps in the implementation programme. It was pointed out frequently that: 'Head of the institutions were not part of the policy making or planning implementation' (R5) and nor were teachers:

> Actually when change is planned, teachers are not consulted. Things are decided at higher levels and then brought down. Obviously, in the field it is the teachers who implement the change. It cannot be implemented if teachers are not informed and their feedback is not taken. (R13)

According to the majority of respondents this omission resulted in many hugely problematic gaps and limited opportunities, first, to anticipate possible areas of resistance to change, and second, devise strategies to overcome and address these. In this way, the school leaders deemed that the whole implementation strategy was ill-planned with no time scheduling or clear sequencing of steps. The situation was worsened, in their view, by a number of factors: lack of communication with all stakeholders, problematic procedures and slow bureaucratic processes.

A further, more strategic, consideration was noted by the school leaders: the capacity to manage the change throughout the system from policy-making level to the schools was, in the view of many school leaders, not given serious thought in the planning process. No attention was paid in the formulation of the policy to developing the processes and skills in the management of change. As one school leader commented, teachers and leaders were not 'given any training' (R3) for the effective implementation of change at the institutional and classroom levels. This lack of focus on enhancing the management capability resulted in fragmented planning and provision for the professional development of school leaders and teachers.

Finding a coherent approach, which could prove meaningful in the classroom context, was another problem highlighted in the interviews:

> The change is imposed without giving any thought to the level of students. The syllabus designers give the quantity without considering that how much time is available for that subject every week and how much time will be required to cover that content. (R9)

Tensions were also identified by the school leaders in the coordination between the two components of the reform programme (that of the curricular programmes and of the assessment programme) where school leaders reported gaps in the content of the new curriculum and the examination system. Among the issues relating to the curriculum and student learning were: a mismatch in the curriculum in the junior levels and the requirements for the higher education, teaching methodologies in practice; time available in the term to cover the curriculum; and the mental age and academic level of the students.

Structural issues were raised about the new assessment system. The reforms to the assessment systems were to be adopted across Pakistani education. However, there was only partial implementation with the reformed assessment system being adopted by only one examination board. There was, in their view, a lack of coherence and opportunities for development: the school leaders reported that there had been no training for paper-setters to implement the real objectives underpinning the reformed curriculum, there was no coordination between paper-setting and marking and finally the content of examination papers remained traditional textbook-based. These concerns created significant tensions for the school leaders, particularly given the importance accorded to examination results in Pakistani education, resulting in examination-driven teaching and learning.

In summary, the school leaders reported that they had experienced three main problems:

1. lack of involvement in devising the new curriculum and assessment system;
2. lack of involvement in the planning of both the policy and the implementation strategy though it was directly related to them;
3. lack of direct communication of information to them to support them in providing guidance in their institutions

This top-down approach to policy formulation and planning was seen as constraining: 'We are not asked to comment rather we are not supposed to do so. We have to follow it and tell teachers how to do it' (R7). Emerging from the data, the school leaders indicated that the lack of involvement only added to the significant challenges they already faced in running poorly resourced institutions. They reported that they were accountable without being empowered to make decisions and shape, amend or adapt the change programme to bring about the required reform within their schools. They have been assigned this task without being provided with the tools, which they find frustrating: 'When some change is planned, we are not conveyed full information. We are not involved in the planning of a change. We just get written orders that this change has been made' (R17).

Theme 3: Suggestions for Improvement

Schools leaders were also asked to reflect on the suggestions for improvement in the process of the change management. Though this section of the interviews was more speculative in nature, the views of leaders were clearly emanating from their specific experiences with this particular change initiative and so the data gathered here have validated and in places extended the views expressed earlier in the interviews. These suggestions included proposals for improvement in the context of

the particular change initiative under study, speculative suggestions for any change initiative and wider proposals about how the change process should be managed in the context of Pakistani education, with proposals relating to:

- teachers;
- the examination system;
- the management of change throughout the education system.

From these suggestions, what is beginning to emerge is a model of change management that bridges different levels and constituencies in the education system and across the different components of the curriculum and assessment reform programmes. In their proposals, the school leaders considered the issue of teachers mainly from two perspectives: the involvement of teachers in the planning and designing the educational change and the training of teachers. From the standpoint of the school leaders, any educational reform that is intended to support and improve the teaching and learning process becomes the business of teachers, because it is they who implement this change in the most fundamental and meaningful way at the classroom level. Thus, as 11 of the respondents proposed, there should be an active involvement of relevant teachers (those teaching the levels covered in the reform programmes) right from the initial planning, through the policy formulation, organization, implementation and evaluation/feedback stages. The involvement of teachers was deemed necessary in order to:

- create ownership of the reform;
- develop an enhanced understanding of the objectives of the programme that would support effective adoption and implementation by the teachers;
- make the policy comprehensively oriented to the realities of people working at the site of the implementation.

Thus, the gap between policy and practice could be bridged and the failure of context-free top-down model of reform could be avoided (Sarason, 1996). School leaders indicated that this involvement could largely take care of the many practicalities of implementing reforms, which could not be anticipated by the policy-makers in the executive positions in government. As one headteacher argued, it is the detailed understanding that teachers bring to the development of policy:

> When they change the syllabus, teachers should be invited as only a teacher can tell about the average mental level of the students and can recommend the syllabus accordingly. (R18)

The subject of teacher training for change was a recurring theme throughout the interviews but in the suggestions section it was consistently a significant issue: 'Teachers should be trained for the change. Objectives of the change can be achieved when teachers are trained otherwise the whole plan may fail' (R15). According to the school leaders, teachers are tools to implement the change so they need preparation for the task. Out of 20 interviewees, 13 proposed that, with regard to the change programme, teacher training and development was crucial to support, prepare, update, motivate, refresh, guide and orientate teachers. Further, training and development could help teachers cope with the upgraded level of the syllabus and enable them to adapt their practice to meet the changed requirements. School leaders suggested different forms of support including workshops, in-service training, refresher courses, seminars and master trainers training for every

institution. They proposed that training and development should include a wide number of teachers and should be based on the requirements the teachers had to meet in the classrooms. Training was seen as a bridging between policy and practice with one common suggestion from the majority of school leaders being that training should be organized and coordinated by the planners of this change in order that it was relevant to the reform programme and contributed to the fulfilment of the objectives for the change.

The school leaders had noted previously the misalignment between elements of the reform programme. Therefore, other suggestions related to this need for coherence. Suggestions regarding the examination system included training matters to ensure improvement in paper-setting and assessment. Other areas where school leaders made suggestions were concerned with the alignment of pupil experiences in the curriculum and the assessment system, the use of non-textbook-based question papers, linking the examination system to the curriculum and teaching in schools and close coordination and monitoring of the assessment with the objectives of the curriculum. This coherence would be partly achieved through training.

Another substantive suggestion for improvement related to the management of change itself. Fourteen school leaders referred to, and extended upon, the discussion on change management, particularly wider involvement in the planning and initiation stages of the process. They not only suggested an inclusive approach with teachers being involved but two school heads proposed a much richer change process. The suggestions here echo Schon's (1971) proliferation of centres model and Havelock's (1971) social interaction model for the management of change (both quoted in Law and Glover, 2000). Here the proposals included using a research-based approach: 'Change should be research based' (R12), which would require the testing and validating of ideas before and during implementation, which would enable and facilitate continuous upward and downward communication and feedback across the management structures involved in the process. Thus, ideas should be gathered from the field and then subsequently tested or validated by the people working at the grassroots level: 'Information should be sent to institutions for feedback' (R15) and this would support a two-way communication.

Another strategy highlighted by the school leaders for the planning and policy-making stages was the development of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach: 'If curriculum is made without considering the level of the students, capacity of teachers and time available, then it will bring no good' (R9). The different segments of the system should be worked on simultaneously to achieve a meaningful and comprehensive change. These segments were grouped differently by different respondents but the commonality in their suggestions was in the concept of a co-ordinated work on these different components: the policy formulation, planning and implementation stages. These components included the curriculum, teaching, examinations and assessment: 'So all these four segments (curriculum, teaching, examination and assessment) have to be improved simultaneously otherwise nothing can be achieved' (R2) and similarly: 'Syllabus, teaching examination and assessment are delinked now. Till the time all these segments are improved at the same time, no improvement can take place' (R6). Not only should the different components be worked on in a coordinated way but consideration should also be given to capability and resource issues: 'If [the] curriculum is made without considering the level of the students, capacity of teachers and the time available, then it will bring no good' (R9). In addition, two leaders also suggested a target-based approach to shape progress of the change programme. Thus, a comprehensive approach could help identify the targets and direction to action and when the initiative is undertaken to achieve these targets, research/enquiry methodologies could be adopted in an inclusive process of development and improvement.

Some of the ideas put forwarded by the respondents regarding the approaches to change management were grounded in the particulars of the Pakistani context, notably the rapid and arbitrary changes in policy. Here nine school leaders were particularly critical of inconsistency, arguing that policy should not be overly affected by change in the political scene: 'Education policy should not be used to propagate political ideologies. There should be no effect of the change in politics on the education system' (R12). Instead of a pattern of frequent change proposals, which had led to many initiatives being abandoned half way through the process of implementation, these school leaders looked for consistency and stability in policy. A 'step-wise approach' to change was further offered by three school leaders who thought that the whole process of change management could be improved by adopting a systematic approach: 'The plan should be that first we are clear about the objectives, then we set curriculum, then we train teachers and then we see and analyse the results over the years' (R16). Rather than seek immediate outcomes, there needs to be a concern for the sustainability of change which could be addressed by adopting a 'strategic approach' (Davies and Davies, 2009; Middlewood and Lumby, 1998) in order to work on the reform process over the longer term: 'When we bring a change we should wait for the system to settle down, get accepted and then we should expect results' (R17). What is being advocated here is similar to the systematic approach described by Hopkins (1994), where reform is well planned and managed with sufficient time for people, processes and system to adapt. A number of the features of this systematic approach were noted by the school leaders in their interviews including: effective monitoring, coordination, decentralization and empowerment by participative decision-making within and across institutions and the provision of support in the form of information, materials and training at the implementation stage.

Alongside a strategic approach, where the various elements should be co-ordinated in order to achieve the goals of the reform programme, 13 school leaders advocated an 'incremental approach', where change is planned and implemented progressively up through the schools system. A common theme from the interviews was that reforms should have been started in the junior levels of the school and then gradually introduced at the higher levels. Another facet of the incremental approach was the proposal that any programme of reform should be launched a session before it was due to be implemented in order to give time for those in school to review, understand, prepare and adopt the change:

> The start should have been made from the junior level and then gradually taken forward. My suggestion is that whenever any change is brought it should be very gradual. It should be implemented from the next year and it should not be introduced in the current year all of a sudden (R4).

The incrementalist approach is sometimes criticized for being slow and out of step with the ever-changing demands and expectations placed on the education sector. However, incrementalism cannot be totally replaced by a drive for radical, specified and immediate change, particularly given the scale of the task of changing the curriculum and assessment system and its potential impact on the lives of generations to come.

The other proposals for a comprehensive and inclusive approach using enquiry methods and possibly targets might seem at odds with an incrementalist approach. However, as Engeström (2008: 381) has pointed out, an emerging trend is to conceive educational change as 'a multi-layered, multi-sited, and temporally dispersed phenomenon of collective or organizational learning, simultaneously both incremental and radical not as a radical one big jump from one state into another'. Therefore, we need to consider how these various processes can be drawn together in a coherent process.

Discussion

If we map out the experiences, views and suggestions of school leaders gathered through the semi-structured interviews on the management of educational change, we can identify some distinct patterns. First, and importantly, the school leaders agreed with the need for change and were positive about the purposes of this change initiative. However, they have faced problems with certain aspects of the change. Among the most prominent were the limited engagement of practitioners and their training, the rapid pace and disconnectedness of the initiative, the poor coordination in the implementation and finally the instability of the policy. From their own experiences in dealing with the reforms, the school leaders put forward a range of suggestions for improvement and these centred on the issue of the engagement of teachers and heads and their development through training and support. They suggested wider involvement particularly of those who have to implement the change and this would make the process of change management 'adaptive' in contrast to 'adoptive' (Hopkins et al., 1994). This adaptive process is responsive to context, culture and environment, is more democratic in contrast to a more technocratic approach (Sergiovanni, 2001) and can help in limiting the disillusionment among teachers regarding their sense of ownership (as argued by Bush, 2008; Busher, 2006; Earley, 1998) and so prompt greater commitment to externally imposed reforms, 'which sometimes arrive or involve change in unpredictable ways' (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 2005: 8).

The second issue raised by the school leaders related to teacher training for successful adoption and execution of the change initiative. The development of teachers as part of change management is also a significant theme in the research literature, which is replete with opinions and findings about the development and preparation of people involved in the implementation of change. Training and development are deemed necessary to provide support (Stoll and Fink, 1996), to promote teachers' commitment (Oliver, 1996), to bring improvement by contextualizing (Oliver, 1996), to bring personal meanings to the change (Dalin, 2005), to successfully adopt the change (Billet, 1996; Fullan, 1992), to bring organizational change by changing individuals (Land and Jarman, 1992) and finally to build the intellectual capital, that is the practical knowledge, needed to achieve change (Sergiovanni, 2001).

From the more speculative proposals regarding alternative approaches put forward by the school leaders, we can see emerging a construction of the management of change model that builds around research-based, inclusive and comprehensive approaches to the change management. Further, their experiences of instability, inconsistency, disjointedness of change led the school leaders to advocate for a consistent and incremental approach to change processes. From the experiences of the school leaders in managing this reform programme in schools, we can see the need for the development of an approach to sustained change. From the data, in order to ensure long-term and sustainable impact, we can see school leaders propose that the purposes, content and targets of the initiative should be brought together in a well-thought out and well-planned change process. A strategic approach, which is sustainable and has a sense of coherence and comprehensiveness, needs not only a strategic vision but also to be embedded in the day-to-day work of schools and classrooms. Thus, for the school leaders a strategic approach to the management of educational change included this link between policy and implementation through methodologies that are research-based, comprehensive, inclusive and incremental. The data from the school leaders coincide with a number of recurring common issues across different educational systems, such as ineffective implementation due to inconsistent policies, political expediency, limited use of research in policy formulation (Levin, 2010b), the constricting effect of structures on reform (Kozleski and Smith, 2009), the failure of reforms due to the procedures not relevant to the context of the
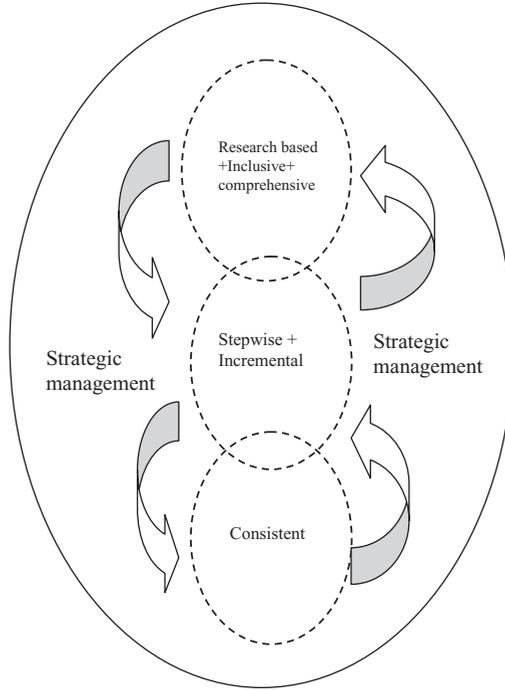
Figure 3. Suggested model of educational change.

institutions (Heckman and Montera, 2009) and the need of historically and politically situated reform for the sustainability of change (Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006). However, there is a particular importance of generating a model of educational change that emphasizes a research-based, inclusive, incremental and comprehensive approach for the Pakistani educational context. Historically in the Pakistani educational system there have been arbitrary and sometimes ad-hoc changes of national policy, leading to situations where reform programmes are imposed, poorly resourced, have limited implementation and then abandoned before there is any evident impact.

A model of educational change management has emerged from the experiences and opinions of Pakistani school leaders who have had to implement a national educational reform initiative in their institutions, but it shares common features with the large-scale reform programmes on the global educational scenario (Figure 3).

This model of educational change proposed by school leaders in Pakistan shares some features with Fullan's (2009) framework for systemic educational reforms. This convergence of research and theory across contexts can provide a promising start to the second decade of 21st century and limit the modal processes of educational reform (Sarason, 1996) causing widespread failures in first and second waves of education reforms efforts across nations.

Note

1. As a policy objective, the Education Policy 2009 (Government of Pakistan, 2009) has also pledged to continue the process of curriculum development through the wider participation of the field educators, which indicates a participative and inclusive approach in the process.

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