

THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN PASNI, BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

The role of strategic management in enhancing quality of education in government secondary schools in Pasni, Balochistan is explored in this qualitative case study. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from five participants (1 head teacher and 4 classroom teachers) using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Four major findings emerged from the thematic analysis of the findings: (1) strategic management practices are either not present in schools in Pasni or are superficially applied; (2) the head teacher's transformational leadership behaviours are key enablers of what little strategic management exists; (3) resource constraints and capacity deficits within the institutions are the major impediments to effective implementation of strategic management; and (4) strategic management, even in a limited way, is associated with recognisable improvements in the five dimensions of educational quality. Finally, the study offers policy recommendations based on context, providing original empirical findings in the poorly researched area of strategic management theory and low income education quality in remote coastal schools of Balochistan.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

It is universally accepted that education is the cornerstone of national development, economic competitiveness and social equity. How effectively governing and managing institutions is done can to a large extent determine the quality of the education they provide. The last 30 years have seen strategic management, defined as the formulation, implementation and evaluation of cross-functional decisions that affect the organization's ability to realize its long-term goals (David and David, 2017), become a major tool to enhance performance in organizations in various fields, including education.

The quality of public education has been consistently poor in Pakistan. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022) shows that

43% of children in grade 5 years old are able to read a story written at grade 2 level in Urdu and 39% can do basic two-digit division. The stark national averages are even worse in remote and socioeconomically disadvantaged districts. Balochistan, the biggest province in size, is also the worst in terms of educational indicators in Pakistan (Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-2023). These are the issues that Pasni, a seaside tehsil in Gwadar District, Balochistan, illustrates. As Pasni lies on the route of China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC), government secondary schools in Pasni have poor enrolment completion rate, literacy rate and attendance ratio of teachers, infrastructure and lack of structured institutional planning (Balochistan education department, 2022). The strategic management strategies such as strategic planning, transformational leadership,

performance-based accountability, and stakeholder participation have been found to be associated with school effectiveness and student achievement in the international literature (Bryson, 2018; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Nolan & Paludi, 2019). The evidence base for this, however, is largely from contexts in high-income countries, and there is limited research that has been directed toward the suitability of strategic management frameworks in low-income, remote contexts like Pasni. Much of this evidence base, however, comes from contexts in high-income countries, and a relatively limited research base has been directed toward the suitability of strategic management frameworks in low-income remote contexts like Pasni.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the commitment of the government at the national and provincial level to improve educational quality in Balochistan, educational performance of government secondary schools in Pasni is still far below the standards set by the national and provincial governments in terms of the key indicators of educational quality. The initial school record and district education reports review indicate that strategic planning is either absent or poorly developed in schools and head teachers are not competent enough in strategic management, do not have the tools, and also lack institutional support to effectively implement strategic planning (Balochistan Education Department, 2022).

The issue is two-fold: firstly, there is a lack of strategic management practice in Pasni schools and secondly, there is a lack of empirical research that documents this and investigates how strategic management can contribute to the enhancement of educational quality in this particular context. If such evidence is not available, interventions by policy and development actors may be general, out of context, and ultimately ineffective.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the strategic management in enhancing the standards of education in government secondary school in Pasni, Balochistan. In particular, it aims to: (a) identify

the situation of the strategic management practices in these schools, (b) evaluate how strategic management practices correlate with educational quality outcomes, (c) examine the leadership behaviours and institutional conditions that support and/or hinder effective strategic management, and (d) develop context-specific recommendations of strengthening the strategic management capacity in Pasni educational institutions.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes in three ways. In theory it extends the use of strategic management theory, transformational leadership theory and the TQM principles to the under-researched area of remote coastal schools in Balochistan. It empirically produces new and context-specific data pertaining to strategic management in the data record of Pasni's school which are not found elsewhere. The findings are practically applicable for the use of head teachers, district education officers and policy makers of Balochistan Education Department and Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and also development partners and NGOs engaged in education sector of Balochistan.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study is geospatially bound to Government Secondary Schools in Pasni Tehsil of Gwadar District and not in the case of Private Schools and other educational levels. Findings are directly applicable to this institutional setting, and are likely to be transferable to similar remote district schools in Balochistan. Social desirability bias with self-reported responses, a lack of capacity in the field to capture the seasonal variation of management practices and geographical remoteness of coastal field research are all potential limitations. The identified limitations are dealt with by the methodological safeguards outlined in.

Definition of Key Terms

Strategic Management: Strategic management refers to the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating decisions and actions that enable

an organization to achieve its long-term goals and improve performance. In the context of education, it involves setting clear objectives, efficiently utilizing resources, and continuously monitoring and improving school practices to enhance overall effectiveness (David & David, 2017).

Quality of Education: Quality of education refers to the extent to which an education system meets established standards of teaching and learning outcomes. It includes factors such as student achievement, teacher effectiveness, curriculum relevance, learning environment, and school leadership, all of which contribute to meaningful and effective learning experiences (UNESCO, 2015).

School Management: School management refers to the organization, coordination, and administration of school resources, including human, financial, and physical resources, to ensure the smooth functioning of educational activities and achievement of institutional goals.

Performance Improvement: Performance improvement refers to the continuous process of enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational practices, leading to better student outcomes, improved teaching quality, and stronger institutional performance.

Literature Review

Review of Related Literature

According to David and David (2017), strategic management is an integrated process of analysis, formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategies; through this process, an organization can make use of strategies to provide the help to achieve its goals in the face of the dynamics in the world. The field was systematically theorized by Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965) and Porter (1980), and it was determined that organizational success is achieved by matching the internal capabilities with the external demands. Bryson (2018) furthered these principles to the public sector, showing how structured strategic planning in government agencies and schools can have a significant impact if applied to political accountability and stakeholder diversity.

Strategic management is most often expressed in three main processes: (a) strategic planning (school

mission, vision, goals, and action plans); (b) strategic implementation (resource allocation decisions); and (c) strategic evaluation and control (monitoring of outcomes and using feedback that informs planning) (Nolan & Paludi, 2019). When practiced with fidelity and leadership commitment, these processes add to school effectiveness one by one and all together (Poister et al., 2013).

There is sufficient evidence linking school leadership to strategic management effectiveness. Burns (1978) first identified transactional leaders (those who run things by the rules of exchange) and transformational leaders (those who lead followers toward a shared vision). Bass and Riggio (2006) defined transformational leadership in terms of four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, which all capture the behaviours needed to maintain a vision-driven culture and contribute to a reflective, participatory culture within strategic planning.

Hallinger and Heck's (1998) model of reciprocal effects showed that principal leadership affects indirect influences on student outcomes at the school level, such as planning and resource management. In a large scale study of nine countries, Leithwood et al. (2010) identified that transformational leadership explained about 25% of the variance in student achievement, largely through its impact on teachers' motivational states and school organizational conditions.

Total Quality Management (TQM) was developed in the industrial quality management systems of Deming (1986) and Juran (1989) and was applied to the field of education by Sallis (2002), who believed that continuous improvement in schools could be realized by implementing customer-focused management, process improvement, and participatory decision-making. In education, TQM has been manifested in the following activities: Stakeholder needs assessment, Data-driven decision making, Continuous professional development, and Systematic monitoring of learning outcomes which are significantly similar with strategic management. Research in Pakistan has revealed that schools that have adopted TQM practices have higher percentages of passing, fewer

dropouts, and more satisfied teachers (Iqbal et al. 2015; Shah et al. 2020; Zaman et al., 2025).

Research, conducted on the empirical level, of the relationship between strategic management and education quality has produced very consistent results from various national contexts. In a meta-analysis of 47 public sector studies, Poister et al. 2013 determined that strategic planning has a positive relationship with organizational performance in 78 percent of the studies. In the K-12 environment, Boyne and Walker (2010) showed that schools with formalized strategic plans had higher student achievement outcomes, after controlling for socioeconomic context. In South Asia, Iqbal et al. (2015) analyzed 120 public secondary schools in Punjab, and discovered a significant positive relationship ($r = .63$; $p < .001$) between the quality of school strategic planning and the composite educational quality scores.

In particular, the context of Balochistan lacks empirical research on strategic management in schools in the published literature. UNESCO (2020), UNICEF Pakistan (2021) and provincial government sources report that the strategic planning capacity at local schools is low to non-existent, and head teachers are not trained nor supported with institutional resources to engage in formal strategic planning processes. This is the main rationale for the current research study.

Quality of education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. This study builds on the framework of UNESCO (2005) and the elaboration of Lockheed and Versoor (1991) and Adams (1993) and conceptualises educational quality in five interrelated dimensions: (a) learner characteristics (enrolments, attendance, and retention rates); (b) enabling inputs (physical infrastructure, learning materials, and teacher qualifications); (c) content quality (curriculum relevance and instructional rigor); (d) teaching and learning processes (pedagogical quality and classroom management); and (e) learning outcomes (student achievement scores and graduation rates). The five dimensions in this study are used as the framework to assess the quality of education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this study is strategic management theory which helps to understand how strategic management practices contribute to improving the quality of education in public schools. According to Strategic Management Theory, organizations can best reach their objectives by adopting a systematic approach of strategic planning, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation (David & David, 2017). The theory focuses on the need for an organization to regularly review their internal and external strengths and weakness and then appropriately and efficiently allocate resources to create sustainable improvement.

Strategic Management Theory states that school leaders who establish a clear strategic plan, execute it successfully, and monitor results for improvements in school performance and educational quality are more likely to make such improvements. Strategic planning allows for a shared vision and measurable goals to be set and strategic implementation of policies and plans allows for the implementation of strategies. Strategic evaluation can be used to track progress, identify obstacles and inform requisite corrections to enhance educational results.

This theory is especially noteworthy for the current study as it discusses the role of strategic management practices in school leaders in affecting different aspects of educational quality such as teaching effectiveness, student academic performance, school management, utilization of resources and satisfaction of the stakeholders. It also acknowledges that strategic management practices can be affected by the level of community participation, leadership commitment and resources available.

So, strategic management theory is a suitable tool used to analyze the role of strategic planning, implementation and evaluation in enhancing the quality of education in public schools of Pasni in Balochistan.

Methodology

Introduction

The chapter explains the research design, target population, sampling method, data collection

method and ethical protection used in the study. The methodologies used are clearly explained and supported by the researchers' research question and philosophical perspectives of qualitative research.

Research Objectives

The goals of this research are directly related to the research questions and represent the specific aims of the research project

- To assess the current level of strategic management practices in government secondary schools in Pasni, Balochistan.
- To examine the relationship between strategic management practices and educational quality outcomes.
- To identify leadership behaviours and institutional conditions that facilitate or hinder the implementation of strategic management.

Research Questions

This study is guided by key questions that aim to explore the role of strategic management in improving educational quality in government secondary schools in Pasni, Balochistan. The questions are focused on current practices, its impact and the influencing factors for its implementation.

- Q1: What is the current level of strategic management practices in government secondary schools in Pasni, Balochistan?
- Q2: What is the relationship between strategic management practices and educational quality outcomes?
- Q3: What leadership behaviours and institutional conditions facilitate or hinder the implementation of strategic management?

Research Design

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method is well suited because it can be used to investigate a bounded system in detail, and rich contextualized information can be gained on complex issues. The design is very useful for studying current events in their natural environments where the boundaries

between the phenomenon and context are not clearly delineated.

Target Population

The target population of this study is (a) head teacher of a government secondary school in Pasni, (b) classroom teachers working in the studied school and (c) relevant education officials as applicable. A bounded case is selected as the study is focused on one selected government secondary school in Pasni. Five participants were from this school, four were classroom teachers and one was a head teacher. This is because it is these participants who are directly involved in the teaching and administrative process of the school and they can provide rich and in depth information relevant to the study objectives.

The sampling strategy and sample size will be determined

The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling which was conducted to obtain participants who have direct experience and relevance to the research problem. In qualitative case study research, purposive sampling is a great method for securing rich and detailed information from individuals who are most knowledgeable about the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth 2018). Data saturation, or the point where no themes or insights emerged from the data, was used to guide the sample size. Five were estimated to be along and a saturation point was reached with the fourth interview with the fifth interview confirming the emerging themes.

Data Collection Procedure

To gain depth and triangulation, multiple qualitative data collection methods were employed: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. All relevant authorities gave permission and informed consent was obtained from all participants before the data were collected. Interviews were tape-recorded with consent, held at times and places that are convenient to both the interviewees and the interviewer, and supplemented with notes on context, non-verbal cues, etc. All information was transcribed, sorted and kept in a secure place to

preserve confidentiality. Data collection continued until saturation, which is the qualitative case study protocol (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The study conforms to the principles of ethics, namely, respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and they were given explicit information about their right to withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality is ensured by using alphanumeric identifiers (HT-01 for the head teacher; T-01 to T-04 for the classroom teachers) and no personally identifiable information is reported. Data collection began after securing approval from all relevant authorities in the institution. The study is conducted without deception, without physical risk or without psychologically intrusive procedure. All data are kept in the institutional password protected servers, and only the researcher and supervisory team can access it.

Overview

The results of the qualitative case study are presented in this chapter in line with the three research questions. The semi-structured interviews with five participants, classroom observations and document analysis yield a set of data that are analyzed thematically, along with the six phases of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Participants are given codes, HT-01 (head teacher) and T-01, T-02, T-03 and T-04 (classroom teachers). Representative participant quotes are included within each thematic section to help substantiate what is being presented.

Participant Profiles

Participant characteristics are summarized in Table 1. The subjects were all government secondary school employees from the same secondary school in Pasni, Balochistan. Experience of school management ranged from 3 to 22 years, offering institutional knowledge and new insights into the day-to-day tasks of school management.

Produce findings and represent data

Table 1

Participant Profile Summary



Code	Role	Gender	Years' Experience	Highest Qualification
HT-01	Head Teacher	female	22 years	M.Ed.
T-01	Senior Teacher (Science)	female	14 years	B.Ed. (Hons)
T-02	Teacher (Mathematics)	Female	9 years	B.Ed.
T-03	Teacher (Urdu/Social Studies)	female	6 years	B.Ed.
T-04	Junior Teacher (English)	Female	3 years	B.A., B.Ed.

Note. All participants are employed at Government Secondary School, Pasni, Balochistan.

Theme 1: Absence and Superficiality of Strategic Management Practices

The most cross-cutting discovery from all the data sources is that strategic management practices, especially formal strategic planning are largely non-existent or merely "business as usual" in the study school. The school had no measurable performance indicators or timelines and no responsibilities in the school development plan that was documented, which the district education office required; the plan included only targets for

enrolments and wish lists for infrastructure. This discrepancy was candidly admitted by HT-01: We have a plan in the drawer, we fill it out each year when they say we need it, but we never look at it to see if we did anything, just that we need to fill it out each year they ask for it" (HT-01, personal communication). This picture was confirmed by teachers' accounts. In 14 years at the school, he had never been a part of a formal school improvement planning process, T-01 said. The T-02 observed that goal-setting (where it happened)

was mainly informal and "reactive" – it was set in response to upcoming inspections – and not a continuous improvement approach. This study aligns with the assessment by UNICEF Pakistan (2021) that planning capacity of Baluchistan schools is at least at a basic stage. The findings of

the observed strategic management practices and best practice benchmarks are summarized in Table 2, which is based on the conceptual framework (David & David, 2017; Bryson, 2018; Nolan & Paludi, 2019).

Table 2

Strategic Management Practices: Observed Versus Best-Practice Benchmarks

Strategic Management Component	recite Benchmark	Observed Practice	Gap Rang
Mission & Vision	Clear, shared, communicated to all stakeholders	Generic mission exists; not communicated actively	High
Strategic Planning	Annual plan with SMART goals, timelines, KPIs	Plan filed for compliance; not operational	Very High
Resource Allocation	Budget aligned to strategic priorities	Ad hoc; controlled by district office	High
Performance Monitoring	Regular data review; outcome tracking	Absent; inspection-driven only	Very High
Stakeholder Engagement	Parents, community, staff involved in planning	Minimal; parent meetings held irregularly	High
Professional Development	Ongoing, linked to school improvement goals	Infrequent; not strategically aligned	High

Note. Gap ratings are based on qualitative judgment across all data sources. KPIs = Key Performance Indicators; SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

Theme 2: Transformational Leadership as a Partial Compensatory Mechanism

Although strategic management structures were still mostly lacking, qualitative data suggests that the leadership behaviours adopted by the HT-01 partially offset this structural deficiency as they closely resembled those described in the transformational leadership model by Bass and Riggo (2006). The head teacher was consistently described by teachers as inspirational, approachable and dedicated to the improvement of education. T-03 observed: “Sir [HT-01] keeps talking about what this school can become he doesn't give up, he comes early, he comes Late; we feel motivated because he believes in us, but on his own, without a plan, without resources, there is only so far that one person can go.” (T-03, personal communication). Even HT-01 admitted that in his own leadership, he could not do without the institutional framework: Without supports from

the district, without proper training, and without having time and tools available for teachers, ideas don't go anywhere. Leadership alone cannot change a school" (HT-01, personal communication). The findings from these data corroborate the theoretical proposition of the study based on Hellinger and Heck (1998) and Leithwood et al. (2010) that transformational leadership is essential, but not enough, for school improvement; it needs to be supported by good strategic management arrangements and proper resources allocation. The institutional capacity deficits and the resource constraints as barriers are the subject.

Theme 3. A third primary theme related to structural challenges that have hindered efforts to implement strategic management. Financial, human and material resource shortages were the most important constraints all five participants named them independently. T-02 reported

conditions within the classroom: I have 40 students in my math class. I have 20 books. How to make strategic plan when I can't even meet basic needs? If there are no resources, then the plan is worth nothing (T-02, personal communication). These reports were supported by a document analysis. The student to teacher ratio was 38:1, which was significantly higher than the recommended ratio. Physical infrastructure was evaluated by observation and was found to be significantly below standard, with two classrooms having leaking roofs, and no library or science laboratory, while toilets were not functional. These are similar to the district level data presented by Balochistan Education Department (2022) and similar to the national results of UNICEF Pakistan (2021) which indicated that schools in Baluchistan had the lowest per pupil public expenditure in Pakistan. The envelope of capacity expanded to professional competencies. With regard to leadership development, strategic management, and strategic planning, HT-01 said it had not received formal training at all. T-04 also stated that her pre-service teacher training program did not provide preparation in school-level governance and quality improvement processes. This institutional gap, without in-service training, gives rise to a vicious circle in which the lack of management knowledge leads to the lack of management practice. The barriers and enablers of strategic management identified are presented in Table 3, which was derived from cross-source triangulation. The association

between strategic management and educational quality is explored in.

Theme 4. While the picture is very consistent that strategic management is not employed, data also provided useful examples, where even some or informal use of strategic management was linked to measurable improvements in educational quality outcomes. In an informal effort three years ago, HT-01 introduced weekly teacher progress meetings, an effort that aligns with the student performance monitoring and data-informed decision-making parts of strategic management: We were having the Friday discussion for two years, I would bring the attendance book and the monthly scores on the tests, we would discuss who was having trouble and why, etc. The teachers began to share ideas, and attendance at our school improved from very poor to less poor, but then I was pulled into too many district meetings and it stopped (HT-01, personal communication). T-01 confirmed this, stating that student retention in Grade 9 was clearly improving and that there was a significant decrease in the number of students leaving between years during the time of regular review meetings.

Table 4 summarizes the pre-post comparisons of the following key educational quality indicators derived from school records and participant accounts, which were reconstructed for this analysis:

Table 4

Educational Quality Indicators Before, During, and After Informal Performance Monitoring Initiative

Quality Indicator	Before (Year 1)	During (Years 2-3)	After (Year 4)
Average Student Attendance Rate	61%	74%	63%
Grade 9 Mid-Year Dropout Rate	23%	14%	21%
Average Monthly Test Score (out of 100)	41.2	48.7	43.5
Teacher Attendance Rate	68%	79%	71%
Parental Participation in School Meetings	Low	Moderate	Low-Moderate

Note. Data are reconstructed from school attendance registers, monthly test records, and participant accounts. Years are relative to the initiative period. Figures are approximate due to incomplete record-keeping in Years 1 and 4.

Although the numbers are small and record-keeping is incomplete, these data suggest that an informal and resource-poor strategic management practice can yield noticeable gains in indicators of educational quality. This result corroborates Poister et al.'s (2013) overall meta-analysis result which concludes that partial implementation and implementation of strategic management is also beneficial. It also corroborates the findings of Iqbal et al. (2015) in Punjab schools.

Current State of Strategic Management Practices

The results clearly indicate that the strategic management practices in the school under study and generally in similar government secondary schools in are in their infancy and largely underdeveloped. In this study, the compliance-driven, drawer-filing approach to school development planning was found to be a pseudo-planning culture, as described by Bryson (2018): schools do the planning ritual but don't imbibe the content of planning. This distinction is important because it demonstrates that the issue is more than a resource issue in that the norms, values, and expectations that underlie school planning need to be fundamentally reshaped.

This finding aligns with and extends the assessment of UNICEF Pakistan (2021) and UNESCO (2020), which characterized strategic planning in Baluchistan's schools as either absent or cosmetic. The contribution of the present study is to provide thick, contextually grounded qualitative evidence that specifies the mechanisms through which this deficit operates compliance culture, lack of training, resource insufficiency, and the absence of accountability rather than simply documenting its existence through survey metrics.

The finding also connects to broader scholarship on public sector strategic management. Boyne and Walker (2010) observed that public organizations frequently engage in what they termed "strategic orientation" rather than genuine strategic management: they adopt the language and formats of strategic planning without implementing the adaptive, learning-oriented processes that produce performance improvements. The study school's

experience is a textbook illustration of this pattern.

Discussion recommendation and conclusion

Strategic Management and Educational Quality

The results have implications that are context-specific and meaningful but, albeit informal and partial, yield evidence of a positive relationship between strategic management practices and educational quality outcomes in a variety of ways. HT-01's performance monitoring process led to improvements in attendance, retention, test scores, and teacher attendance which reverted to baseline when the program ended. This is a typical longitudinal profile that would be expected in the general empirical literature. The monitoring and feedback dimension of the planning cycle was the part of the cycle that was related to strategic management and organizational performance most clearly, according to Poister et al. (2013), which is the part of the cycle that HT-01's initiative instantiated. The results of Iqbal et al. (2015) from Punjab, which show strong positive correlation between quality of planning and achievement, support the directionality of results from Pasni, although the methodological contexts are quite different.

The fact that the initiative failed to sustain its quality improvements when it was ended, is theoretically important. It implies that the strategic management benefits are not self-perpetuating without being embedded within institutionalised structures and processes. This aligns with the requirement for formal systems with scheduled review cycles, assigned roles, and external accountability that supports the performance improvements of strategic management, as put forth by Nolan and Paludi (2019). However, even an individual motivated leader's informal planning effort is at risk of disruption in Pasni's context which lacks the time, structure or institutional expectation for continuous planning.

Leadership Behaviours and Institutional Conditions

The results support the theoretical hypothesis proposed in the conceptual framework of the

study, which is that the most direct motivator of any strategic management capacity in the school is the leadership style of the principal, that is, transformational leadership. The teachers' perception of the way HT-01 conducts himself is very close to the four dimensions of transformational leadership described by Bass and Riggio (2006): he sets an inspiring vision (inspirational motivation), holds himself and others to high standards (idealized influence), encourages teachers to question established routines (intellectual stimulation), and attends to the professional needs of individual teachers (individualized consideration).

The findings also reveal the boundaries of the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic management without the supporting conditions of structural elements. Leithwood et al. (2010) observed that the impacts of transformational leadership are greatest on organizational factors such as planning quality, resource alignment and collaborative culture, which in turn impact student outcomes. The structures in Pasni are not conducive to the leadership energies of HT-01 being sustained in lasting improvement. This moderating effect of contextual factors resource availability, district support, teacher capacity is exactly what the study's conceptual framework predicted as a moderating effect, and the data support this; moderation is real, and it is substantial.

This discovery has significant implications for the understanding of education reforms that focus on leadership. Investments in head teacher leadership development alone are likely to have partial and limited impact if the structural conditions, such as resource allocation, accountability systems, leadership development systems in which head teacher leadership can have an impact, are not addressed as well. This mirrors the criticism of leadership-driven reform strategies by Fullan (2001) and elaborated in the low-income country context by Leithwood et al. (2010).

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the substantive literature on strategic management in education in three ways. First, it illustrates the applicability of the

strategic management education quality framework (David & David, 2017; Bryson, 2018; Nolan & Paludi, 2019) in a remote and resource challenged, low income district school context, which is not part of the empirical record. Second, it provides contextually based evidence to support the moderating effect of structural conditions on the relationship between transformational leadership and educational quality, building on and localizing Hallinger and Heck's (1998) and Leithwood et al.'s (2010) theory. Third, it offers a process-level explanation of the strategic management absence mechanism in a particular institutional setting, which adds to the mechanism-level explanations called for by Poister et al. (2013) in their review of public sector strategic management studies.

The study was confined to a small number of students

The conclusions that can be drawn from this chapter are limited by a number of factors. Formal generalizability is restricted to the one school studied in the area of Pasni. Participant self-reporting was a limitation because of the potential for social desirability bias that was reduced, however, by triangulation through the use of interviews, observation and documents. There is a risk of recall bias and the well-documented issue of incomplete record-keeping in under-resourced schools in the retrospective reconstruction of educational quality indicators (EQIs) shown in Table 4. Lastly, the single point in time data collection format makes it impossible to make any causal conclusions about the direction of relations between strategic management and educational quality. Future research designs must take into account these limitations by incorporating multi-school samples, longitudinal data collection, and mixed methods research designs which will include both depth and breadth.

Recommendations

Based on findings and discussions the following recommendations are being made to four different stakeholders groups including policy makers and government, Balochistan Education Department and district education offices, school leaders and

teachers and NGOs and development partners. The recommendations are based on the empirical findings of the study, literature review and contextual realities of the educational environment at Pasni.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Government

The provincial government of Balochistan needs to significantly boost per-pupil recurrent spending in the remote district schools, especially in Gwadar District. Structural underfunding as highlighted in this study and supported by the UNICEF Pakistan (2021) is a longstanding issue that needs to be addressed to improve strategic management in any meaningful way. The lack of basic inputs school textbooks, functioning classrooms, and appropriate student-to-teacher ratios no matter how well designed the planning framework, cannot be made up for. Resource provision is a prerequisite of quality improvement though not enough.

Second, the policy makers at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training should look into the Pakistan National Education Policy (2017) and make necessary changes in it to explicitly include provision for capacity building of school level strategic management in remote and disadvantaged areas. Policy provisions are not enough; they need to be backed up by dedicated budget lines and implementation support mechanisms.

Recommendations for the Balochistan Education Department and District Education Offices

Third, the government's role in school development planning must change from being compliance-based to a true capacity building one, in the context of the Balochistan Education Department in particular. This needs to involve: (a) standardizing training for head teachers in strategic planning, performance monitoring and stakeholder engagement; (b) appointing school improvement officers at the district level, who liaise with head teachers to develop, implement and monitor school plans; and (c) ensuring an accountability system for strategic planning in

which genuine engagement comes before the submission of plans.

Fourth, the District Education offices should introduce communities of practice for head teachers in Gwadar District, where head teachers can share their learning and problem solving with each other regarding problems on school affairs. Virtual communities of practice (VCoP) using the existing government digital platform are a low-cost and scalable way of providing professional support, given the isolation of schools in coastal Balochistan.

Fifth, in-service training programs for head teachers should be designed and arranged in collaboration with prominent universities in Pakistan, with the base content of strategic management, transformational leadership, decision making based on evidence, and community engagement. Professional learning that takes place on the school calendar and works alongside head teachers' workload will be more effective at producing practice change than one-off workshops (Nolan & Paludi, 2019).

School leaders and teachers are advised to use the following recommendations.

Sixth, it is recommended that head teachers in the government secondary schools in Pasni start and continue with informal strategic management practices even without any formal institutional support in particular the performance monitoring and review cycles. The results of the performance monitoring program described in this study show that small, yet time-intensive practices are able to produce identifiable improvements in quality. Head teachers must contain the innate urge to wait for things to get better before they can get better. Sometimes, there is a sense that one can only make a difference once the external circumstances improve. This is the wrong approach: progress can be achieved incrementally within the limits of what is possible.

The final recommendation is that teachers should be actively involved in school improvement processes, sharing their professional expertise and understanding of quality barriers and enablers in the classroom with head teacher-led planning processes. The strategic management culture of participation that it calls for can be developed

starting from the classroom floor and going up, even without formal structures, through informal communication, collegial reflection and a shared commitment to student outcomes (Bryson, 2018). The recommendations for Non-Governmental Organizations and Development Partners have been made. Recommendations for Non-Governmental Organizations and Development Partners have been made.

School-level strategic management capacity building is a high-leverage and low-cost intervention, and should be considered by development partners in Balochistan such as national and international NGOs, USAID, the Aga Khan Development Network, and multi-lateral agencies. The research evidence is clear that better management quality has impacts on educational outcomes that are greater than the impact of investments in equivalent physical resources or curriculum changes (Poister et al., 2013).

9. Education stakeholders in Gwadar District need to conduct a systematic assessment of head teachers' management competencies in all government secondary schools of the district in the district by employing validated instruments and providing an evidence-based district-wide report for targeted capacity building investments. The results of these studies should be interpreted as a hypothesis-generating starting point in a larger diagnostic exercise taking place in one school.

Improvements for future research

The following are some avenues for future research to pursue based on this study. First, a Multi-School Study (MMS) using a Mixed Methods Approach (MMA) covering all the government secondary schools in Gwadar District will enable comparative analysis of the strategic management practices of schools and link between institutional strategic management practices and educational quality outcomes systematically across institutions. Second, the results of a longitudinal study on the strategic management practices and the educational quality indicators after an intervention aimed to enhance head teacher planning competencies would yield causal evidence that is missing from the literature and is

needed to determine the impact of the intervention. Third, a comparison between schools with similar resources and different educational quality outcomes would be facilitated by a most-similar case design which would help to determine which management behaviours are likely to explain the difference in outcomes. First, research that draws on students' and parents' voices as additional sources of input would contribute to understanding of the impact of strategic management at the classroom level on the improvement of learning experience.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study aimed to explore how strategic management contributed to the enhancement of education quality in government secondary schools in Pasni, Balochistan which has been empirically untouched in the literature so far on education management in the world. The results lead to three main conclusions.

First, at the moment strategic management practices in the study school are very much missing or carried out as compliance ritual, not as a way to improve. However, this deficiency is not due to the lack of will of the head teacher or teachers, but is the result of the head teacher and teachers being aware of the deep structural conditions of chronic underfunding, lack of management training, compliance culture and accountability, and geographic isolation that limit individual agency. Second, the behaviours of the head teacher are a partial and fragile compensatory strategy, a strategy that is capable of bringing about visible improvements in the quality of education when they are used to support even informal strategic management practices, but one that is, at best, incomplete and limited in absence of any supporting framework of planning, resource allocation and accountability systems. In Pasni, leadership is a very important factor but, by itself, it is not enough to build a school into a centre of sustainable improvement.

Third, the limited and methodologically limited evidence gathered in the informal performance monitoring program shows that strategic management can deliver educational quality benefits even in a very resource-poor context. It

has significant implications for practice: investment in management capacity building is not for the well-resourced school; it is a high leverage, cost effective intervention that can make real differences in the very places where results are most urgently in need of improvement.

The schools of Pasni are located at the crossroads of geographic remoteness, long-term underfunding and the possibility of change with the CPEC. Whether that potential is realized for the children of Pasni's fishing communities will rely crucially on whether their school leaders and managers exercise their strategic oversight and institutional support, and have the professional capacity, that the evidence is clear is strongly linked to educational quality improvement. This study is one small, but purposeful, step toward the evidence base that can drive that transformation.

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