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RESEARCH PAPER

A Phenomenological Investigation of School Leadership Development Programme: Learning Leadership in Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

School leadership Development Programme (SLDP) in schools becomes an integral part of leadership success. The SLDP helped Schools Heads (SHs) to showcase their leadership across the school to create better organization. The objective of the phenomenological study was to investigate the SLDP experiences of SHs in improving leadership in public schools of Punjab. Through purposive criterion sampling, the sample was selected from i.e. central, southern and northern Punjab. The semi-structured in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to collect data by the researcher using triangulation of data sources and engendered themes through simplified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method. The study essence that SLDP was a key element in the development and enhancement of leadership practices. The SLDP school implications were witnessed aiming certain future measures to get fullest results without wastage to reorient its dimensions peculiar to native perspective. The study recommended thoughtful SLDP review by the policy makers.

Introduction

The pivotal standing of school effectiveness encompasses the richest and clearest educational leadership. In recent years the School Leadership Development Programmes (SLDP) has become the dominant concern of educational policy-makers that denotes ever-increasing responsibilities of school leaders to ensure the school quality and improvement. The notion of development of school leaders and SLDP has appeared as an international consensus (Huber, 2004).

Dinham, Anderson, Caldwell, and Weldon (2011) enunciated that the stout educational leadership emphasis on achieving the basic skills, secure and an orderly environment, high hopes of pupil achievement and recurrent assessment of pupils' progress because the students are the most essential unit of an organization. Dinham et al. (2011) further described that leadership is dispersed and distributed across schools in networks that demands redefine professional development of school leaders.

During the last few years many changes and developments have been observed with reference to school leadership development in international perspective while in some other countries, this practice has just started. This denotes that schools are no longer stagnant organizations rather effective school leadership demands a set of attitudes, skills, attributes and knowledge with comprehension. A comprehensive training and development is recognized as unquestionably vital. This may be regarded as a kind of paradigm shift in the view of school leadership and leadership development considering school leaders as educational leaders with a mode of collaborative leadership (Huber, 2010). The nations are spending substantial amounts on leadership development believing that a way of transforming betters leaders and school systems (Bush, 2009).

There are inadequate ways of professional training for principals and head-teachers despite the fact that the frequent educational policies of Pakistan have proposed the professional training (Memon, 2003). The training for leadership development sensed strongly as there is a concrete link between the personal development and professional development and its efficacy for organization (Khalil & Iftikhar, 2015). School principals require skills and vision to introduce and administer the organizational change (Zbar, 2013). Leadership is an integral element in managing change and developing schools. A leader in school deals with all the organizational and educational changes whatever recent policies offers, as well as to anticipate the changing ways as per requirement to lead better (Southworth, 1993).

The school principals are the custodians and curators of the school's mission, vision, values and standards. As a consequence, School Head (SH) as school leader imparts vision and inspires school staff to attain the mission and vision of school. The school leader nourishes and creates the environment of change to lead the school towards its chosen destination, and interact with diverse interest groups to attain the school's vision and missions. In this entire pursuit the school leader remains at the leading verge in implementing and developing the policies, plans, strategies and mechanism as a torch bearer. Because the principal provides support and guidance to the teachers, parents and learners and to all other stakeholders for manipulating the befitting practices and approaches that helps in the realization and fulfillment of the school's vision. Hence this discussion offers sufficient evidence that headship is not the matter of luck or connection, rather it requires exclusive trained professionals who manage this job on square ground for the betterment of school (Mathibe, 2007).

Leadership denotes the state of superiority within an organization that empowers the leader to direct a group of people who are responsible and follows a mutual path to achieve pre-defined objectives. Evidently, the SH as a leader of the organization employs his/her own image in achieving the pre-defined objectives. In this manner, definite power dynamics occurs between the members of the organization and leader particularly in school i.e. an outstanding learning community even for professionals. During this learning journey of training programmes the school leaders and principals may promote the everlasting link between theory and practice to aid stakeholders to better understand prevailed goals and challenges. The SLDP in terms of SHs' training can offer certain guidance to policy makers for collaborative practices and systemic change to merge sustainable improvements over the period of time (García-Martínez et al., 2018).

Around the world nations are spending extensive amounts on leadership development having believed that it will make better leaders and further effective school systems (Bush, 2009). Pakistan is a developing country and SHs are involved in numerous job responsibilities such as administrative, academic, and fiscal but as a matter of fact majority of SHs do not know how to perform these effectively. Therefore, it is pressing need of time to ensure their participation in professional development programmes for refining their skills and competencies. Because such professional leadership development programmes helps in making their schools as 'learning' or 'leadful' schools, and promised in expanding their leadership capacities (Memon, 2003).

The study is phenomenological falls under interpretive paradigm i.e. comprehends the world from the subjective experiences of an individual as subjective experiences study were approached the phenomena to explore the perceptions of the real performers and the professed reality in a specific situation. Consequently, phenomenology explored the experiences from the standpoint of the individuals to describe the essence of the phenomena.

Therefore a SLDP was conducted for school leadership development and enhancing leadership management skills from elementary to higher secondary school heads in Punjab. It was the joint venture of Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development, Punjab (QAED) under the umbrella of School Education Department (SED) Government of the Punjab in collaboration of British Council to develop leadership skills amongst the school head teachers. The salient features of SLDP were ensuring soft skills and technical skills:

- Soft skills include effective leadership skills, effective communication skills, presentation skills, motivation, social cohesion, behavior change etc.

- Technical skills are Training Need Analysis (TNA) based that employed in fulfilling official responsibilities related with job description

The SLDP offers certain modules that covers certain areas of leadership development because the school leadership in interknitted with these tasks.

School Leadership Development Training Programme

- Core skills for leaders
- Leadership styles
- Communication and Coordination
- Staff motivation
- Problem solving
- Critical Thinking
- Excellence in teaching and learning
- Professional leadership skills
- Official correspondence skills
- Shared leadership skills
- Distributed leadership skills
- Organizing co-curricular activities

- Ensuring quality education
- Financial management
- Effective teaching and learning
- Rules and regulation
- Leave rules
- Excellence in teaching and learning
- Office Management
- Protecting children
- Leading happiness well being
- Pupil voice
- Leadership in 21st century

- Community engagement communication
- Provision of Child friendly environment
- Positive climate for learning
- Value culture
- Social Awareness
- Ethics
- Promoting student leadership
- Strategic planning
- Community engagement
- Team buildings

Figure 1Modules Context of SLDP

Educational leadership in Pakistan is a fortuitous opportunity and not a planned and nourished phenomenon. The dire need for SLDP was sensed strongly because this is an inseparable link between the personal and professional development and its effects on the organization (Khalil & Iftikhar, 2015). The study is helpful in producing a meaningful data on the phenomenon to grasp its context in the present scenario. The study encloses originality and ingenuity of knowledge in terms of the stated problem that has not been explored or conducted before purely in this SLDP context. Under the prevailed scenario leadership development phenomenon in education requires to be researched in knowing the whys and wherefores of decreasing or increasing productivity, set back or improvements and lethargic demeanor or efficient progress of the educational organizations. The leadership is an imperative feature to recognize how organization get subsequent win. This study data carries diversified perceptions of experiences emerged through multiple interconnected minds exactly about SLDP perspectives based on knowledge, skills and attitudinal transformation as a result of SLDP.
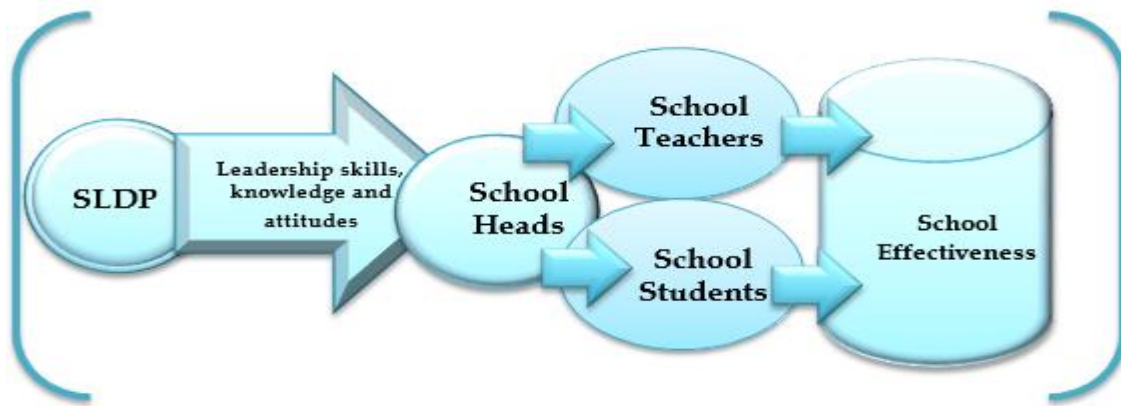
Figure 2 Research Objectives of the Study

Literature Review

The five years' evaluation provided the evidence of essential growth in principals' learning and behaviors as an outcome of participating in McREL's Balanced Leadership program. Evidence that occurred was the perceptions of principals in learning from the leadership development programs resulted to increase in leadership behaviors and practices that involves teachers directly. Explicitly, the SLDP caused strong growth in principals' and in broad spectrum school climate. The SLDP are possible need of leadership opportunities and ultimately have positive influence on schools (Miller et al., 2016).

Professional development of school leaders is still narrowed researched area. In a comprehensive way the school leadership is vital as it is largely acknowledged that good school leadership touches students' achievement and the total school performance. The overall school performance in terms of effective school leaders focuses on the school processes includes curriculum and instruction, effective communication, maintaining good relationships that contributes towards shaping school climate and culture results in outlining and sustaining the school mission. Henceforth it is pressing need of time to explore the school leaders by way of SLDP towards their competencies; human resource management, personal traits, improving infrastructure and investigating finance are recommended as subject for future researchers and research (Daniels et al., 2019).

The role of SLDPs for school leadership is indispensable, consistent and real. As such SLDP extended new prospect towards preparing resultant school leadership and in a nutshell the improved leadership practices are disguised in leadership programmes (Saleem & Saeed, 2022).

Good control and governance, no matter how it is designed is the crust of a good organization that definitely does not occur by itself because good leadership is devised. Therefore, considering the importance of leadership developmental the work on leadership development is under way all around the world (Dinham et al., 2011). The key of organizational success is developing the capacities of leadership and distribute it within an organization of a school as a lever to success (Gold, 2003). SLDP empowers leaders to work jointly in resultant and expressive ways that ultimately helpful for students' learning. SLDP are results-driven efforts require noteworthy investments of time, resources and energy to create the resultant conditions and desired behaviors that inculcates stronger beliefs among staff and stake-holders (Gray & Bishop, 2009).

The undeniable nature of SLDP plays a key role in nurturing the knowledge, skills and attitudes amongst SHs that removes the messy state of affairs in schools. The SLDP

enrich the school leadership with technical and soft skills in three arenas of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Saleem & Saeed, 2021). Preparing school leadership is gradually viewed as a spirited section of school improvement. The leadership is not limited to the principal but it happens collaboratively in the school amongst the school stake-holders. Therefore, it is the pressing need for leadership centers to 'sponsor' research to identify and disseminate good leadership practice (Bush & Jackson, 2002).

Material and Methods

The study is qualitative and transcendental phenomenology in nature. Phenomenology is an interpretive research methodology deals with the lived experiences as perceived by the participants about a phenomenon (McMillian, 2004).

The researcher has drawn the sample based on geographical distribution of the province i.e. central, southern and northern Punjab. In which 14 school-heads (07 males and 07 females), 84 Students 10th class (06 from each school for FGD) and 56 teachers (SSTs/ESTs) (4 from each school for FGD) through the criterion sampling i.e. a form of a purposive sampling because phenomenology employs criterion sampling is befitting when participants meet predefined criteria. The SLDP experience is the predetermined criterion for the phenomenon under study.

There were three sources of data collection which include: a) semi-structured interviews protocols i.e. one each for the SHs, teachers and students. Researcher prepared the instruments and validated by five experts' in the field and Mock practice of the instruments were conducted from SHs, teachers and students to ensure the refinement and validity of the instruments. The research credibility, dependability and transferability were maintained. The collected data were analyzed using a structured approach specific to transcendental phenomenology i.e. a simplified form of Moustakas' (1994) Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method.

Emerged Themes
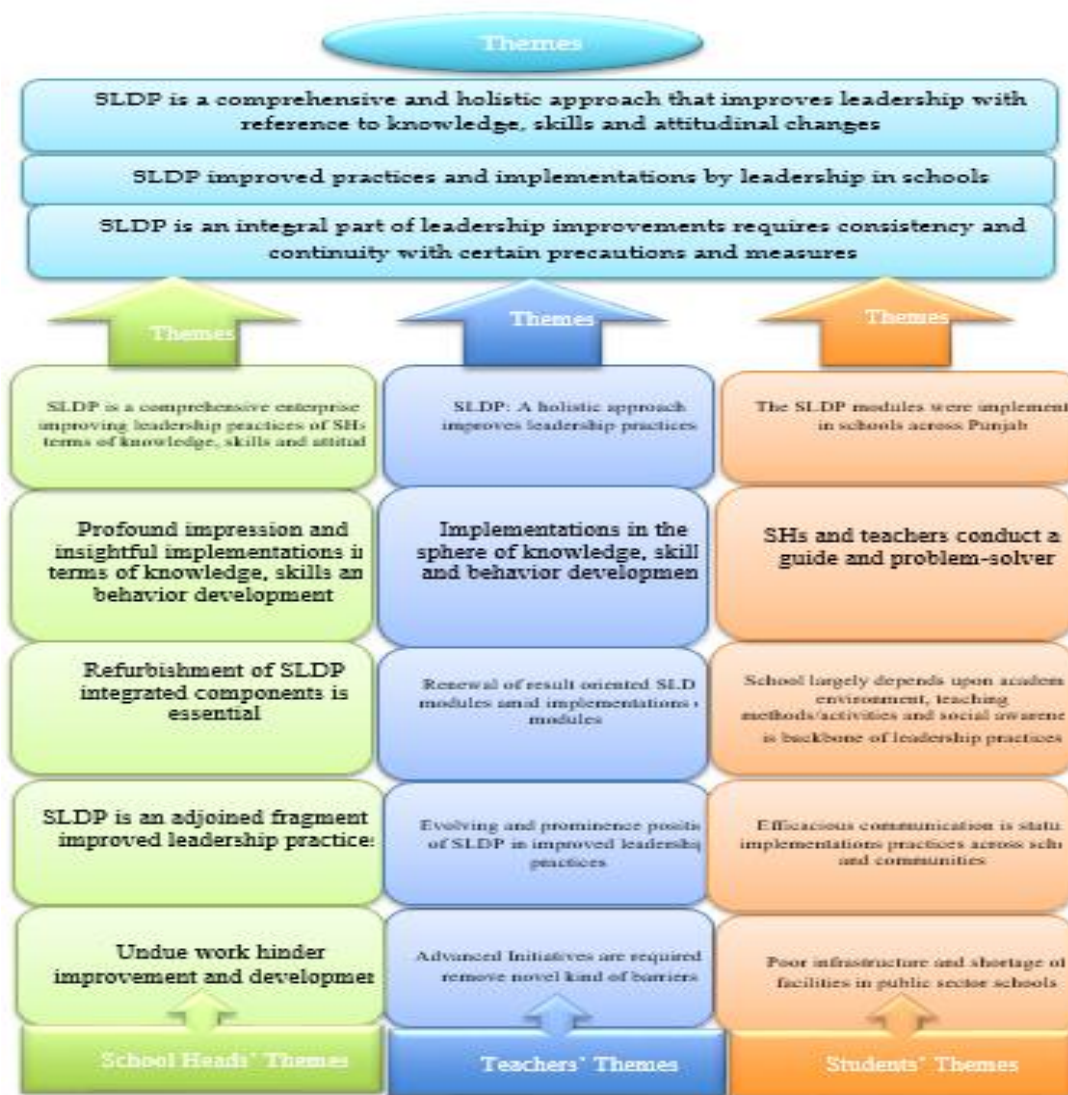
Figure 3 Themes Emerged From the Data School-Heads, Teachers and Students Data Analysis (Source: Author)

The Figure 3 contains findings of the study with reference to SHs, teachers and students further major themes have been extracted and elaborated in which all three sources of data have been merged and incorporated to reach at the conclusion as follows:

SLDP is a comprehensive and holistic approach that improves leadership with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes

All three sets of data SHs, teachers and students voiced about the efficacy of SLDP and marked it an inevitable and integral part in improved leadership skills with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes. All SHs endorsed the SLDP efficacious role in improving school leadership as a holistic approach. SHs enunciated the effectiveness of SLDP amid their diversified role and over-burdened nature of duty fulfillments i.e. lack of teaching and non-teaching staff, lack of facilitation and funds and indulgence in making official correspondence and financial record management etc. declaring it an efficacious initiative that reorient and revive the leadership.

SLDP helped SHs in financial management, core leadership skills, comprehension about leadership styles, team management, effective role of communication, pedagogical skills, stress management, instructional leadership importance, students' central role and importance and purposeful relationship with staff and students. Further the character building societies, students' leadership, students' protection, problem solving, anti-narcotics and school based initiatives envisioned the SHs to uplift the schools for betterment. The SHs achieved ISA (International School Award) award and conferred the praise and honor to SLDP that stands them at this sublime position and pedestal of distinction. They were well aware that attitudinal changes never take place in overnight but SLDP paves their way towards new horizon awareness.

Teachers endorsed the effectiveness of SLDP and admitted that SHs are fulfilling a number of roles at the same time as headship is a hectic responsibility. As headship is a multifaceted amalgamation of managerial and administrative responsibility includes human and material resources; community and public relations, quality assurance and leadership for better academics (Pont et al., 2008). Teachers were dire supporters of trainings and spoke about the efficacy of SLDP keeping in view certain post SLDP developments in schools. Teachers endorsed that SHs were visibly more skilled in financial management and they guide teachers about the record management on new lines that were not conversant with it at prior. Teachers also rendered an example in which SH paid special attention to readjust the time table just for sake of convincing some of the reluctant teachers giving them space to review their conduct by their own. Teachers admitted that there was drastic change in attitudes and many examples of problem solving and cooperation were emerged after SLDP. The SHs learned new knowledge and developed skills at the same time work-conducive environment emerged amidst SLDP.

Students were also convinced that leadership trainings always better to groom anyone indulged in such activities and practice makes the man perfect.

SLDP improved practices and implementations by leadership in schools

SHs negotiated with teachers and transmitted essentialities of SLDP with teachers and paved the way towards proper implementations of SLDP in school. SHs promote friendly and healthy work environment, one of the participants uttered that "SLDP break the ice and SHs intermingled even rigid SHs were willing to exchange ideas".

SHs preferred team building and problem solving at every stage that helped redefine the leadership in 21st century. Teachers learnt from SHs and SHs tried to discuss and disseminate the learnt knowledge to their staff that makes it more effective. Teachers iterated that a value culture was promoted and witnessed in school under which many good initiatives were taken such as initiatives of child protection, sports, debates, monitor selection, students 'stance and students' leadership, anti-narcotics seminars that marked SLDP efficacy and chain of learning. One of the participants uttered that "SHs imparted special directions to deal with students amicably to solve their problems and promoted value culture among the staff".

The NSB utilization, child protection lectures, seminars, flaxes display and community engagement were also zealously implemented. Mutual collaboration and interaction was vastly admitted domain of teachers. It was counter checked via triangulation that SLDP was appreciated and considered as a milestone in native scenario by SHs. Teachers iterated that after SLDP many changes were seen in school improvement implementations. The culture of cooperation, coordination, problem-

solving and healthy interactions were observed in leadership improved implementation practices.

Implementation of SLDP in schools empowered SHs and inculcate a sense of confidence and responsibility among the entire staff. SHs disperse responsibilities amongst the staff members that promoted work-conducive environment that promoted better communication, team building and a culture of cooperation. SHs addressed with students and staff in morning assembly that shows their implementations and positive environment. Various group activities were also manipulated and offered to students for better teaching and attention methods towards students. Parents were called on result declaration day and certain interactions with parents on students were implemented in the best interest of students.

SLDP is an integral part of leadership improvements requires consistency and continuity with certain precautions and measures

SHs, teachers and students assured that SLDP is an integral and integrated part of improved leadership practices. At the same time SHs, teachers and students denounced certain measures and precautions such as SHs spoke about the quality of modules, expertise of master trainers (MTs), facilitations, follow-up and continuity of SLDP as peculiar to it. Teachers also believe that practice makes the man perfect hereby SLDP exposure requires consistency. As the consistency saves time, resources and helps in realigning the SLDP with proper needs as per ground realities. Students believe SLDP enhances leadership skills as manifested through the lens of students' declarations.

Discussion

The all three sets of data SHs, teachers and students denounced that SLDP is an integral part of enhanced leadership practices with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes. Various examples were shared in which the monotonous stereotype routine patterns to deal with school affairs and were discarded and proper innovative parameters and exposures were exposed. Where SLDP efficacious and beneficial dimensions were enunciated the same way certain thought provoking orientations were also explored. The researcher tried the best to explore the three sets of data in such a way that enhances the virtue of transferability and rest liability upon the recipient to fix it appropriately. The triangulation of three sets of data sources enhanced the trustworthiness of the study to pen down the real picture of the phenomenon.

The improved leadership practices are hoarded in the nutshell of leadership training. The extreme eagerness of stakeholders i.e. SHs, teachers and students was attached to SLDP in order to learn peculiar areas with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudes. SLDP was energy reviver that opens up new orientations of excellence in leadership and improved leadership practices. The effective school depends on effective leadership and the world has realized it and recommended recognition globally (Bush et al., 2006).

SHs, teachers and students appreciated the exposure of SLDP and appreciated it vehemently. As 1998 to 2010 National Education Policy proposed the in-service training for the educational administrators, teachers, and teacher trainers through grouping of schools manipulating multiple techniques for enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of professional development (Khan, 2012).

The realization of the worth of SLDP by SHs at all levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a refresher towards learning and endorsement of previous learning as

learning is a reconstruction of experiences. The SHs highlighted dimensions such as problem solving, decision making, problem solving, child protection, students voice and leadership, monetary matters, better communication, team building, academics, work-conducive environment, critical thinking, character building, PEEDA, PPRA, core skills of leaders, elevation of ethics etc. This notion is further endorsed by teachers and students. The ISA was an example of competitiveness an offshoot of SLDP and attached honor and prestige.

Good leadership is not a "one man show" rather a matter of collaboration and interactions as team. Further teachers were also a proponent of SLDP and affirmed SLDP transferability as a chain of leaning without break. Students' voice also confirmed SLDP implementations and progress.

The thought provoking areas came under discussion as the indigenous philosophy, religion and believes, moral values and unnecessary burden on SHs need to be eradicating for better SLDP implementations. On the contrary SLDP will be mere a wastage of time and resources. The continuity with consistency and follow-up is a basic to explore it for better conduct and benefit.

Conclusion

The researcher resolute to explore the perceptions and experiences of SHs, teachers and students about the SLDP effectiveness in leadership development with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes of school-heads and explore the SLDP training effectiveness implementation practices/reforms in school by SHs after SLDP training exposure with reference to knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes. In this regard researcher investigates the phenomenon in depth from the direct stake-holders via triangulation of data sources.

SHs, teachers and students confirmed and affirmed the efficacy of SLDP highlighted positive dimensions in improved leadership practices. SHs convinced that team building, critical thinking, styles of leadership, teaching and learning, teaching and learning, teaching methodology, rules implementation, official correspondence, financial matters, ethics, child protection, anti-narcotics and students' leadership etc. remains into the limelight. ISA winners candidly voice the constructive role of SLDP that encourage them to contribute in school and win ISA Award stating it a milestone success. But at the same time ask for solutions of the faced problems by SHs, teachers and students facilities demanded there must be a "mechanism" to resolve the school heads problems. Participants pointed out many areas of improved leadership and suggested its continuation in future focused more on practical mode of instruction and proper master trainers' trainings.

It is about learning through SLDP to improve leadership skills and practices and coordinate among the staff and students. SLDP develops a shared culture that gear up development reflects improved leadership. The voice that school leadership is a complex and demanding task requires various leadership dimensions to overcome and settle down. Perhaps the SLDP is befitting endeavor to equip school leaders working in supreme position within a school dispensation. SLDP helps SHs resultantly to fulfill the role of a school leader. Further SHs make their support systems by engaging teachers and students. SLDP proves to be the most exciting avenue of exploration for the SHs and teachers that endorses SLDP importance in future. SLDP foster an exciting drive and vision to do better in terms of leadership and improved practices i.e. crucial to realign and reset direction.

Further the certain new problems areas were discussed such as over-burdened nature of work both for SHs and teachers that impede performance and progress. Such issues demand urgent solutions and the study bring into limelight the certain areas peculiar to SLDP about expertise of MTs and quality of modules in terms of ideology and native examples. Follow-up is an indispensible way to get feedback provided taken and given aptly at appropriate time as it a nucleus of support helps in redesigning the initiative peculiar to capacity building programme. The assertion is worthy that of there is no follow-up there is no feedback and growth.

The students' voice raises certain prevails issues in terms of missing facilities in public sector schools that requires attention and seek solutions.

The SLDP implementations are manifests across Punjab in letter and spirit at the same time SLDP proves an elixir and eagerness packed exposure that inspirits the school and school stake- holders strive to get best towards prosperity.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as follows:

1. The study is phenomenology hereby another qualitative design may employ to explore the phenomenon in native context to reorient the phenomenon

2. The SLDP requires to be continue in future with adoption of certain parameters of follow-up, continuity, consistency and proper accommodation to get fullest benefits

3. The overburdened nature of responsibilities of SHs and teachers need to be remove for effectual and efficient implementations of SLDP

4. The modules and given examples requires a native perspective relate to society based on Islamic philosophy and culture

5. The Master Trainers requires expertise and proper time-management

6. The public sector schools need basic facilities to get fullest potentials

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