TEACHERS' ROLES IN SHARED DECISION-MAKING IN A PAKISTANI
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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of
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Dedication

To the memory of my beloved uncle, Zafar Ahmed Qayum, whose life's journey sadly ended just as my doctoral journey began, and to my loving parents, Brig (R) Muhammad Salim Akhtar and Nusrat Salim, my greatest cheerleaders and support system, who helped me through all the tough times.

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List of Abbreviations

Adult Literacy Centers .... ALCs
Aga Khan University – Institute of Educational Development .... AKU-IED
Asian Development Bank .... ADB
Community Based Organizations .... CBOs
Education Sector Reform..ESR
Federally Administered Tribal Areas .... FATA
Federally Administered Northern Areas... FANA
Gross Domestic Product ....GDP
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa .... KPK
International Labor Organization .... ILO
In-service Training ....INSET
Leadership Capacity School Survey .... LCSS
Millennium Development Goals .... MDGs
Non-Governmental Organization .... NGO
Parent Teacher Association .... PTA
Parent Teacher Meetings .... PTMs
Pre-service Training ....PRESET
School Improvement Plans ....SIPs
Shared Decision-Making .... SDM
Socio-economic status ....SES
Spread the Light ....STL
Staff Development Day ....SDD
Teacher Change Agent Scale .... TCAS
Teacher Perceptions of Shared Decision-Making Survey .... TPSDS
Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-Making .... TSQS
Training of Trainer .... TOT
United Nations Development Program .... UNDP
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization .... UNESCO
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund ....UNICEF
United States Agency for International Development ....USAID
Village Education Committees .... VEC
Zafar Secondary School ....ZSS

Abstract

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Over the past two decades, teacher participation in school decision-making has emerged
as a significant theme in education reforms, gaining the attention of researchers and
practitioners across different education contexts both in developed and developing
countries (Lee & Nie, 2014). A supportive and participatory culture typically does not
exist in Pakistani schools catering to the underprivileged. Instead, the existing
hierarchical public education system promotes multi-layered power structures in which
authority flows from the top to the bottom (Khalid, 1996; Tajik, 2008). Inadequate
attention has been paid to the participatory activities of informal teacher leaders in
developing countries such as Pakistan, and existing research predominantly examines the
perceptions of formal teacher leaders such as principals and head teachers about their
involvement in shared decision-making. Yet, research indicates that against all odds, a
few private, low-cost community schools in Pakistan have adopted the idea of involving
teachers in decision-making within and beyond the classroom. The purpose of this

qualitative single case study is to explore the perceptions of Pakistani teachers about their roles in shared decision-making in a reputationally, effective, low-cost community school in Pakistan. Multiple data sources were used to ensure triangulation. These included a survey on shared decision-making for all 34 community school teachers; informal observations, field notes and semi-structured interviews of 22 purposefully selected community school teachers. Standard survey analysis, emic coding, and constant comparative analysis were used to identify common themes across survey and interview responses. Findings suggest that a majority of the Pakistani community school teachers were positively inclined toward the process of shared decision-making, preferring it over the traditional decision-making model. While they believed that the decision-making process in their school was collaborative, more than half the teachers did not feel empowered to make decisions because their input, though sought out by the management, was not incorporated into final decisions. Findings also identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors within and outside the school that impacted Pakistani community school teachers' willingness and agency to participate in the shared decision-making process. It is concluded that Pakistani community teachers feel ready to assume shared decision-making responsibilities, but they need relevant knowledge and skills to meaningfully participate in the process and take charge of their professional landscape. The study findings have implications for practitioners, policy makers and teacher educators.

Keywords: shared decision-making, teacher leaders, teachers' perceptions, teacher education

Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

Teachers can "harbor extraordinary leadership capabilities," and their leadership can be "a major untapped resource for improving schools" (Barth, 2001, p. 444). Over the last two decades, teacher participation in school decision-making has emerged as a significant theme in educational reforms, gaining the attention of researchers and practitioners across educational contexts in developed and developing countries (Conley, 1991; Jones, 1997; Lee & Nie, 2014; Smylie, 1992). In an age of globalization, high expectations and accountability, focus on improved student outcomes and teacher performance has intensified, as has the need for schools to adapt to these changes and evolve into collaborative communities fostering knowledge sharing and capacity building (Chatziioannidis, 2013; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). There is growing recognition that teachers need to play proactive roles in school policy decisions that impact their own practice and the learning of their colleagues and students (Chatziioannidis, 2013; Leiberman & Miller, 2005; Pashiardis, 1994).

A basic premise underlying shared decision-making by teachers is that when their input in policy decisions is valued, they feel intrinsically motivated in their work environments, thus driving active participation in processes that influence their practices. As autonomous professionals in charge of their own practices, teachers will not only perform at optimum level, but are more likely to show greater commitment toward

implementing policies they help to develop (Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2003; Gagne & Deci, 2005; Kumar & Scuderi, 2000; Lee & Nie, 2014). Furthermore, teachers will never improve learning in the classroom unless they help improve the conditions surrounding the classroom (Fullan, 1993) because teaching cannot exist in "isolation from the cultures of schools and communities or the historical and political context of school and society" (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 280). Every teacher may not necessarily be a decision-maker, but every teacher has unique leadership expertise in a certain domain, and the strength of successful school leadership lies in helping teachers discover these skills in order to channelize them toward meaningful school reforms. Consequently, school improvement goes beyond simply raising student test scores. Its essence, as Barth (1990) points out, lies in nurturing school communities that are "collaborative, inclusive and ultimately empowering… it is only within such communities that the potential of both students and teachers will be fully realized" (p. 158 cited in Harris, 2002, p. 119).

Shared Decision-Making and Distributed Leadership

Teacher shared decision-making is a term often used interchangeably with distributed leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003), collaborative leadership (Wallace, Anderson, & Bartholomay, 2002), democratic leadership (Gastil, 1994), and participative leadership (Vroom, Yetton, & Jago, 1998). This dimension of empowerment relates to the inclusion of teachers in key decisions directly impacting their work. These encompass areas such as instructional coordination, curriculum development, knowledge sharing, professional staff development, teacher selection, evaluation, general school improvement, rules and discipline, engagement with parents, and policymaking

pertaining to budget allocation (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Short & Greer, 2002). In contrast to traditional notions of leadership, the concept of shared decision-making implies a decentralized power relationship within a school setting in which distinctions between teachers and school leaders tend to blur (Gronn, 2000).

Central to the idea of shared decision-making is the view that leadership is not the sole domain of the individual at the top, and while the principal is still responsible for the overall school organization, s/he needs to exercise a more fluid, democratic, participatory and collaborative form of leadership that engages all key stakeholders in decision-making (Frost & Harris, 2003). Owing to increasingly complex education systems, particularly in larger schools, no one individual can have all the knowledge and expertise to effectively fulfill the various leadership roles and responsibilities (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Instead, a new leadership model has evolved that underlines the need to include different stakeholders such as teachers and parents in essential decision-making related to school policies and practices. The general view is that since teachers work closely with students and possess firsthand knowledge of classroom teaching and learning, their feedback in decisions will be informed by this knowledge, thus leading to constructive school reform (Kumar & Scuderi, 2000).

Shared decision-making emphasizes increasing "intellectual and social capital" and building capacity within the organization (Frost & Harris, 2003, p. 480). Thus, the school principal needs to adopt a facilitative role that encourages goal-setting by staff members and recognizes each teacher's potential to demonstrate leadership in one area or another based upon his/her expertise. It is equally important that the school

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administration provides opportunities to nurture teachers' leadership skills and creates an engaging school culture to promote joint responsibility and ownership amongst teachers (Vlachadi & Ferla, 2013).

Additionally, the education literature has identified several potential benefits for promoting teacher participation in decision-making within schools. Advocates argue that since teachers are so close to the teaching and learning process and have in-depth knowledge about their students and curriculum, decisions made in consideration of their input will be grounded in an "intimate understanding of the context" (Weiss, 1993, p. 69). Therefore, involving teachers in school decision-making gives them a say about their work conditions; increases teacher satisfaction; strengthens teacher morale; fosters interpersonal skills for principals and the teaching staff; creates a positive school culture; generates fresh ideas thereby improving the quality, ownership, and implementation of decisions; builds trust between staff and management; positively influences the quality of teaching in the classroom; instills teachers with a heightened sense of commitment to the organization; and enhances school effectiveness (Duke et al., 1980; Fullan, 2001; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Hopkins, 2001; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Liontos, 1993; Sergiovanni, 2001; Shabaan & Qureshi, 2006). Shared decision-making can be a powerful contributory factor in improved organizational performance if the "right conditions," such as an enabling school culture and collaborative work mechanisms, are created (Harris, 2014, p. 5). Research, however, has also highlighted the potential costs of shared decision-making, particularly in cases where it is unplanned or implemented ineffectively. These may include increased demand on teachers' time by engaging them in responsibilities

beyond their own specialized work (Duke et al., 1980; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Lambert, 2003; Leech, 1999; Rauls, 2003); loss or reduction of autonomy and accountability for individual decision-making (Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996); and increased wariness to overstep the bounds of their authority for fear of collegial disfavor or, in some cases, threats to career advancement (Sirianni, 1987). Consequently, some teachers may prefer not to participate in decision-making at all, while others may participate selectively when their interests are at stake (Marks & Louis, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Although the literature on teacher leadership alludes to some examples of teacher participation in different areas of shared decision-making, these are few and far between, particularly in the Pakistani context. The common view has traditionally been that the term "leader" can only apply to individuals who take on responsibilities outside the classroom or have formal administrative or managerial positions within a school organization, such as head teachers, department chairs or principals (Collay, 2013). The history of teaching has been isolated behind the classroom door, and the notion that "the only job of teachers is to teach students and to consider the classroom as the only legitimate extent of their influence" (Urbanski & Nickolaou, 1997, p. 244) has held sway for quite some time. With school decision-making perceived largely as an administrative domain, the teacher is traditionally seen as either an implementer or a passive recipient of externally authorized reform initiatives (Richardson & Placier, 2001). This perception is reinforced by hierarchical patterns of school management, resulting in the professional isolation of teachers from their peers and superiors, the exclusion of teachers from

decision-making roles or decisions that affect the nature of their work, and the "chronic de-skilling of teachers through a number of misguided mandates" (Collay, 2013, p. 72).

In 1983, the release of *A Nation at Risk* highlighted the failure of U.S. schools to assess the quality of teaching and learning in both public and private spheres, thus propelling teachers to the forefront of educational reform efforts in the U.S. and worldwide (Ali, Qasim, Jaffers, & Greenland, 1993). The resultant wave of educational reforms called for more decentralized school management and increased teacher participation in decision-making with regard to teaching and learning (Hess, 1994; Keedy & Finch, 1994). Researchers argued that school improvement strategies that did not include teachers' participation and leadership were "doomed to failure" (Lieberman & Miller, 1999, p. xi) because collaboration among educators is now required to accomplish change. In the ensuing decades, researchers, educators, and historians who study education reform have progressively come to recognize that one-dimensional education policies focused on introducing "formulaic" programs or injecting funds to repair schools are minimally likely to facilitate long-term improvement (Lane, Parachini & Isken, 2003). Instead, they argued that school reforms are more likely to result from sustained efforts at individual school sites with teachers working collaboratively with their peers and the school administration to respond to the needs of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Elmore, 2004).

Critical school-related decisions are often made by individuals who are far removed from the sites where the decisions are to be implemented (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991). With the rise of education reforms involving site-based management, career

ladders for teachers, and mentor teacher programs, the focus of school leadership research has shifted from the leadership activities of school principals to the leadership employed by teachers and other stakeholders (Anderson & Shirley, 1995; Weiss & Cambone, 1994). Hence, advocates of the teacher empowerment movement underline the need to reconceptualize a notion of leadership where (a) teachers and managers engage in shared decision-making and risk-taking with greater emphasis placed upon "active and participatory leadership in school improvement work, rather than top down delegation" (Harris, 2000, p. 6), and (b) teachers introduce innovative strategies to support student learning both within and beyond the classroom such as teacher evaluation, mentoring, curricular development and determining resource expenditure (Hatch, Eiler -White, & Faigenbaum, 2005). Thus, the initial view of the teacher as a mere implementer of reform strategy has shifted to one wherein the teacher assumes an active leadership role in the evaluation of teacher performance, curriculum design, professional development program design, mentoring, school budget setting, and peer collaboration with the aim to enhance personal growth and student learning (Barth, 2001; Lukacs, 2008).

Pakistan: The Socio-Cultural and Education Context

Although these arguments have been largely raised in Western countries, they also have significance in the Pakistani setting. Pakistan is a developing country with vast "human and natural resources but limited exploitation capacity" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 2). Over the past decade, it has experienced its fair share of geo-political turbulence and internal political instability, fluctuating economic growth rates, and recurrent natural calamities that adversely impacted the economy and the delivery capacity of social

services, particularly health and education. Pakistan faces critical challenges in providing quality education to millions of children. Whereas children from the higher strata of society have access to quality education and healthcare resources, those at the lower end of the spectrum can only afford institutions offering substandard education.

The ancient Indus Valley civilization, dating back at least 5,000 years, was spread over much of modern-day Pakistan. Pakistan emerged as a sovereign nation on August 14, 1947, after its founding father, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, led a freedom struggle resulting in the partition of the Indian Subcontinent and independence from nearly 200 years of British colonial rule. Pakistan follows a parliamentary form of democracy under the Islamic federal constitution of 1973. Geographically, it is located at the junction of three major regions of Asia: Central Asia to the north, the Middle East to the west, and the Indian Subcontinent to the east and southeast. Situated in South Asia, Pakistan borders India in the east, Iran in the west, Afghanistan in the northwest, China in the northeast, and the Arabian Sea in the South. Administratively, the country is divided into four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (KPK), with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) also falling under the jurisdiction of Pakistan. The capital of Pakistan is Islamabad, and the country has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. About 96% of the population comprises Muslims; two percent are Christians; and two percent comprises other minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Ahmadies, etc. (Salfi & Saeed, 2007).

Figure 1. Map of Pakistan.

Overview of the State of Education in Pakistan

With an estimated population of 185. 1 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world (The World Bank, 2016). Between 2005 and 2009, the country made significant strides developmentally; it gained eighteen places on the Human Development Index (HDI). However, by 2010 it dropped back twenty places, and currently ranks 146 out of 187 countries on the HDI 2013, thus falling in the category of countries experiencing low human development (United Nations Development Program, 2014, p. 162). This index measures dimensions such as life expectancy at birth, adult

literacy rate, combined primary and secondary enrollment ratio, and per capita income. Pakistan's poor socio-economic standing reflects the low priority successive governments have attached to people centered development. According to government estimates, nearly 30% of the population lives below the poverty line, up from around 18% in 2007 (Pinon, & Haydon, 2010).

In 2010, Pakistan declared the provision of free and compulsory primary and secondary education as a fundamental right and committed to the achievement of equality of education access at the national level through Articles 18, 25-A and 37 of the constitution. It is also a signatory of international declarations and agreements upholding equality of access to basic education, including the World Declaration on Education For All (1990, Jomtien, Thailand) the Dakar Framework for Action for EFA (April 2000, Dakar, Senegal) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000), which called for the universal primary education by 2015. Nonetheless, strong disparities persist in literacy and educational attainment between rural and urban areas in Pakistan, and its goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015 was not achieved. Among the myriad problems it faces, low levels of literacy and lack of access to quality educational opportunities, particularly for children who live on the margins (urban slums, urban peripheries, and rural areas), are the most pronounced, cutting across gender, classes and regions. For more than a decade, Pakistan's annual public expenditure on education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained stagnant at an average 2.2% to 2.4% (UNDP, 2014, p. 194), far below UNESCO's recommendation for low-income countries of 4% allocation (Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Moreover, this limited budgetary

allocation is mostly utilized to cover recurrent overhead costs such as salaries and day-to-day operational costs. Less than 10% of the education budget is spent on upgrading services and making quality improvements to teacher training, curriculum development, provision of school facilities, and monitoring and supervision of educational programs (UNESCO, 2013, p. 10).

Pakistan presents a grim picture in terms of its education sector indicators. Although its overall literacy rate increased from 45% in 2000 (Government of Pakistan, 2000) to 58% in 2013 (UNESCO, 2013, p. 11), this marginal increase indicates the ineffectiveness of fifteen successive education policies since Pakistan's inception. Nearly one-half of the country's adult population is unable to read or write. Additionally, the net enrollment rate at the primary level (5-9 years) is 57% (Husnain, 2014, p. 148), and an estimated 34.4% of children of primary school-age are currently unenrolled (UNICEF, 2014, p. v). Pakistan has the second largest out-of-school population in South Asia after India, accounting for 6.5 million school children (UNICEF, 2014, p. v). The gross enrollment for primary school-age population is estimated at 93%, and secondary and tertiary enrollment ratios stagnate at 37% and 10%, respectively (UNDP, 2014, p. 194). Disparities are more glaring along gender lines; less than half of the country's female population ever goes to school. According to Husnain (2014), Pakistan's overall male and female literacy rates are 71% and 48%, respectively (PSLM Survey 2012-13). However, the female literacy rate drops significantly to 37% in rural areas, compared to 64% among males. In urban areas, this figure is 69% for females, and 82% for males. Not surprisingly, educational inequalities are more pronounced across the urban and rural

divide; whereas the literacy rate in urban areas is 65%, it decreases to 37% in rural areas (Husnain, 2014). The data from Pakistan's population census indicate that almost 62% of Pakistan's total population still resides in rural areas; where as 38% of the total population resides in urban areas (World Bank, 2016). Fewer schools are available for rural students compared to their urban counterparts, and the quality of instruction in urban schools, on average, is relatively better as compared to rural schools (Warwick & Reimers, 1995).

Schooling in Pakistan

The education system in Pakistan is "complex and multifaceted," comprising a network of public schools, elite English medium private schools, private NGO community schools catering to children from low socio-economic status, and religious schools known as Madrassas (Jaffery, 2012, p. 14). Public schools at the primary and secondary level cater mostly to students from lower- and middle-income groups. However, prestigious higher education institutions and professional colleges are almost always public and provide education in English (Jaffery, 2012).

Pakistan's public education system has been described as "least effective" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 7) and as "one of Asia's worst systems of government-sponsored education" (Warwick & Reimers, 1995, p. 1). This is due to a number of key indicators such as high dropout rates, low quality of education, ineffective utilization of development funds, inadequate availability of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials, outdated curricula, lack of evidence-based practices, and problems related to education governance and accountability. Moreover, the challenges of teacher

motivation, though widespread, are most felt in rural areas where public and private school teachers suffer from low self-esteem, poor job satisfaction, inadequate incentives, and weak input in the decision-making process (Saeed, Ahmad, Salam, Badshah, Ali, & Shafi-ul-Haq, 2013; Vazir & Retallick, 2007).

The deterioration of the public education system and the government's inability to provide accessible quality educational opportunities for children have led to the mushrooming of private schools. These range from expensive elite institutions owned by individuals or private for-profit organizations, to low-cost community establishments run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or not-for-profit Trusts. The quality of education in private schools varies greatly, and although a majority of these institutions claim to use English as the language of instruction, "the cheaper the price of education, the poorer the language quality and instruction" (International Crisis Group, 2014, p. 22). Nonetheless, several studies on NGO community schools indicate that despite limited resources and poor infrastructure, NGOs have successfully overcome barriers related to service delivery of education, mobilized surrounding communities, and expanded outreach to disadvantaged children in remote regions where the government has failed to make inroads (Anzar, 2002; Farah, Mehmood, Amna, Ashams, Iqbal, Khanam, Shah, & Gul-Mastoi, 1996; Jaffery, 2012; Khan, 2005a; Khan, 2005b; Shah, Bari, & Ejaz, 2005). This doctoral study has been conducted in a low-cost community school called Zafar Secondary School (ZSS), managed by 'Spread the Light,' one of the leading education-specific NGOs in Pakistan. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of NGO-run community schools will be described in Chapter Two. Between 1999 and 2008, private schools

registered a 69% increase. According to Husnain (2014), around 74% of students in rural areas attend public schools, while 26% of students attend private schools, including religious schools. This compares to urban areas, where 41% of students attend public schools, and 59% of students attend private schools, including religious schools.

Teacher Shared Decision-Making in the Pakistani Context

Supportive and participatory cultures typically do not exist in Pakistani public or private community schools catering to students from low-income backgrounds (UNESCO, 2006). Instead, the existing hierarchical public education system promotes multi-layered power structures in which authority flows from the top to the bottom (Bacchus, 2001; Khalid, 1996; Memon, Nazirali, Simkins, & Garret, 2000; Tajik, 2008). Within this highly bureaucratized system, the teacher is often considered irrelevant in the change process as compared to external change agents such as administrators, education officers and supervisors (Ali et al., 2013; Simkins, Sisum, & Memon, 2003; Tajik, 2008). The head teacher is a school representative working at a relatively low level within a multi-tiered hierarchy, and the main levels of change lie elsewhere. Low teacher morale is a "colossal" dilemma in Pakistan (UNESCO, 2006, p. 61), further compounded by political and bureaucratic interference, frequent staff transfers, lack of merit-based appointments, lack of high quality teacher and staff trainings, scarcity of resources, and lack of accountability (Bregman & Mohammad, 1998; Retallick, 2005).

Low motivation amongst public school teachers is reflected in high levels of teacher absenteeism; deteriorating standards of professional conduct; and poor professional performance, including less time spent on task, low commitment, heavy

reliance on traditional teacher-centred practices, and little time devoted to extracurricular activities, teaching preparation, and marking (Bennell, 2004). Also, Pakistani public school teachers rank low in the education system, and the authoritarian education management structure ensures that teachers and students are heavily controlled from the top rather than being involved in matters pertaining to curriculum design, knowledge sharing, or helping to enhance the professionalism of their peers (Khan, 2005a). Existing teacher preparation programs in Pakistan do not adequately equip teachers with the tools they need to develop a sense of ownership, nor do they instill in them the confidence they need to generate meaningful change by challenging regressive conditions and positively transforming their educational settings (Khamis & Sammons, 2007). During pre-service, teachers are seldom exposed to any leadership roles and are usually trained to understand their roles as teachers, not leaders (Davies & Iqbal, 1997).

Teacher leadership, where it exists, is practiced through a variety of formal and informal roles, and channels of communication in the daily work of schools. Sometimes teachers serve in formal leadership positions, such as department heads, curriculum specialists, mentors, or members of a site-based management team. In other cases, teachers continue as full-time classroom teachers while also taking on various individual and collective leadership responsibilities. They demonstrate shared decision-making in informal ways by volunteering for new projects, sharing innovative ideas with colleagues, assisting colleagues in carrying out their classroom duties, coaching peers to strengthen pedagogy, encouraging parent participation, working with colleagues in small

groups and teams, modeling reflective practice, promoting the school's vision, or articulating a vision for improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The notion of teachers working as leaders in decision-making roles in informal settings is a relatively new concept and not much practiced, or researched in Pakistani schools. However, researchers have claimed that teachers' credibility and expertise influence people, policy, and performance more than the teachers' formal leadership positions (Hatch et al., 2005). A few studies conducted to assess the impact of school reforms revealed that designating formal positions to teachers does not always bring in positive change in instructional practices or contribute much toward changing the wider school culture (Smylie, 1994). Moreover, the initiatives and practices of those to whom leadership is distributed need to be effectively documented. School reform movements all over the world emphasize greater involvement of stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) in decision-making to improve the quality of schools. The notion of shared decision-making and collaboration promises an integration of `top-down' and `bottom-up' strategies for reform in education, bringing together a range of stakeholders who each have an interest in the nature of change in schools (Kirk & Macdonald, 2001).

Education reform is also under way in Pakistan to resolve quality issues, particularly in the public education system that caters to four of five children enrolled in schools. Under the policy frame-work articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), the Government of Pakistan initiated the Education Sector Reforms in 2001 to enhance access to primary and secondary education, and to reform government primary schools in Pakistan by creating an adequate

teaching-learning environment and addressing the issue of underqualified, inadequately trained, underpaid and undervalued government primary school teachers (Hoodbhoy, 1998). There have been major paradigm shifts in policy and structural reforms during the last five years under the current Education Sector Reform (ESR) Program (Ministry of Education, 2001).

As part of the Local Government Devolution Plan 2003, districts rather than provincial governments have officially become the operational tier of governance, and district education officers have assumed responsibility for monitoring schools and conducting annual evaluations of teachers (Rizvi, 2008). Resultantly, there have been attempts to improve school education in Pakistan through decentralization and strengthening relationships between the school and local community through the creation of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). Moreover, capacity building of administrators and educators gradually came to be recognized as a crucial factor for the successful implementation of school improvement plans, particularly at the government school level (Rizvi, 2008). However, capacity building activities focused on instructional and managerial roles are mostly conducted for staff in formal leadership positions such as principals or head teachers in order to prepare them for their roles as financial and administrative experts and academic leaders. 'Regular' teachers, on the other hand, usually receive training only in innovative pedagogical strategies and classroom management. Little effort is made to prepare them for leadership roles within or beyond the classroom.

Pakistani Teachers' Voices in Shared Decision-Making: The Missing Link

While the education reforms articulate a new vision of school improvement by restructuring the realm of teaching-learning processes, they fail to take into consideration a most crucial link – teachers' voices in decision-making processes as a catalyst for social transformation. Consequently, teacher engagement in policymaking and planning remains ad hoc, "driven and dictated by the whims of senior managers and planners which undermines the very purpose of engaging teachers' voices" (UNESCO, USAID, & ITA, 2008, p. 25). The education reform movement is a relatively new phenomenon in Pakistan with educators and researchers still trying to acquire a clearer understanding of teacher leadership practices. Yet, against all odds, a few public schools and private low-cost community schools in Pakistan have adopted the idea of involving teachers in different decisions about school curriculum and related activities. They have demonstrated positive change in terms of school/classroom climate, teacher ownership/commitment and teacher mastery/competence, and are "perceived as successful schools by the local communities" (Farah et al., 1996; Kunwar, 2000; Retallick, 2005, p. 34; Shafa, 2003).

Nonetheless, there is a dearth of research on the outcomes of teachers' shared leadership practices or the processes by which they attained success in their school settings. Little attention has been paid to the participatory activities of informal teacher leaders in developing countries such as Pakistan, and the existing research mostly outlines the perceptions and practices of formal teacher leaders and the various concerns principals and teachers tend to experience around their involvement in shared decision-

making. Undoubtedly, for the change process to be effectively implemented, it is imperative to recognize and address participants' concerns (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991). However, it is also essential to understand the nature of teachers' beliefs and practices and how these influence successful school improvement. This will allow for the documentation of the process by which formal and informal teacher leaders challenge impeding factors like inadequate funding, limited teacher professionalism, and outdated school structures. Attention should also be paid to the means by which teacher leaders resolve concerns about shared decision-making, namely, by establishing collaborative partnerships, holding fast to their vision of democratic learning communities, promoting an environment of effective teaching and learning, and successfully leveraging relationships with other stakeholders within and beyond the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs, perceptions and practices of Pakistani teachers surrounding their roles in shared decision-making in a reputationally effective community school in Pakistan. I identified one 'successful' community school in Pakistan and explored how community school teachers' perceptions about and participation in shared decision-making activities contributed to the success of that school.

Research Questions

My goals lent themselves to a single case study because such a methodology was conducive to the development of an in-depth understanding of Pakistani teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their roles in shared decision-making as they apply in a particular

setting. Understanding the complexities present also provides essential contextual information that supports the investigation. The primary research questions informing this study are as follows:

1. How do teachers in one Pakistani community school participate in shared decision-making activities in their school?

2. In what ways do these teachers feel prepared to assume decision-making roles within and outside their classrooms?

3. How does the school environment influence these teachers' decision-making abilities?

4. How do factors external to the school environment either contribute to or hinder these teachers' ability and agency to participate in decision-making roles?

Rationale

I examined the literature on shared decision-making among teachers and found a gap pertaining to in-depth exploration and analysis of Pakistani teachers' perspectives of their roles in shared decision-making in successful public or low cost NGO funded community schools. The existing Pakistani literature on teacher leadership, shared decision-making, or change agency has largely focused on examining the practices of formal educational leaders such as principals or head teachers (Rizvi, 2006; Rizvi, 2008; Saadi, Bhutta, Kazmi, & Ahmad, 2009; Shamim, 2006; Simkins, Garrett, Memon, & Nazir, 1998; Simkins et al., 2003). Although the school improvement literature in the developed and developing worlds suggests that the role of principals and heads is

significant in improving schools by establishing and maintaining shared decision-making (Abdulalishoev, 2000; Bacchus, 2001; Barth, 1990; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Shafa, 2003; Yousufi, 1998), equally important is the need to understand the perceptions and shared leadership practices employed by informal leaders, such as regular teachers in successful schools. While some empirical studies have looked at the role of external change agents and principals and the ways in which they affect change in schools (Denton, 2009; Kelley, 2011; Tajik, 2008), little is known about the perception of Pakistani school teachers in terms of their agency in shared decision-making. Additionally, while there is a wealth of information about the knowledge, skills, characteristics, and disposition that formal and informal teacher leaders need to acquire to be effective within and beyond the classroom, researchers have been hard-pressed to identify sites where they can observe Pakistani teachers' school based decision-making in practice or see its positive effects.

The rationale for studying Pakistani community school teachers' beliefs about shared decision-making was to provide useful insights into how Pakistani teachers' perceptions, roles and practices are shaped by the contexts in which they work, and how teachers navigate the constraints and limitations of their professional milieu while engaging in successful collaborative and participatory practices to advance school effectiveness. Furthermore, analyzing the efforts of NGO community schools in Pakistan was vital in consideration of limited research indicating that NGOs have made efforts to devolve school management, encourage community participation, and implement

effective practices in areas where government intervention has been ineffective (Retallick, 2005).

Significance

This study is valuable for education in Pakistan both from a research and policy perspective. It contributes to the scant research on Pakistani teachers' voices, perceptions, and practices regarding shared decision-making in an effective school that caters to a disadvantaged population. There is very limited research on successfully implemented distributed leadership reform models within Pakistani school systems. Therefore, Pakistani teachers' rich discussions in their native language provided deep insight into how these teachers perceived the concept of shared decision-making. Additionally, it extended my understanding of the ways in which and the degree to which the culture of a successful Pakistani community school facilitated teachers' participation in school level decision-making in spite of challenges such as inadequate funding, limited teacher professionalism, and a hierarchical school structure. In doing so, it informed practice by assessing the need to support the concept of teacher empowerment and involvement in shared decision-making in community, public and private schools in Pakistan at the policymaking level.

Even though one should not generalize the results because the findings are based on the practices of teachers in one low-cost community school, education practitioners and policymakers might still come to understand the complexities of such a context and thus draw information from examples of the collaborative practices in which teachers in this school were involved. In turn, those practices might be adapted and applied to the

contexts of other community or public schools in Pakistan, or even to other developing

countries with similar school structures, demographics, or similar education challenges.

The study identified facilitative and inhibiting factors that impacted Pakistani community

teachers' willingness to engage in shared decision-making. In light of these facilitative

and inhibiting factors, education leaders and policymakers may draw insight to assist in

the design of effective policies to ensure that an enabling environment and appropriate

support structures are provided to enhance Pakistani community teachers' ability to

meaningfully participate in shared decision-making.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept and processes of shared decision-making through the lens of Pakistani community school teachers, I have examined four bodies of knowledge to inform the conceptual framework of this study. These include: 1) the Pakistani context and teachers' roles in Pakistani schools; 2) the concept of shared decision-making and its impact on teacher morale and efficacy; 3) teachers' shared decision-making in the Pakistani context, and 4) teachers' beliefs about and perceptions of shared decision-making. There is limited empirical research on informal teacher leaders' perceptions of their roles in shared decision-making in the Pakistani context. Given that teachers are the closest to the learning and teaching processes, it is both relevant and crucial to hear their voices and learn about their practices in shared decision-making. Therefore, owing to scant empirical research in the Pakistani context, this synthesis draws heavily upon research work undertaken on teacher leadership, empowerment, collaborative decision-making and teachers' perceptions in the United States and international contexts, while also including the Pakistani perspective wherever possible. This review, in turn, has helped me to consider both the applicability of research conducted outside Pakistan and consider the elements that are contextually and theoretically applicable.

In the first section of this literature review, I present relevant aspects of the education climate in Pakistan that were touched upon in Chapter One. Within this section, I provide a detailed analysis of NGO-managed community schools and address how education context influences the role and status of teachers in Pakistan. Following this further, the second section of the literature review examines research on the role of teachers as leaders and teachers' involvement in shared decision-making as opposed to the traditional concept of the teacher as a passive recipient of externally mandated policies. I explore the definition(s) and processes of teacher shared decision-making and present the research addressing the perceived benefits and shortcomings of incorporating teacher shared decision-making in schools. Additionally, this section examines empirical research on the impact of teachers' participation on teacher motivation, job satisfaction, teacher performance and student achievement, as well as research on teacher preparation programs to inculcate leadership and managerial skills in teachers. In the third section of this literature review, I will examine international and Pakistani literature, though limited, on teachers' beliefs and perceptions of shared decision-making.

Pakistan: The Education Landscape

Improving education outcomes remains one of the key development challenges for Pakistan. With an adult literacy rate of just 45% in 2001- 2002, Pakistan performed poorly against the South Asian average (58%); its net-enrollment was only 51% compared to 83% in India, 90% in Sri-Lanka and 70% in Nepal (Das, Pandey, & Zajonc, 2006). Whereas, Pakistan's overall literacy rate has risen to 58% in 2013 (UNESCO, 2013, p. 11), and enrollments have gradually increased over a decade, Pakistan still

struggles to meet the educational needs of its population of 185.1 million. The country fares better than its South Asian counterparts in terms of poverty indicators, and poverty levels have dramatically decreased from 35.9% in 2002 to 12.7% in 2011 (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Nonetheless, 50.7% of the total population still lives on less than $2 a day (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Nearly seven million children (age 5-9) do not attend school, of which 55% are girls, and approximately 30% of Pakistanis live in extreme educational poverty, having received less than two years of education (Government of Pakistan, 2014; UNESCO, 2006).

Further compounding the education crisis is the fact that the provision of education in Pakistan remains heavily reliant on historically low and static government budgets. While the country needs to spend a minimum 4% of its GDP on education to make satisfactory progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of achieving universal primary education and equal enrollments among girls and boys, its budgetary allocation has shrunk from 2.5% in 2006 to around 2.1% in 2014 (Government of Pakistan, 2014, p. 9). Some progress was made on the legislative front with the passing of Article 25-A, which that stipulates the provision of free and compulsory education to every child aged 5-16 years.

In spite of three decades of foreign donor assistance to Pakistan's public education system, the country is severely off-track in its progress towards some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the promise of achieving universal primary education by 2015 remained largely elusive (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2006). Since 2000, the United Nations has been working with governments, civil society and

other partners to build momentum for the achievement of the MDGs – a blueprint mutually agreed upon by all the world's countries and leading development institutions in an effort to address the needs of the world's poorest. The eight MDGs range from reducing extreme poverty rates by half, to promoting gender equality, to reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, to ensuring environmental sustainability and providing universal primary education.

In Pakistan, economic, geographic, socio-cultural, and gender-based factors influence children's access to educational opportunities (Jaffery, 2012). Children, without access to schools or quality education are those who live on the margins— in urban slums, urban peripheries, and rural areas (Das et al., 2006). Many of these children are expected to contribute to the family income and subsequently are likely to withdraw from school. In fact, 50% of children between 7 and 16 years of age from the poorest households are considered out-of-school children (OOSC) in Pakistan (ILM IDEAS, 2014, p. 3). Accessibility to education is more glaring along gender lines, where fewer than half of the country's female population ever goes to school. Female literacy and girls' school enrollment rates are particularly low in rural areas of Pakistan, at 33% and 48%, respectively (ILM IDEAS, 2014, p. 3). This disparity exists due to societal customs more prevalent in rural and semi-urban areas that restrict girls' mobility outside the home; limited numbers of schools and colleges for girls situated in close proximity to their residences; early marriages, and fewer job opportunities for women after education (UNESCO, 2013). Additionally, while efforts to raise enrollment and retention rates must

continue, it is important to understand that enrollment and retention are only one measure of education and do not guarantee actual learning.

Public Schools and Low-Cost Private Schools

The education system in Pakistan provides multiple avenues to educate children. Over the years, public schools under the Department of Education, Islamic Madrassas (religious seminaries), and elite private schools, and low-cost private schools (either privately owned or NGO managed) have emerged as the three largest education providers in Pakistan. Madrassas however, only cater to 2% of the population enrolled. School education is organized across four levels - Primary school (five year duration), Middle school (three year duration), High school or lower secondary level (two year duration); and Intermediate or upper secondary level (two year duration). Since the denationalization of private schooling in Pakistan in 1979, the private sector has expanded both in terms of the numbers of schools, as well as the proportion of children enrolled.

Nonetheless, from the mid-nineties onwards, Pakistan has witnessed a phenomenal increase in private for-profit and not-for-profit NGO managed schools, spreading across urban and rural areas across the nation, especially in Punjab. The number of private non-religious schools increased from 3,000 to 47,000 between 1982 and 2007 (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2008). Since 1995, one-half of all new private schools have set up in rural areas and they are increasingly located in villages with worse socioeconomic indicators. Although the government remains the largest provider of

education, particularly at the primary level, this dramatic growth of the private schooling has reshaped the education landscape of Pakistan.

The structure of the public school system, which educates the large majority of school students, is similar to that of many developing countries, especially in Asia. It is based on a ''top-down'' bureaucratic model with schools in the public sector controlled through centralized policy decisions (Simkins et al., 2003). The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for formulating education policies and plans with provincial Governments acting as implementing agencies rather than taking independent initiatives for education development in their respective provinces. Government schools face perpetual challenges of low levels of resourcing and poor quality of provision, and the majority of school head teachers are effectively receivers of policy decisions rather than active participants in school development. In recent years, some structural and policy reforms have been designed to replace the centralized education system with a more decentralized one.

In this regard, the 18th Amendment was approved, under which the Ministry of Education was devolved to the provinces and to the local governments. This Devolution Plan transformed the system of governance by shifting the administrative and supervisory control of schools from the federal to the provincial and district levels. This is potentially a major paradigm shift in policy. However, these are still rudimentary developments, and it remains to be seen how successful they will be. In the short term, this move presents a challenge due to a lack of capacity and experience at the provincial level in dealing with matters of policy formulation, planning, and management of programs particularly at the

tertiary level (UNESCO, 2013). Nonetheless, efforts are underway to build the capacity of provinces and districts to support the system wide reform process. As mentioned earlier, partly in response to the inadequacies of the government education system, an enormous variety of non-government schools and school systems have been established by non-profit, often community-based trusts and by private entrepreneurs. During the last two decades, this sector has made substantial investment in education in urban and semi-urban areas, although the public sector is still catering to the needs of the vast majority of population in general and in rural areas in particular.

ILM IDEAS (2014) analyzed the role of low-cost private schools in Pakistan, noting that the number of private schools in Pakistan has "multiplied almost three fold – at a much faster rate than the number of public sector schools," pointing out that most of this growth has been within low-cost private schools (LCPS), which are mostly concentrated in urban and semi urban areas and now account for 30% of total enrollment. The study describes low-cost private schools (LCPS) as privately owned and operated institutions charging low fees, often ranging between US$1 and $25 (ILM IDEAS, 2014). Additionally, Andrabi, Bau, Das, and Khwaja (2010) define private low-cost schools as small-scale, low cost enterprises that do not undergo any regulatory oversight or receive any government subsidies.

The Learning and Education Achievements in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) study was conducted from 2003 to 2007 to evaluate the education sector of the Pakistan using a detailed data set. It found a significant and growing role of low-fee private schools, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan. While acknowledging that low-cost private

schools are slowly spreading into previously underserved areas, particularly in villages

with low socio-economic characteristics, the LEAPS study nonetheless pointed out that

private schools usually tend to cluster in relatively richer communities and access to these

schools is highly uneven (Andrabi, Das, Khwaja, Vishwanath, & Zajonc, 2007). Across

all villages in the LEAPS survey, 82% of private schools were located near a bank and

92% near a health center—an indicator of richer settlements closer to a main road,

contrasting with 60% government schools situated close to banks and 7% near health

centers (Andrabi et al., 2007, p. xiv). It would be pertinent to mention that several

researchers have discussed the differences in public and private schooling in rural

Pakistan. However, most of the research focuses on private, for-profit schools catering to

children from low socio-economic strata with little documentation of the work of NGO

not-for-profit schools (Jaffery, 2012). Owing to limited research in the NGO context, this

literature review also includes research on low-cost private schools as they share similar

characteristics with NGO community schools in Pakistan.

Similarly, economists from the World Bank and Harvard Institute for

International Development (HIID) conducted the Learning and Educational Achievement

in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) survey in 812 government and private primary level schools,

comprising 12,000 students, 5,000 teachers and 2,000 households across 112 villages in

three districts of Punjab province. This survey sought to assess Pakistani Third Grade

students' learning abilities and gaps in Urdu, English and Mathematics, as well as to

evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of private and public schooling in Pakistan

and provide in-depth information on the beliefs, behavior and characteristics of schools,

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teachers and parents in both public and private schools (Andrabi et al., 2007). Around

two percent of the teachers surveyed belonged to NGO-managed private schools;

however, they were excluded from the final discussion. Although LEAPS is the first

Pakistani study that assesses children's learning in multiple public and private schools

within the same village, it suffers from the small number of study districts.

Until recently, much of the debate surrounding the quality of government and

private schools, measured in terms of achievement differences of their student bodies and

the distinct demographic and pedagogical characteristics of their teaching staff, was

largely based on circumstantial accounts (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011). However, the

mushrooming of private schools at all education levels and an increasing number of

parents' deciding to send their children to fee-charging schools, as opposed to free

government schools, were developments that were reflective of the improved quality of

private schooling. Additionally, the fact that private school graduates were able to secure

more lucrative jobs and generate higher earnings, as compared to their counterparts in

public schools were perceived as evidence of the relative success of private institutions

(Aslam, 2009a). Alderman, Orazem, and Paterno's (2001) pioneering work in Lahore

district in 2001 provided evidence for the anecdotal accounts that private schools in

Pakistan were providing better quality in terms of higher pupil achievement as compared

to public schools. They emphasized that private schools no longer remain an urban or

elite phenomena, but rather poor households also use these facilities to a large extent, due

to their better locations, low fees, teachers' presence and better quality learning,

especially in the fields of mathematics and language. These findings have since been

substantiated by more recent evidence, often with a wider and more varied geographical coverage than Alderman et al.'s original study (Andrabi et al., 2007; Arif & Saqib, 2003; Aslam, 2009b; Das, Pandey, & Zajonc, 2006).

Few studies (Gazdar, 1998; Khan, Kazmi, & Latif, 1999; Zia, 1999) have investigated the role and effectiveness of NGOs and the private sector in imparting quality education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These studies compare the educational outcomes of students in low-cost NGO-managed community schools with the academic outcomes of students in public and private schools. Hence, they contribute to a deeper understanding of the overall performance of NGO schools compared to public and private institutions. They also provide insight into the ways in which NGO-managed community schools strive to provide improved quality of education to underprivileged children despite limited funding and scare resources. Studies indicate that NGO community schools typically hire a larger number of female teachers from local communities and enhance their sense of ownership and commitment by making them a part of the School Management Committees (SMCs) and encouraging them to engage with the parents and community to prevent drop out and maintain high student enrollment.

Through a survey administered to private and NGO schools, Gazdar (1998) found that NGO-managed schools were innovative and more effective due to increasing community participation, proximity of the school to the pupil's home and greater parental trust of NGO school teachers owing to a greater effort on the part of teachers and the NGO to motivate parents and mobilize the community in sending their children to school

and in facilitating collective and participatory action. Zia (1999) assessed the performance of students in an NGO school, located in Sheikhupura district. According to his results, even students who ranked low in the class obtained more than 50% marks. Additionally, Khan, Kazmi, and Latif (1999) compared the quality of education provided by public, private, and NGO schools in all the provinces of Pakistan. Forty-three sets of government, private and NGO schools were selected from across the country and data were collected through 10 questionnaires that solicited information from students, teachers, households and communities. Forty-three sets of government, private, and NGO schools were selected from across the country and data were collected through ten questionnaires that solicited information from students, teachers, households and communities about the family background, household wealth, household interest in the child's schooling, parental knowledge about the existence of a School Management Committee (SMC) or a Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and their satisfaction with the school. Additionally, the questionnaire also assimilated information on teachers' training, salaries, teacher absenteeism, number of students enrolled, strategies to curb student absenteeism, problems faced while working with the community and the functioning of SMCs to gauge their possible impact on improving the quality of education. The NGO schools engaging in formal primary schooling were first randomly selected, and then the closest government and private schools were included in the sample.

To ensure that the same level of schooling was being assessed across NGO, private, and government schools, the researchers only selected those NGOs that were delivering mainstream formal education similar to government and private sector schools.

Data were gathered through tests administered to Grade Three and Grade Five students to assess their cognitive skills in Mathematics and Comprehension, as well as assessment tests to evaluate the cognitive skills of Grade Five teachers. Additionally, field observations were carried out to acquire a more holistic picture of the selected schools.

The study concluded that overall, NGOs were the most successful in delivering quality education and NGO schools were performing better than public schools, whereas private schools ranked between the NGO and public schools. NGO school students at both grade levels attained the highest mean scores in Comprehension and Mathematics. Moreover, while teacher comprehension scores were highest for NGO school teachers, teacher mathematics scores were highest for private school teachers. The performance of public school teachers was the lowest in both subjects although they had similar education qualifications as NGO and private school teachers and a much higher level of pre-service training. Finally, public school students had a much lower scale of academic achievement in Grades Three and Five as compared to their counterparts in the NGO managed schools and private schools. While the sample NGO schools were effective in delivering quality education overall, the study found that not all NGO schools in the sample were a success. The multi-school NGOs with strong support systems displayed better management than the one-off NGO schools. The teachers were treated well, trained well and made to feel a part of a team and a mission. Moreover, the incidence of cheating in NGO schools was the lowest, as were the student and teacher absentee rates. NGO schools were rated the highest on the physical quality of school index and they also invested the most in in-service training for teachers. While those NGO schools charging a

fee had a relatively higher average fee compared to government or private schools, 77% of NGOs reported charging nothing.

The research confirmed the abysmal state of public schooling and found that only five of the 43 public schools visited were successful. The physical conditions in public schools were found to be poor and existing facilities were minimal, with a lack of furniture, stationary, supplies, and relevant teacher aids. Moreover, classrooms were generally small and poorly lit with little ventilation. Poor teaching conditions and the pressures of multi-grade teaching often proved to challenging for the teaching staff. Additionally, the student-teacher ratio and rates of absenteeism for both teachers and students were very high, and teachers frequently practiced corporal punishment to discipline students.

On the other hand, Arif and Saqib's (2003) study results were inconsistent with the findings of Khan, et al. (1999). Arif and Saqib explored the differences in the education outcomes of Grade Four students enrolled in 50 public, private, and NGO schools located in six districts across all four provinces of Pakistan, as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The sampled students of Grade Four were almost evenly distributed across three types of schools: 37% of the students were attending public schools, 33% were enrolled in NGO schools, and 30% attended private schools. Overall, about 47% of the Grade Four students in the sample were females; however, this percentage was much higher (62%) in the case of the NGO schools. Furthermore, the majority of the students were between nine and thirteen years of age at the time of the survey, and there was no major difference in mean age of children enrolled in the public, private, and NGO

schools. Teacher qualification characteristics across the three school types were also documented. The proportion of female teachers was substantially higher in NGO schools as compared to both public and private schools. In terms of qualification, teachers employed in private schools were more qualified than their counterparts in public and NGO schools. In NGO schools, about half of Grade Four teachers had a qualification of intermediate level (12 years of schooling) or lower, while the corresponding figures for public and private schools were 32% and three percent, respectively. Compared to 30% in public and 33% in NGO schools, about 56% of the teachers in private schools had a bachelor's or higher degree (Arif & Saqib, 2003).

On the other hand, teachers in public schools were more experienced than the teachers in private and NGO schools. The researchers used a survey to assess Grade Four students' achievement in Mathematics, Urdu, and General Knowledge. In each of the 50 sampled schools, four separate questionnaires were administered to 50 school heads, Grade Four teachers, all 965 Grade Four students, and their parents.

Findings revealed that private school students obtained 75th percentile marks in the three cognitive skills tests compared to 66th percentile marks for NGO school students and 64th percentile marks for students enrolled in public schools. While Khan et al. (1999) had concluded that the private school children outperformed NGO school children, Arif and Saqib's (2003) study showed that there was a marginal gap between public and NGO schools in terms of student test scores, however, a significant test score gap was found between the students enrolled in public and private schools. This gap was largely explained in terms of the family background and school-related variables,

including teachers' qualification and student/teacher ratio. Moreover, the choice of the NGO schools in the Khan, et al. (1999) study may have differed from the NGO school samples in Arif and Saqib's (2003) study. While Khan et al. (1999) included both one-off NGO schools and multiple NGO schools in their sample, their primary focus was large NGOs that operated a multiple school system and only seven of the 43 schools in their sample were operating a single school. The NGOs that operate multiple schools are generally large, well-funded organizations offering high-quality education. On the other hand, Arif and Saqib's (2003) study focused more on single NGO schools as part of their sample; that school choice may have influenced the final outcomes.

Between the years 1999-2000 and 2007-08, there was a 69% increase in the number of private schools, as compared to a mere 8% increase of government schools (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2010, p. 3). In 2000, the private sector was catering to the educational needs of about 6 million children, but this figure rose to 12 million in 2007-08, equivalent to 34% of the total enrollment. Owing to "high levels of teacher absenteeism, low teacher effort in government schools" (Dixon, 2012, p. 187), perceived poor quality of public schools and weak public education delivery systems, parents are increasingly looking toward the private education sector to provide alternative schooling for their children. Researchers have tried to dispel the common perception that private schools in Pakistan are only an urban elite phenomenon (Alderman et al. 2001; Andrabi et al. 2008). Alderman et al. (2001) noted that private schools are also utilized by the underprivileged, emphasizing that in the city of Lahore, Pakistan, around half of children from families earning less than $1 a day attended private schools, even when

there was a free government alternative. Dixon (2012) concurred with this view, asserting that research in several urban areas of the developing world indicates that more children in the shanty towns and slums, and a few in rural areas prefer to attend low-cost private schools than government ones. This is because private schools often have more committed teachers, "smaller class sizes, and better facilities, even while incurring a fraction of the government schools' teacher costs" (Dixon, 2012, p. 192).

Furthermore, studies have also shown that private schools are not only prevalent in rural areas, but are also affordable to middle- and even low-income groups due to the low fees they charge. Both Andrabi et al. (2007) and Heyneman and Stern (2014) found that educating a child in a public school costs twice as much as in a private school: the overall cost of educating a child in an average rural low-cost private school was Rs.1000 or $10 a year, or typically less than or equivalent to the average daily wage of an unskilled worker. Comparatively, educating a child in a public school costs twice as much (Rs.2000 or $20 a year) as a private low-cost school. The only way a school can charge such low fees and stay in business is if it keeps costs to a minimum. As teachers' salaries make up a major portion of education budgets, lowering the overall cost necessarily involves limiting teacher salaries. It is therefore not surprising that public sector teachers are paid five times more than teachers in the private sector (Andrabi et al., 2007). Teacher salaries and compensation benefits in the public sector are driven almost entirely by a teacher's age, experience, educational qualifications and level of training, rather than ability, level of motivation, actual on job performance and the amount of effort a teacher puts into his/her job (Andrabi et al., 2010). It was also reported that

teacher effort in the public sector is generally low as is evident from high teacher absenteeism rates and low student outcomes. In contrast, private sector teachers are paid more when they "exert greater effort and produce better outcomes" (Andrabi et al., 2010, p. xii). Besides that, there is evidence to indicate that private schools are bridging the gender gap, even in the rural areas of Pakistan where parents are sending their daughters to low-cost private co-educational schools. Andrabi et al.'s (2008) study findings revealed that there was a 21% increase in male enrollments and a 29% point increase for female enrollments in settlements with private schools compared to those without (p. 341). A contributing factor to increased female enrollment could be the fact that private low-cost schools tend to hire a larger number of female staff to address the concerns of parents and community members for the safety of their daughters. Hence, the LEAPS study showed that 76% of its sample private school teachers were female, as compared to only 43% female teachers in the government sector.

Public and private school teachers. The differences in observed teacher demographic and educational characteristics across public and private schools have been documented in many studies (Andrabi et al., 2007; Aslam & Kingdon, 2011; UNESCO, 2007). Studies have found that public school teachers in Pakistan are more qualified and experienced, have higher training, and are older and better paid than the relatively young, mostly female private school teachers, particularly in low-cost schools (Andrabi et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2007). Using the Pakistan National Education Census (NEC) 2005-06 data, the UNESCO (2006) report indicated that a substantial number of teachers (over 50%) in the private sector lacked professional qualification and were untrained. The NEC

was the first ever Pakistan education census conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Bureau of Statistics to collect information on 245,682 institutions, including public and private schools, colleges and universities, professional institutions, vocational and technical centers, mosque schools, Madrassahs, and non-formal education centers. In contrast, most teachers in the public sector did have a professional qualification, with only five percent of teachers reporting that they received no training.

Andrabi et al., (2007) noted that teachers are central to meaningful school reforms, therefore, "a school with leaking roofs, no textbooks, and uninvolved parents can still produce good learning outcomes for students if the teacher is motivated and committed" (p. 58). Pursuing this further, Andrabi et al. (2007) also found that the public school teachers in their sample population were better trained because teacher training is mandatory in government service. Hence, only six percent of public school teachers reported "no training," while around 43% of public school teachers held a Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) and the remaining 50% either held a Certificate in Teaching (CT), an intermediate level professional teaching degre0,e or the higher-level Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed.), an undergraduate professional degree that prepares teacher students for their teaching vocation.

Moreover, the LEAPS study found some dramatic differences in the demographic profiles of 4,825 teachers in the government and private sector. Teachers in private schools were predominantly female, younger, unmarried, and from the local area. The age distribution among private school teachers was highly concentrated around 21 years,

while the age distribution of government school teachers was more distributed with an average close to 40 years. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the percentage of unmarried female versus male teachers in the private sector (83% and 54%, respectively). However, in the government sector, unmarried male and female teachers both stood below 15%. Andrabi et al. (2007) also found that the public school teachers in their sample were better educated than their counterparts in the private sector and were equitably distributed across villages and schools throughout the country. The government sector follows a strict and consistent hiring policy for teachers; therefore, the findings indicated that 19% of the teachers held a master's degree (M.A.), while another 26% held a bachelor's degree (B.A.).

In contrast, only four percent of the private school teachers in the sample held a master's degree, and 19% reported holding a bachelor's degree. In view of these teacher characteristics, public sector school teachers seem to be better positioned to deliver quality education than their counterparts in the private or NGO sectors. Nonetheless, Andrabi et al. (2007) found that while, children performed considerably below curricular standards for common subjects and concepts at their grade-level in Pakistan on average, children in low-cost private schools scored significantly higher than those in public schools, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors, village of origin, and selection bias. Study findings indicated that the differences between the student outcomes of public and private schools were so wide that it would take children in public schools 1.5 to 2.5 years of additional schooling to catch up to where private school children were in Grade Three in all three subjects: Urdu, English and Mathematics (Andrabi et al., 2007, p. x).

It is noted that there are weaknesses and strengths in both sectors. The relative strengths of the government sector are a better educated and trained workforce that is equitably distributed. The relative strengths of the private sector are the ability to reduce costs by paying teachers according to local conditions and job performance, thus eliciting higher levels of effort from their teachers. LEAPS study results also showed that while the highest performing public schools were only slightly worse than the top performing private schools, the performance of the worst government schools was much below that of the worst private schools.

Although, teacher qualifications and training were lower in private schools compared to public schools, teacher turnover was much higher among the former, suggesting that private schools can more readily dismiss teachers from service who demonstrate low levels of motivation and commitment. Aslam & Kingdon (2011) asserted that it is important not only to examine observed teacher characteristics, but also to unravel unobserved teacher characteristics such as effort, motivation, a sense of empowerment and ownership that may differ significantly across the school-types and generate substantial differences in student achievement. In Pakistan, public school teachers' prefer government jobs as they are often permanent, pay relatively well, and lack stringent accountability mechanisms to assess teacher regularity in school and teacher effort (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011). While teaching jobs in the government sector require rigorous training, the quality of training is substandard, and training components lack innovation, relevance, and practical applicability. On the other hand, private schools often prefer hiring female staff (who can be paid less compared to males), who are young

and often unmarried and less experienced (though not necessarily less certified).

However, private schools may be particular about monitoring teachers' attendance and

regularity, and may adopt measures to supervise their performance. This may be reflected

in the much higher turnover in private schools, which can also be partly attributed to

efforts on the part of teachers to search for more lucrative job prospects (Aslam &

Kingdon, 2011). Besides, the sample private schools had lower student-teacher ratios and

better infrastructure than the public schools.

Heyneman and Stern's (2013) paper reported on case studies of low-fee schools in

Jamaica, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Indonesia, and Pakistan and assessed the reasons for

their increased demand. Employing convenience and snowball sampling techniques to

identify the location of the sample schools, the researchers found that in Pakistan, parents

perceived private schools to be of higher quality than public schools. Citing issues such

as poor national examination scores, over-crowding, high teacher absenteeism, and

unengaged teachers, parents often worked to scrape together small amounts of money so

they could remove their children from the public school system. This information is

relevant in understanding that school teachers in low-cost private schools have been

shown to be relatively more engaged and committed toward improving the education

outcomes of their students as compared to their counterparts in public schools.

Similarly, the LEAPS study incorporated measures of parental satisfaction with

teachers in government and private schools to assess reasons for the learning gap between

private and public school children. Around 45% of the parents in the study rated the

teaching skills of public school teachers as above average, whereas 60% of parents

expressed satisfaction with private schools. In the survey, parents did not blame their children's public school teachers for low education or poor qualifications; rather, they felt that the teachers were not "motivated" enough, did not "care about the children" or were "almost never there" (Andrabi et al., 2007, p. 68). Parents' responses were indicative of the fact that teacher effort, engagement and motivation matter as much, if not more, than teacher competency in producing satisfactory students learning outcomes.

Teacher effort, motivation and absenteeism. Research has indicated that teacher effort and quality in many developing countries is very low, as indicated by very high teacher absence rates. In Pakistan, teacher absenteeism is a persistent problem owing to weak accountability mechanisms in the public sector (Andrabi et al., 2008; Das et al., 2006). A survey of primary schools in Pakistan found that the absence rate was 10% for teachers at the primary level (Reimers, 1993). Similarly, Bennell (2004) estimated teacher absenteeism in Pakistan to fall between 10% and 20%. In addition, Das et al., (2006) study revealed that public school teachers are absent 3.2 days per month, as compared to 1.8 days per month for private-school teachers. The LEAPS study found that the absence rate for more experienced teachers was higher (Andrabi et al., 2007). While there was no difference in absenteeism between public and private teachers (1.9 days a month) with less than one year of teaching experience, it was estimated that public school teachers with more than three years of experience were absent 3.4 days a month, while absenteeism for their private school counterparts with similar experience remained constant at 1.9 days per month (Andrabi et al., 2007).

Khan (2005a) conducted a study to explore whether there is a teacher motivation crisis in Pakistan and the extent to which low teacher motivation is a constraint to the attainment of universal primary education. Focusing on two provinces of Pakistan (Punjab and North West Frontier Province), the researcher collected data on teacher motivation and incentives through focus group discussions, open-ended semi-structured interviews (face to face as well as telephone interviews), and participant observations of randomly selected teachers from public, private, and NGO-managed community schools in Pakistan, office bearers of Teacher Unions, representatives of the Ministry of Education, NGOs, donors, and teacher trainers. Khan identified teacher absenteeism as a major problem in primary public schools in Pakistan, emphasizing that low motivation and poor accountability systems translate into high absenteeism and poor quality teaching. According to Khan (2005a), teaching practices are far superior and absenteeism is low in private schools, particularly owing to the fear of job loss due to poor performance and better management practices that incentivize hard work. In contrast, public school teachers, once hired, have a sense of job security. Therefore, voluntary and involuntary retirement among public school teachers is low. Khan (2005a) cited poor working conditions; lack of transportation, security and residential facilities in remote areas; frequent transfers of teachers for political reasons; an ineffective accountability system to monitor teachers' performance and inadequate salary benefits as some of the reasons for teachers' demotivation and job dissatisfaction.

Although not explicitly mentioned, Khan (2005a) alluded to the top down approach of the authoritarian education management structure in public schools as

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another reason for low teacher commitment and motivation. Head teachers are given little decision-making powers pertaining to professional development, staff guidance and management. Neither are they involved in curriculum planning and design, or encouraged to provide guidance to peers on effective pedagogical tools to adopt for imparting curriculum, nor is their input valued on issues pertaining to enhancing teacher professionalism issues at the school level. Instead, the authority to carry out these responsibilities and make policies on school improvement resides with education officials at the federal and provincial levels who have very little contact with students, teachers, or parents. As a result, public school teachers feel a low sense of ownership toward their schools and students and their low motivation is translated into high absenteeism that proves to be a major impediment in the effective delivery of quality educational services.

Status of teachers in Pakistan. A broad understanding of the role and status of teachers in Pakistan is foundational to this study. As per the 2013-2014 Economic Survey of Pakistan (Husnain, 2014), Pakistan has a workforce of 1.5 million teachers serving in over 231,239 public and private schools across the four provinces of the country. The United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, and International Labor Organization's (2008) report on recommendations about the status of teachers defined the term 'status' in the following words:

The expression "status" as used in relation to teachers means both the standing or regard accorded them, as evidenced by the level of appreciation of the importance of their function and of their competence in performing it, and the working

conditions, remuneration and other material benefits accorded them relative to other professional groups. (ILO/UNESCO, 2008, p. 21)

In Pakistan, the professional status of teachers is perceived in terms of the academic, social, and economic position they hold in society (Vazir & Retallick, 2007). The academic status of teachers refers to the prestige that teachers enjoy based on the level of education they have acquired, combined with their professional competence and personal commitment toward their students and their profession. Moreover, the perspectives on teacher status focus on teaching as a profession compared with other professions, the social and economic status of teachers and the degree of teacher involvement in education decision-making.

Existing research is in unanimity with the view that the occupational status of teachers in Pakistan has been declining over the past few years (Khan, 2005a; Rizvi & Elliot, 2005; UNESCO/USAID & ITA, 2008; Vazir & Retallick, 2007). There are mixed perceptions about the professional and social standing of teachers. While on the one hand, teaching is considered one of the oldest and noblest professions; on the other, it is fraught with challenges, particularly in the Pakistani educational milieu where the pressures of operating within constraining, hierarchical structures are high. Dissatisfaction with loss in status, low salaries, poor teaching and learning conditions, inadequate professional training, and lack of career progression have driven a large number of teachers out of the profession.

Quality of teachers and teaching can result in high learning outcomes; however, in Pakistan, the role of teachers as key players in the development of a quality education

system has not been sufficiently recognized. Vazir and Retallick (2007) noted that there has been a consistent "downgrading of the status of teachers in Pakistan over the past thirty years" (p. 3), so much so that few capable young college and university graduates consider teaching as their first career option (Khan, 2005). Khan (2005a) observed that, until the mid-1960s, teachers in Pakistan were widely respected and held in high esteem. However, factors such as continuous political interference, the enlisting of primary school teachers as electoral agents during national and provincial elections, and public school teachers' appointments and transfers based on their political affiliations rather than merit, have undermined the status of this profession. Consequently, teaching in Pakistan is generally characterized by low efficiency and weak performance due to low teacher self-esteem, poor working conditions, inadequate salary structures, low performance standards, a theoretical-based curriculum, and lack of subject content knowledge particularly in public and small-scale private schools (UNESCO/USAID & ITA, 2008; Vazir & Retallick (2007).

Additionally, there is inadequate preparation of prospective teachers to empower them to effectively meet the challenges of their profession. Vazir and Retallick (2007) emphasized that in order to have good academic standing, teachers in Pakistan require a comprehensive background in education, effective grounding in subject matter, and relevant preparation and planning in pedagogy. Although there are many highly committed teachers in Pakistan, their efforts are sometimes overshadowed by those teachers who lack professional competence, knowledge, and integrity and are often irregular about attending school, particularly in public and small-scale private schools

located in the rural areas. Moreover, due to the shortage of teachers in non-elite private and public schools, teachers have been compelled to engage in multi-grade teaching and teach subjects that they are not qualified for, which has in turn adversely impacted their professional competence and sense of commitment. Their quality of teaching is further limited by the scarcity of teaching and classroom resources, fragmented professional training, and little evidence of research based practices at the government and non-elite school level (UNESCO/USAID/ITA, 2008).

The United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, & International Labor Organization (2008) report on the status of teachers recommended that teachers should have the professional autonomy to take initiatives, actively participate in developing new courses, assess and select textbooks and teaching aids suitable for their students, and have the freedom to make use of evaluation techniques that they consider appropriate for the appraisal of their students. However, Khan (2005a) noted that teachers in Pakistan have less power, autonomy, and prestige compared to specialists in other professions. This is particularly so in public schools where the teacher is ranked the lowest within a highly authoritarian education management structure that ensures that teachers' activities are controlled from the top. Although Learning Coordinators (LCs) are responsible for monitoring and supervising teachers and checking on absenteeism, they seldom provide professional support to the teachers who tend to work in professional isolation. Khan (2005a) explained that, ideally, the head teacher should be responsible for managing the teachers, guiding them in curriculum related matters, and helping to enhance their professionalism. However, the head teacher, too,

has little freedom or authority to carry out these tasks on her own, since the real authority to conduct these responsibilities resides with education officials and bureaucrats who have little interaction with students, teachers, or parents and are far removed from the teaching and learning processes. Vazir and Retallick (2007) also concurred with the perception that teachers have little involvement in issues pertaining to policy development, the process of curriculum development, and the writing of textbooks, as these domains are not considered to be the concern of teachers. Instead, decisions regarding policy and curriculum formulation are made by high officials or senior experts, many of whom have never taught at the school level. Nayyar and Salim (2004) explained that the responsibility for designing all "pre-university national curricula and textbooks" lay with the "Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education and the provincial Textbook Boards" in Pakistan which issued guidelines to textbook writers and school teachers (p. v).

Additionally, Khan (2005a) asserted that teachers are seldom recognized for their services through national awards announced for high performing teachers. Moreover, they are not given adequate representation in administrative, developmental or legislative bodies. Therefore, where social standing is concerned, teachers, particularly those teaching in non-elite schools, do not have a high standing in society (Khan, 2005a; Vazir & Retallick, 2007). More recently, however, the Government of Pakistan took measures to motivate teachers by organizing a high-profile conference on the 'Dignity of Teachers' and celebrating World Teachers' Day as an advocacy initiative to commemorate deserving teachers engaged in teacher licensing and professional development activities.

In addition, the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) was developed in 2009, as well as the National Accreditation Council for Teachers' Education (NACTE), to define the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes that beginning teachers, master teachers, teacher educators, and education specialists need to possess to effectively fulfil their obligations.

Generally, the economic status of teachers in Pakistan varies with school type, years of experience, educational qualifications, and level of professional training. Although the salaries of public school teachers are low, there is a fixed pay scale for male and female teachers. This is not the case in elite and non-elite private schools. While teachers are offered attractive remunerative packages in private elite schools, salaries are low in non-elite medium and low-scale private schools. Vazir and Retallick (2007) reported that female teachers employed by small-scale private primary schools are notoriously underpaid compared to their male counterparts, and the remuneration paid to teachers serving in Non-formal Basic Education (NFBE) schools, Mosque Schools or Adult Literacy Centers (ALCs) is minimal with little travel allowance and no job security. Additionally, teachers in NGO-managed community schools are paid a salary much below the salaries of public and private school teachers (Khan 2005a; Vazir & Retallick, 2007). Furthermore, there is no job security for teachers in small-scale private schools or in schools managed by NGOs, and teachers can be dismissed from service at any time owing to low performance or disciplinary issues (Khan, 2005a).

NGOs and NGO Community Schools in Pakistan

Since this study explores the perceptions and practices of Pakistani school teachers about shared decision-making in a successful community school managed by a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), it is pertinent to therefore also provide a broad understanding of the role(s) of NGOs in education in Pakistan. Few studies have examined the role and impact of NGOs in education or documented the quality of education provided by NGO schools in Pakistan.

The term "non-governmental organization" (NGO) was first coined in 1945 with the creation of the United Nations. The United Nations describes an NGO as a private, not-for-profit organization that is independent from government control (Wikipedia, 2016). It has also been defined as an independent, voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis, for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities (Willetts, 2002). The history of Pakistani NGOs goes back to partition in 1947 when British India was divided into Pakistan and India. In the wake of the partition, many voluntary organizations were established to provide humanitarian assistance to the refugees pouring into the country and to help victims of communal unrest (Asian Development Bank, 1999). Since then, civil society organizations have grown dramatically in diversity, scope and influence and increased their focus on development efforts for the marginalized segments of the Pakistani population. The roles of NGOs in Pakistan range from creating awareness about issues, such as human and legal rights, gender mainstreaming, and women in development, to examining policy issues about family planning or ways to alleviate

poverty. Other emergency, relief, and rehabilitation NGOs with charitable orientations, are involved in providing basic amenities, such as basic healthcare, educational opportunities, sanitation, water, food security, and employment to underserved populations. While community-based organizations with a participatory approach empower the local community through self-help projects and strengthen their awareness of their own potential power to control their lives, NGOs operate on a small or large scale depending upon their sponsorship and the funding available to them (ADB, 1999).

Community NGO schools. Jaffery (2012) noted that there is a dearth of systematic comparative literature on the outcomes of NGO-managed community schools, public schools, and private schools in Pakistan. In addition, there does not exist an in-depth assessment of the contribution and potential for growth of NGO-based community schools, the lessons derived from their practice, or the social implications of their practice. Yet, detailed information about the work of NGOs in Pakistan is important because limited research has shown that NGOs have achieved success in areas where the government, with its limited resources and weak infrastructure, has been ineffective in mobilizing the community to realize the benefits of educating its children, particularly girls (Jaffery, 2012; Khan, 2005b). Anzar (2002) alluded to the fact that NGOs in Pakistan have reached far and wide in rural areas where there are no paved roads, hospitals, health services or other basic necessities of life. Considering the fact that I have selected a successful community NGO run school as a research site for my study, information about the roles of Pakistan based NGOs is particularly relevant in providing foundational context information for understanding the results of the study.

Moreover, Khan (2005a) provided an overview of Private Community NGO-managed schools in Pakistan. Private Community schools are established by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), or philanthropic and commercial organizations in sites where there are no public schools. Teachers are typically identified and hired from within the local community, a strategy that tends to reduce the issue of teacher absenteeism. Depending upon the amount of funding available, NGO-managed community schools usually conduct short duration teacher education and professional development sessions for their typically young, inexperienced and underqualified school teachers using interactive child-centred pedagogy. To enhance community ownership and participation at the grassroots level, School Management Committees (SMCs) or Village Education Committees (VEC) are set up to administer the day to day operations of the NGO schools; design and support the implementation of school development plans; monitor teacher attendance and students' enrollment, regularity and retention, and academic outcomes; address teacher wellbeing and grievances; and to mobilize parents and the local community to increase their engagement with their schools. Additionally, SMCs also determine the school fees, and approve fee subsidies to students who cannot afford to pay the fees. Education officials, notable community members, parents, and NGO school representatives (including teachers) constitute SMCs.

Research has indicated that an essential and instrumental component of NGO-managed community schools' success is the use of a community-based participatory approach (Khan, 2005a). In many cases, the community is mobilized by the NGO and usually donates land for the construction of a school in its area. The process of

community mobilization involves building partnerships with the local communities by giving them a voice in the management of the school in order to inculcate a deeper sense of responsibility and ownership of the school by the community. As a result, compared to private and public schools, NGO-managed community schools have been shown to encounter fewer issues of teacher absenteeism, low female enrollment or high dropout rates. Nonetheless, teacher attrition and turnover is high, owing largely to the incidence of female teachers getting married and leaving the villages, whereas male teachers tend to leave in search of better prospects. Variation in teacher salaries depends upon donor-based determinants, such as donor type (national, international), type of donor funding, implementation mode, level of assistance provided, and the professional qualifications and education of the teacher.

This review of the literature implies that the lack of equitable educational opportunities for children in Pakistan and a growing disillusionment with the low quality of public schools has led to a rapid mushrooming of medium and low-cost private and NGO-run schools in the urban and rural areas of Pakistan to fill the void. It also indicates that there is currently a dearth of research on the role and effectiveness of NGO-managed community schools in Pakistan with the larger body of Pakistani literature focused on public or private schools. However, the few studies that are available on NGOs have shown that effective NGO-managed community schools strive to provide improved quality of education to underprivileged children despite limited funding and scarce resources. These school systems are using their own resources, approaches, and capacities to bring innovations in teaching and learning in their schools. As a result, it is

important to analyze the efforts of NGO schools in Pakistan in their efforts to decentralize management structures and give Pakistani community teachers a greater voice in school-based decision-making.

The Evolving Role of Teachers in Schools

This section provides an overview of the changing role of teachers in schools in Western countries and in the Pakistani context. While most of these studies have been conducted outside the Pakistani context, the traditional perception of the school administrator and not the teacher as the gatekeeper of change as reflected in early reform literature has also been prevalent in many Pakistani schools. Traditionally, leadership in schools has consisted of top-down mandates, with little input from classroom educators. This is clearly reflected in the early education reform literature, where there is little emphasis on the teachers' ability to initiate change and participate in decision-making for meaningful school improvement (Lukacs, 2008). Instead, the focus is on the role of "others" such as policymakers or administrators in implementation of the proposed changes, with teachers seen merely as "cogs in the wheel" of school reform (Griffin, 1995, p. 30).

This teacher recipient model underlines the prevalent belief that "administrators lead, teachers teach, and learners learn" (Kauffman & Hamza 1998, p. 5). Teachers tend to see change as challenging because someone outside the classroom directs it and defines whether or not it is being successfully implemented (Lukacs, 2008; Richardson & Placier, 2001). As both the intent and execution of change are driven from the top, there is a lack of ownership for innovation on the part of the implementing teachers. Chilcott

(1961) describes teachers as "vague, formless and conforming" (p. 390), and often reluctant to innovate for fear of being too controversial, thus reinforcing their state of relative powerlessness. In an earlier article, Hill (1971) reviewed existing literature to find that teachers have historically been considered irrelevant to the change process because the drive for change originates from outside the education system. He noted that teachers are not only passive, but frequently assume the role of active obstructionists, often remaining silent about their professional needs or allowing themselves to be easily suppressed after raising their voices about initiating meaningful change. Although Hill's work noted this state of affairs in 1971, it is nonetheless important to note the unfortunate sustainability even now of his literature review findings.

Moreover, Lieberman (1990) acknowledged that despite expectations, schools are generally hierarchical institutions where the principal and the administrative staff are expected to provide direction, while teachers are expected to carry out the work of teaching in accordance with the "expectations of the leadership cadre" (p. 197). Consequently, in conceiving the role of teachers as passive recipients, it would "probably be heretic to consider that teachers should have major participant roles in decision-making about school policy, expectations, practice and evaluation" (p. 200). Hill (1971) suggested that to exercise leadership and to initiate meaningful change within the education system, teachers must apply the tools of persuasion, be willing to be accountable for their actions, "have the courage to speak up and demonstrate academic diligence and honesty" (p. 427). Building upon this argument, Griffin (1995) maintained that teaching has long been perceived as engaging in student-teacher activities inside the

classroom, and that this narrow conception places "unrealistic boundaries" (p. 30) on what it meant to be a teacher. Additionally, Barth (2001) observed that teachers, who are central to the learning process, often see themselves as incidental to the school improvement process. He questioned the prevailing school cultures that work against cultivating teacher leaders.

In the context of developing countries such as Pakistan, Simkins et al. (2003) noted that there is limited research on the role of leadership and management in schools. A major reason for this may be that much of the effort for educational improvement in such countries has been focused on top down, system-wide change rather than change at the level of the individual school. Such system-wide change has tended to focus on the domains of planning and finance, rather than those of governance and management that are likely to be the key to the effective institutionalization of change at grassroots level. Furthermore, Simkins et al. (2003) pointed out that within highly bureaucratized education systems of many developing countries such as Pakistan, the role of teachers, head teachers, and even that of even principals, is relatively insignificant. Such individuals are essentially perceived as functionaries operating at a fairly low level within a multilayered hierarchy, while the main levers of change are assumed to lie elsewhere with central administrators and planners at the federal and provincial level.

Researchers on the education systems of developing countries, including Pakistan have expressed considerable doubt about the degree to which head teachers in many such countries may be able to act as transformational leaders in their schools (Ali et al., 1993; Memon, 1998; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Multiple reasons have been cited to support

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this perception, such as the highly bureaucratic and hierarchical structures that govern most school systems, especially in the public sector; and limited exposure to professional training and opportunities for socialization by most teachers and principals and the prevailing national culture that may encourage dependency and autocratic management styles (Simkins, 2003). Despite calls for decentralization, traditional modes of bureaucratic management structures remain entrenched in many schools in Pakistan. Simkins et al. (2003) asserted that efforts to effectively implement decentralized policies and create more participatory structures are often impeded by insufficient understanding among key administrators of the democratic values underlying such policies. As a result, relevant teacher education and professional development are required to strengthen the knowledge and implementation capacity of local managers, especially those at school level.

Although most of these studies have been contextualized outside the Pakistan setting, the findings of these studies make potential connections with Pakistan. These studies reveal that traditionally the role of the teacher both in the west and in Pakistan has been restricted solely to responsibilities of teaching and learning within the classroom while the power to make decisions and initiate change for school improvement has been vested amongst school administrators with little or no input from teachers. These bureaucratic models of governance exist in many Pakistani public and some private schools where teachers are viewed as bureaucratic functionaries rather than as well trained and skilled professionals. Teachers in Pakistan have little role in planning or evaluating their own work, nor are meaningful investments made or time afforded in

encouraging teachers to indulge in knowledge acquisition about learning theory, pedagogy, child development or curriculum and assessment, or engaging in joint planning or collegial discussions about problems of practice. Curriculum planning is predominantly carried out by administrators and specialists at the federal or provincial levels while teachers are required to implement the curriculum planned for them. These studies suggest that so far, little attempt has been made to understand whether or not Pakistani community teachers view themselves as leaders in their professional milieu and what type of support would they require to discover their leadership skills. Additionally, there is limited research on successful leadership practices of reform-minded teachers in the Pakistani context. The few studies that are available in the Pakistani context allude to the existence of hierarchical management school structures where teachers are seen as mere implementers of externally mandated policies with minimal responsibility for shaping practice. Additionally, the existing literature examines the roles of formal leaders such as principals and head teachers in the decision-making process, while overlooking the beliefs and participatory practices of informal leaders such as regular teachers and how the leadership roles of these informal teachers may influence organizational and instructional improvement. This review of the research underscores the importance of complementing existing accounts of formal Pakistani teacher leaders' practices of distributing leadership responsibilities in their schools with rich and descriptive accounts of informal teacher leaders' perceptions about and involvement in school decision-making.

Shared Decision-Making and Teachers as Leaders

In the last two decades, theories emerging from school improvement and change literature began to challenge the teacher recipient model. Distribution of power and authority and teacher participation in decision-making gradually evolved as dominant themes in educational reform initiatives in both developed and developing countries (Conley, 1991; Lieberman & Miller, 2005; Murphy 2005; Shamim, 2006; Smylie, 1992). Thus, a new direction emerged towards understanding the concept of school leadership from the perspective of shared or distributive leadership. Muijs and Harris (2003) argued that school improvement is more likely when leadership is distributed and when "teachers have a vested interest in leading school development" (p. 442). Situated within the discourse of shared or distributed leadership is the concept of 'teacher leadership' that has received greater attention from education theorists and researchers in developed as well as in developing countries. Amidst recent demands for reevaluating the role of the teacher in a climate of education reforms, education practitioners have been compelled to review their conception of what teaching entails and what teachers can contribute to school improvement and effectiveness. This has led to calls to decentralize power and authority within schools. As a result, an expanded notion of teaching has emerged that involves team teaching, professional collaboration, participation in school-wide decision-making, and policy development and implementation rather than merely interacting with students inside the classroom (Griffin, 1995). Barth (2001) maintained that all teachers can lead and most want to lead, but their "leadership capabilities" can only be unlocked in an engaging school environment geared towards school improvement. Participating in

the larger school arena may be a difficult journey for some teachers because it involves supplementing classroom activities with additional responsibilities, and losing time, energy and immunity from public criticism for efforts that might not succeed (Barth, 2001). Despite these hurdles, Barth urged teachers to assume leadership roles within schools in order to reduce their professional isolation and help them experience greater satisfaction from playing constructive roles in improving their schools. This positivity spills over into their classroom teaching, and they "become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants" (p. 449).

This review of the literature indicates a shift in the perception of the role of the teacher in the decision-making process. It recognizes the teacher as a key participant in school improvement who willingly shares the power over change with those in more traditional leadership roles (i.e., principals). These evolving arguments about the necessity of involving teachers in school-based decision-making first emerged in western developed countries, and their relevance and feasibility for developing countries remains to be assessed to any substantial degree. In the Pakistani context, few examples from successful schools have emerged where teachers have demonstrated their leadership skills through innovative practices. However, the outcomes of Pakistani teachers' shared leadership practices or the processes by which they attain success in their school setting have not been extensively documented. Hence, this literature review implicates the need to identify 'successful schools' within various school education systems in Pakistan and reveal how and to what extent the devolved management practices of those schools are

involving teachers in participatory school based decision-making and in doing so, contributing to the success of the school.

      Defining school-based shared decision-making. Over the past two decades, school-based shared decision-making has captured the attention of researchers and educators around the world (Rauls, 2003). This growing appeal for the concept lies in its inherent quality of including many voices in the decision-making process, and in doing so, shifting the pendulum of power from a traditional top down hierarchy to a participatory and collaborative school management structure. As Weiss (1992) pointed out, "shared decision-making represents democracy in action. Irrespective of its outcomes, it gives those affected by a decision a say in the making of decisions and reduces power differentials in the educational system" (p. 3). Short and Greer (2002) described school-based decision-making as a dimension of empowerment that relates to the involvement of "teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work" (p. 150). These decisions may involve budgeting, teacher selection, scheduling, curriculum planning, planning, designing and implementing teacher education and professional development, and other programmatic areas. Therefore, the process of shared decision-making involves empowering teachers to exercise greater control over their work environment. Short and Greer emphasized that for teachers' involvement in decision-making to be effective, it is imperative that teachers believe that their involvement is genuine and valued and that their opinions have a critical impact on the final outcome of a decision. A school climate that encourages teacher shared decision-making is one that is characterized by openness, risk-taking, and giving teachers the autonomy to suggest new

ideas for instructional planning, student learning, and school improvement. Smylie (1992) expressed the view that the more teachers perceive that they are responsible for student learning, the more strongly they perceive they should be held accountable for their performance. In turn, the process of shared decision-making requires teachers to feel a sense of ownership and commitment to identify problems and institute change efforts and to demonstrate a greater willingness to accept that they have a role in resolving those problems

Research indicates that the term "shared decision-making" is often used interchangeably with "distributed leadership," "collaborative decision-making," and "teacher leadership." Bauer (1992) described shared decision-making as a process that drives essential education decision-making to the school level, where individuals closest to the children may use their expertise in making informed decisions that promote school effectiveness and ensure the provision of need-based services to students and the school community. Clearly then, shared decision-making is a dimension of empowerment that embodies the perspective that leadership is about constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. A central assumption underlying the concept of shared decision-making is that leadership is not vested in any one person or office; rather, authority should be dispersed within the school and among different stakeholders. Harris (2014) explains that a primary focus of shared decision-making is on the interactions of teachers in formal and informal leadership roles, implying that individuals in informal leadership positions can exercise influence through professional interactions with their colleagues. Meanwhile, Lambert (2003) connected leadership with lasting school

improvement. She described leadership capacity as "broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership…[by the] principal, a vast majority of teachers, large numbers of parents and students" (p. 4). She underlined that student achievement can be directly linked to the presence of conditions that create high leadership capacity in schools.

Moreover, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) described teacher leaders as individuals who "lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others towards improved educational practices; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership" (p. 6). Consistent with the various definitions of teacher leadership, different roles or functions have been associated with the concept of teacher shared decision-making. Researchers perceive teachers as participating in a large array of projects such as instructional coordination, curriculum development, knowledge sharing, professional staff development, teacher selection, evaluation, general school improvement, rules and discipline, engagement with parents, and policymaking pertaining to budget allocation (Duke et al., 1980; Short & Greer, 2002).

Klecker and Loadman (1998) analyzed The School Empowerment Scale that defined and measured six dimensions of teacher empowerment: (1) shared decision-making—teachers participating in school related decisions; (2) teacher professional development—opportunities for teachers to develop and expand their perspectives and skills; (3) teacher status—respect and admiration of colleagues; (4) self-efficacy—teachers' feelings of ability to be effective; (5) teacher autonomy—freedom to control professional life and decisions; and, (6) teacher impact—the ability to directly influence

life in the school. They found that even though shared decision-making is the most frequently mentioned component of teacher empowerment in the literature on school restructuring, it is the least practiced in schools. They highlighted the need for direct and sustained attention to shared decision-making in order to challenge the status quo and initiate meaningful school reforms. Recognizing that teachers have not been prepared to assume the role of engaged decision makers, and administrators have not been prepared to accommodate this level of teacher involvement, the authors underlined the need to provide for sustained professional development of school personnel.

Part of the reason teacher collaboration and shared decision-making is valued is that it is believed to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills and efficacy, which in turn makes teaching more enjoyable and satisfying (Burns & Darling-Hammond, 2014). Added to this is the premise that if teachers are treated as professionals and given autonomy to determine the direction of their own professional lives and practice (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Weiss, 1993), they will help to nurture a more "academically focused environment" (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991, p. 11). Undoubtedly, change is more likely to be effective and long-lasting when individuals who implement decisions have a voice in determining those decisions and feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the change process. Bauer (1992) asserted that the purpose of shared decision-making is to improve school effectiveness and increase student achievement by enhancing staff commitment and ensuring that schools are more responsive to the needs of their students and community. Dispersion of authority and shared decision-making have been identified

as the most common characteristics of effective schools in both developed and developing countries (Shamim, 2006).

Merits and potential demerits of shared decision-making. Existing research has identified several potential benefits for promoting teacher participation in decision-making within schools. Weiss (1993) observed that shared decision-making will yield informed policies because teachers have "detailed, variegated knowledge about students and curriculum." Hence, the "decisions in which they participate will be grounded in intimate understanding of context—and thus will be wiser" (p. 69). Teachers have an area of expertise in teaching and learning; therefore, they are expected to take decisions that directly or indirectly impact student learning and performance, whereas, administrators are more likely to devote much of their time to managerial concerns. Moreover, shared decision-making also has the ability to unleash teacher creativity. By encouraging teacher input in school decision-making, the school management will encourage teachers to share novel ideas and introduce innovative proposals geared towards reforming the teaching practice and stimulating critical thinking skills in their students. Smylie (1992) discussed the benefits of increasing teacher involvement in school decision-making. He argued that greater teacher participation in decision-making provides the school administration deeper insight into information about school-related problems. Additionally, increased access to and use of this information will help to improve the quality of decisions. Increased teacher/stakeholder satisfaction occurs when teachers are given opportunities to share in the decisions that are made. Their participation is believed to enhance their commitment and ownership towards those decisions, and they are willing to take greater

responsibility for seeing that the decisions are carried out effectively. Additionally, researchers point out that teacher shared decision-making has the potential to strengthen teacher morale and motivation, foster interpersonal skills for principals and staff, and create positive school culture by building teamwork and trust between teachers and the management (Fullan, 2001; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992).

In spite of these benefits, researchers recognize that shared decision-making is concerned with the complex interplay and dynamics of power and authority. It involves fundamental changes in the way schools are managed, and how formal leaders understand and view their leadership roles. It also implies alterations in the roles and relationships of teachers and the management. Hence, some formal leaders (school principal and assistant head) may perceive distributed leadership in terms of having to relinquish their power and authority to facilitate the leadership of others. Moreover, teachers may view shared decision-making with suspicion due to the demands it will place on their time as a result of additional duties and responsibilities that accompany the process.

Existing literature finds that in schools with centralized control, school districts and boards continue to maintain tight control over decisions pertaining to education policy, budget, operations, curriculum, scheduling and teacher hiring (Leech, 1999; Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995; Rauls, 2003). In this respect, Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) reported findings of a three-year research on school-based management conducted by the University of Southern California's School-Based Management Project. Researchers

visited 40 schools in 13 districts across the United States, Canada, and Australia and interviewed over 400 participants, including parents, students, teachers, principals, superintendents, and board members. The study concluded that for school management to improve school outcomes, it was essential that teachers be given decision-making authority in areas such as budget, personnel, and curriculum, as well as the freedom to introduce reforms that directly impact teaching and learning. Additionally, Leech (1999) pointed out that decentralized management involved delegating decision-making authority to teachers in the areas of budget, curriculum, and staffing, thus enhancing their level of influence over decisions.

Rauls (2003) expanded upon this argument, emphasizing that shared decision-making involves the input of key players such as administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents in shaping school policies and practices pertaining to curriculum, instruction, student achievement, budgeting, scheduling, and personnel decisions. She cautioned that many of these stakeholders may not have a sound understanding of the process and parameters of the shared decision-making process given its complex nature. Moreover, Rauls asserted that the success of shared decision-making depended upon several factors, particularly the "leadership style" and expertise of the school administrator; the "willingness of the school district office to decentralize" authority to support collaborative decision-making, teachers' inclination towards, "knowledge of and participation in the decision-making process and stakeholders' training in the shared decision-making process, it's implementation and the evaluation of its effectiveness" (p. 6). Deliberating upon the barriers to successful implementation of shared decision-

making (SDM), Rauls observed that SDM placed new demands on teachers, calling for a "change in traditional attitudes and roles" (p. 15). She explained that traditionally, only the site administrator and/or the district office were authorized to oversee decision-making domains such as budget, curriculum, staffing, teacher hiring, policy, and procedure, whereas teachers' decision-making authority was restricted to "arranging duty schedules, handling discipline, arranging field trips and scheduling classroom functions (p. 15)". However, in shared decision-making, teachers are required to step into "unfamiliar administrative areas" beyond the scope of teaching and learning (p. 16). Rauls pointed out that in cases where teachers are given more decision-making authority, they realize that nothing in their prior training has prepared them for effectively undertaking these new roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, Smylie (1992) contended that while there was considerable evidence that teachers were selective about decisions in which they wished to participate, little was known about the factors that influenced teachers' willingness to participate in different spheres of decision-making" (p. 54). He noted that one variable affecting the implementation of shared decision-making was the principal's willingness to empower teachers and the teacher's willingness to participate. Noting that the principal played an important role in influencing teachers' willingness to participate in shared decision-making, Smylie's study of teachers in a Midwestern metropolitan school district found that the relationship between the principal and teachers was a strong predictor of successful teacher participation in decision-making. He further explained that teachers were more willing to participate in decision-making if they viewed their relationships

with the principal as "open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive" (p. 63), but were

less likely to get involved in shared decision-making if they perceived the relationship as

closed and controlling.

Leech (1999) cited Johnson and Pajares's (1996) study of a public secondary

school's three-year initiative to implement shared decision-making. They found that the

principal encouraged teachers to participate in shared decision-making by providing

support in the form of active encouragement of staff members, requisite resources,

training, and "playing the role of a cheerleader" and facilitator to facilitate the

participatory process (p. 68). The study explored the enabling and mitigating factors that

impacted teacher empowerment and participation in shared decision-making. Data

collected through observations, interviews, and document analyses identified several

factors that encouraged and constrained teachers in the successful implementation of

shared decision-making at the school site. The enabling factors were stakeholders'

confidence in their abilities to improve personal and collective competence, resource

availability, evolution of democratic processes, and a supportive principal. The mitigating

factors included the need for additional resources, lack of experience in collaborative

decision-making, and a perceived lack of support from the school district.

Moreover, Beckett and Flanigan (1998) reported that teachers raised several

concerns over their level of participation in the decision-making process. One of their

main causes of frustration was that teacher participation in decision-making was not

broad-based, and input was invariably sought from the same prominent faculty members,

while the opinions of those teachers who showed reluctance to actively participate were

overlooked; the latter group had to reconcile with the fact that they were held accountable for decisions made by those who agreed to participate. Additionally, teachers expressed concern that there were no structures in place to enhance teachers' knowledge acquisition or to equip them with the relevant tools to make well informed, quality decisions:

Decisions that were ultimately made were not the decisions that teachers had agreed upon in the discussion. They suggested that when the administration did not stick to the agreed upon decision or did not explain why a decision had been changed, the attitudes of those teachers who valued shared decision-making were undermined, and the attitudes of those who questioned shared decision-making were [re]enforced. (Beckett & Flanigan, 1998, pp. 5-6)

In their discussion of the findings, Beckett and Flanigan (1998) stated that school districts and school administrators needed to ensure that several conditions were in place to facilitate successful shared decision-making. The most important condition they identified was the cultivation of a collaborative school climate and a culture of trust and teamwork between teachers and the administrator. Moreover, they underlined the need to transfer power from principals to teachers in order to influence successful shared decision-making.

Shared decision-making varies from one school site to another in terms of how it is practiced, the type of decisions that are made and who makes those decisions. Whereas one school may have an active shared decision-making committee that involves teachers, parents, students, and the administrator in important decisions pertaining to budget, teacher selection and curriculum development; another school may involve teachers in

only a few decisions related to scheduling or textbook selection. Therefore, one demerit of shared decision-making is that it is difficult to assess its effectiveness owing to variations in its implementation across different school sites. Additionally, shared decision-making requires teachers to work collaboratively with their colleagues; however this collaboration may sometimes lead to conflict over issues teachers have differing opinions about, particularly when they have not been taught how to negotiate and handle conflict effectively.

Another disadvantage of shared decision-making is that it may place additional burden on teachers by requiring them to undertake administrative responsibilities that they are unfamiliar with and have little expertise in. Hall and Galluzzo (1991) noted that when teachers are given more decision-making authority, they may find that their training has not sufficiently prepared them for this new role. They recommended that participants in school-based decision-making need to be trained to become comfortable with their new roles in order to effectively perform these responsibilities. Teachers and administrators are typically "accustomed to making decisions in isolation; hence they need to learn to make decisions collaboratively" (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991, p. xi).

Rauls (2003) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the shared decision-making process as implemented at an elementary school in a large urban district in California. A survey was administered to 26 teachers at ABC Elementary school to assess teacher interest in, support of and recommendations for enhancement of the shared decision-making process. The study also examined the relationship between shared decision-making and student achievement, increased teacher job satisfaction and the

development, and implementation and evaluation of curriculum. Findings revealed that an overwhelming number of teachers supported the process of shared decision-making, but were unclear about the process of shared decision-making itself. Additionally, results indicated that the teachers at ABC Elementary believed that staff development in the area of shared decision-making would enhance its effectiveness. She recommended that all stakeholders should receive staff development on the process of shared decision-making as implemented at their site as well as training on the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and which decisions needed to be made through the shared decision-making process.

This review of the literature on the potential merits and demerits of shared decision-making has helped me approach my study of the phenomenon of teacher shared decision-making in a Pakistani community school in a more informed manner. It has contributed to my understanding that shared decision-making is not a magic bullet for school success, nor is it a simplistic proposition. A lot depends on how leadership is distributed and the intentions behind the distribution. While schools may share many commonalities, every school has certain distinct characteristics and unique organizational infrastructure and circumstances under which it operates. Therefore, a particular approach to participatory distributed leadership may successfully work in one school setting, but it may not in another school setting owing to the prevalent school culture. Effective implementation of distributed leadership involves a reevaluation of what leadership means in a particular school context, how it is enacted, who leads and more importantly,

whether balance has been maintained between the degree of influence the school administration and the teachers have within a school.

Impact of Teacher Shared Decision-Making on Teacher Morale and Performance

This body of literature empirically examines the impact of teacher shared decision-making. Results indicate a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and teachers' efficacy, organizational and professional commitment, and organizational change (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Harris, 2008). Other studies found that low teacher participation in critical school issues adversely impacts staff morale and results in ineffective school governance (Evans, 1997; Wadesango, 2012). Additionally, findings from research on the relationship of teacher empowerment and classroom practices or student academic performance are mixed (Marks et al., 1997).

While there is no shortage of anecdotal evidence about the benefits of professional collaboration, it is difficult to empirically substantiate any positive or lasting impact of professional networking on student learning. Research shows that empowerment affects pedagogical quality and student academic performance indirectly through school organization for instruction. Empowerment may increase teachers' job satisfaction and even their commitment and sense of collegiality, but there is no conclusive evidence that instructional practice will change, pedagogical quality will improve, or student performance will be enhanced (Clune & White, 1988; Conley, 1991; Gamoran et al., 1996; Smylie, 1994; Taylor & Bogotch, 1994). Weiss (2008) also conducted a study to assess whether the use of a shared decision-making model within a school impacted student achievement. A questionnaire concerning the perceptions

teachers have about shared decision-making was administered to the teaching faculty at each identified of the 12 school across four school districts in the northern Cook County area. Another questionnaire was given to the each of the principals in the 12 identified schools. Additionally, students' Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores in Reading and Math at grades three and five were examined for each school before a shared decision-making model was implemented and compared with ISAT scores for subsequent years during which the shared decision-making model was implemented. Trends in student test scores were reviewed to identify increases in overall school achievement. Data were collected through a triangulated approach involving the principal and teacher questionnaires and the ISAT data to assess any possible relationship between shared decision-making models and increases in student achievement.

Findings indicated that both principals and teachers perceived shared decision-making as a positive process that can be used to affect change. However, when asked to indicate areas impacted by shared decision-making, Weiss noted that a few of the teachers' comments deviated from the norm, indicating that they did not view shared decision-making as a "positive process," nor did they feel it was being "implemented with integrity" at their schools (p. 108). She concluded that, according to the data, shared decision-making supported improvements in student achievement, adding that although the relationship between the use of a shared decision-making model and student achievement existed, it could not be determined definitively that shared decision-making was the only factor responsible for the improvement seen in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. It was possible that other improvement initiatives that

accompanied the use of shared decision-making could have impacted the increases seen in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. The relationship indicated was based on the perceptions of teachers and principals, as well as the ISAT scores.

More recently, Burns and Darling-Hammond (2014) reported on the findings of the Teaching and Learning International Survey of 2013 (TALIS) that represented the perceptions of teachers and principals in lower secondary schools from 34 jurisdictions around the world. Reflecting the conditions for teaching in different countries, TALIS data indicated that time for teacher professional collaboration varies widely across countries. Around the world, teachers reported working an average of 38 hours a week, ranging from over 50 hours a week in Japan, to less than 30 hours in Chile and Italy. This time is structured very differently in terms of the amount of time that teachers spend working directly with students in relation to the time they have for planning, collaborating with their colleagues, grading papers, and meeting one-on-one with students or parents. On average, teachers taught classes an average of 19 hours per week, but teachers in the United States taught 40% more, at an average of 27 hours a week, while teachers in Norway taught only about 15 hours per week.

TALIS data showed that lack of time was a major barrier to professional learning for many teachers and that teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction were associated with the opportunities teachers had for collaboration, which varied widely. Moreover, while more than 80% of teachers reported having engaged in some form of collaborative professional learning, only 63% had done so more than once in the previous 12 months. In some jurisdictions (e.g. Finland, the Slovak Republic, and Flanders), over 40% of

teachers had not engaged in any collaborative learning activities. Similarly, in some countries, opportunities for collaborative engagement were routine. More than 80% of teachers in Japan reported observing other teachers' classes and providing feedback at least twice a year, and over 50% of teachers in each of Mexico, the Slovak Republic, Denmark, Italy, and Japan reported teaching jointly in the same class at least five times a year. However, 45% of teachers reported never observing another teacher's class — a proportion that exceeded three-quarters in Brazil, France, Iceland, Flanders, and Spain. Similarly, 42% reported never teaching jointly as a team in the same class. This indicates that in many countries, a significant proportion of teachers still teach largely in isolation and may be missing out on valuable opportunities to collaborate, receive feedback, and learn from their colleagues (Burns & Darling-Hammond, 2014).

Teacher Shared Decision-Making in the Pakistani Context

The role of leadership and management in schools in Pakistan is an under-researched subject. However, there is increasing recognition that school improvement requires effective management at school level and increasing involvement of teachers in school policy and planning (Simkins et al., 2003). Little is known about what Pakistani community school teachers think about the concept of shared decision-making and whether or not they feel they have the agency to actively participate in decision-making in their professional milieu. There is a dearth of research on the outcomes of Pakistani community school teachers' shared leadership practices or the actual processes by which they attained success in their school setting. Inadequate attention has been paid to the participatory activities of informal teacher leaders in Pakistan, and existing research

mainly analyzes the perceptions of formal teacher leaders such as principals and head

teachers about their involvement in shared decision-making. Yet, research indicates that a

few private low-cost community schools in Pakistan have adopted the idea of involving

teachers in decision-making within and beyond the classroom.

Khaki (2005) explored the roles, beliefs and behaviors of three reputationally

effective secondary school head teachers from public, community and private schools in

Karachi, Pakistan. Findings showed that contextual factors influenced the nature of

leadership. All three heads focused on building an environment conducive to better

teaching and learning, enabling teacher development, and fostering productive relations

within and outside the school. However, they differed in their rationale, understanding,

strategies, and application of these strategies, due largely to differences in their personal

histories, specific beliefs and values, and organizational settings. This body of research

indicates that existing hierarchical public education system promotes multi-layered power

structures in which authority flows from the top to the bottom (Bacchus, 2001; Khalid,

1996; Memon et al., 2000; Tajik, 2008). It also highlights Pakistani teachers' perceptions

of their principal's and immediate supervisor's empowering behaviours and examines the

practices of formal education leaders such as principals or head teachers (Rizvi, 2008,

Rizvi, 2006; Saadi et al., 2009; Shamim, 2006; Simkins et al., 1998; Simkins et al.,

2003).

Additionally, Shabaan and Qureshi (2006) conducted a qualitative study in a

private school in Pakistan to explore stakeholders' perceptions of the processes of

involving teachers in the planning of school development initiatives and its influence on

their practice. The sample comprised two groups – the first group included 'formal leaders' such as Learning Area Coordinators (subject specialists), head teachers, and education officers; and the second sample group comprised 'informal leaders' such as classroom teachers. Findings revealed that all stakeholders (formal and informal leaders) felt that factors such as stakeholders' beliefs, school structures, school policies and practices were essential in facilitating their involvement in the process of planning for the school development initiatives.

However, the researchers concluded that the level of teachers' involvement in decision-making was basic and operational wherein, teachers were involved in planning day to day routine activities but were not engaged in planning on strategic issues. Although facilitative structures and policies were in place to involve teachers in school improvement, teachers were consulted through middle managers such as Learning Area Coordinators, and it was not necessary for their ideas to be fully valued and incorporated within the school development plans by the management. Although this experience did not empower teachers to take the lead in school improvement initiatives, stakeholders felt that even this very basic level of participation in planning school improvement activities had a positive impact on teachers' classroom practices. Teachers displayed a higher level of motivation and commitment toward their work, and their relationships with other school stakeholders also improved.

The study underlined the need for formal school leaders to define leadership roles for informal leaders and to pay attention not only to those teachers who are interested in participating but also in helping to engage those teachers who show little inclination

toward assuming leadership roles. Moreover, Shabaan and Qureshi (2006) suggested that professional development activities should focus on positively influencing the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and Learning Area Coordinators towards teacher leadership and collaboratively working towards school improvement.

Collegiality among educators is considered as an essential component of successful and effective education institutions. However, there is a dearth of research on teacher collegial relationships in developing countries such as Pakistan. Consequently, Shah and Abualrob (2012) conducted a quantitative, non-experimental survey study to identify the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher professional commitment in public secondary schools in Islamabad, Pakistan. The survey, comprising the teacher collegiality scale (TCS) and the occupational commitment scale (OCS), was conducted in 17 secondary schools located in Islamabad. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the impact of teachers' collegiality on their professional commitment. Study findings confirmed that teacher collegiality positively influenced professional commitment among Pakistani school teachers. Based on these findings, the study implicated the need for school leadership to focus on enhancing teacher collegiality in order to improve teachers' commitment towards their profession.

Meher, Ummulbanin, and Lalwani (2003) noted that despite the many education reforms undertaken in Pakistan, limited initiatives have been taken in the area of teacher empowerment. They reported one such initiative through the collaborated efforts of Aga Khan University – Institute of Educational Development (AKU-IED) and USAID, whereby a series of teacher empowerment professional development programs were

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planned and implemented for 242 male and female teachers working in schools funded by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the rural and semi-urban areas of Sindh, Pakistan. These professional development programs focused on imparting teachers' decision-making and empowerment skills in the areas of curricular content, pedagogy, interpersonal and intra personal skills, presentation skills to confidently articulate views pertaining to school policies, technique of posing and responding to critical questions, and engaging with parents and interaction with colleagues.

During follow up visits and workshops, the AKU-IED mentors found that a majority of the NGOs had assigned significant roles to these teachers following their graduation from IED because they proved to be successful teachers with strong decision-making skills. Teachers reported that, as a result of the acquisition of interpersonal skills training, they acquired a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities as teachers following professional development, their interactions with their colleagues improved significantly, and they were confidently able to respond to students' questions and deal with parents. However, Meher et al. (2003) mentioned that one challenge continued to be that some of the NGO stakeholders did not welcome teachers' interventions in their policies because they feared losing their right to make decisions.

Following this further, Simkins et al. (1998) conducted a study on the role perceptions of Government and non-Government head teachers in Pakistan. Drawing on interview data with six head teachers from Government and private secondary schools in Karachi, the study findings indicated that the nature of the school system in which a head

teacher operates, has significant implications for how they perceive their role and how they conduct their responsibilities. The school system context within which the Government and non-Government heads worked differed in a number of ways. While the Government heads worked within a governance regime dominated by relatively bureaucratic rules and structures, the work of the non-Government heads was directly or indirectly influenced by the values and agenda of the NGO trustees and system managers. Moreover, the results showed that non-Government heads generally had considerable powers over the management of staffing, including teacher appointments, discipline, and in some cases, even determining teacher salaries, whereas Government heads lacked such powers. Non-Government schools were structured through salary-differentiated hierarchies of deputy heads and positions of responsibility such as heads of department, whereas Government school structures were flat, with no formal posts of responsibility other than Teacher In-Charge' who received no extra remuneration for playing these roles. Besides these system differences, interview data revealed that the head teachers in the two sectors perceived and performed their roles.

While the Government heads managed their teaching staff through direct supervision exercised through face-to-face contact and tours of the school, the non-Government heads, in contrast, operated through systems of delegated middle management systems. They clearly defined the roles of the middle management and held meetings with them to review the progress made by the school. Linked to this, Government heads primarily dealt with internal issues, whereas the non-Government heads spent a considerable amount of time in addressing issues such as building personal

relations with trustees who played a more direct interventionist role than Government district officers to whom heads communicated primarily through written correspondence.

In general, Government heads felt that they had considerably less autonomy to manage. In contrast, the non-Government heads seemed to have considered broader changes and taken more risks than had their Government colleagues. This partly arose from actual differences in power roles and structures associated with the two education systems. Simkins et al. (1998) noted that a general sense emerged through data analysis that the Government heads were less likely to exhibit 'performance efficacy' because they felt they were less capable of improving student achievement through their actions.

This study raised some essential issues about the work of heads in the Government and non-Government sector of Pakistan. It emphasized the importance of differences between school systems in determining the opportunities and constraints that are placed on schools. It also underscored the debilitating effect of the culture of the Government system compared with the private education sector. However, the study was limited by its focus on the day-to-day activities of school heads and their main role relationships and drew little data about their role in change management.

Additionally, Salfi (2011) identified some successful leadership practices of head teachers for school improvement in secondary schools in Pakistan. The researchers administered a survey to a sample of 351 secondary school head teachers and 702 elementary and secondary school teachers working in public secondary schools in the province of Punjab. Data were collected using a mixed-methods research design that included a review of related literature, documents indicating school achievements and

student attainment, survey questionnaires and in-depth semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders including the head teachers, teachers, parents, and students. The instruments were pilot tested to ensure their validity and reliability. Data analysis revealed that the majority of the head teachers of successful schools developed a common and shared school vision and promoted a culture of collaboration, support and trust. They empowered teachers and other school staff to lead and distributed leadership responsibilities throughout the school. Findings also showed that successful head teachers involved different stakeholders in the process of decision-making while also striving to maintain cordial and positive working relationships with different personnel of the school community. Moreover, they actively sought opportunities for ongoing professional development to improve their own leadership skills, and also made these opportunities available for their teaching staff. Finally, they involved parents and community in the process of school improvement.

This study provides an understanding of the effective and participatory strategies that policy makers, administrators, managers, and head teachers at the secondary school level may adopt to improve school outcomes. Both the Salfi (2011) and Shah and Abualrob (2012) studies show positive practices of shared decision-making and distributed leadership in public schools in Pakistan. Despite large bodies of research that decry the low quality of education and the rigid, bureaucratic mode of leadership practices in public schools in Pakistan, the findings of these two studies show that if the right conditions for a participatory approach area created and facilitative structures are

put in place, committed and visionary school heads can successfully turn their schools around irrespective of the system that they follow.

Simkins et al. (2003) conducted a multiple case study of three school heads representing the three broad categories of school that operate in the cosmopolitan city of Karachi, namely, Government schools, private schools, and the network of NGO schools owned and managed by the Aga Khan Education Service-Pakistan (AKES-P). All three heads had participated in the Advanced Diploma in School Management (ADISM) offered by the Aga Khan Institute for Educational Development. This program encouraged school leaders to reevaluate their assumptions about the role of head teachers and to acquire insights, knowledge, and skills to initiate improvement in their respective schools. At the end of the ADISM program, head teachers were asked to devise an action plan for school improvement that they were to implement in their schools over the succeeding 18 months. The three case studies were based on extended interviews (three interviews for each head) carried out with the three head teachers over a period of 12 months as they sought to implement their respective school improvement plans. Through the interviews, Simkins et al. (2003) sought to explore the school heads' perspectives on the management of change, a key theme in leadership. Additionally, teachers in the three schools were interviewed to gain an understanding of teachers' views of the leadership dimension of the head's role.

Findings indicated that national culture is an important variable in influencing leadership behaviour, but that this influence is mediated by system and personal factors. All the heads expressed positive attitudes towards change, and all have implemented

strategies of improvement in their schools, but they differed in their demonstration of personal efficacy. The head of the low-cost private school seemed to derive sole confidence from her personal values and strong social position as a means to initiate school improvement and make a difference. Thus, for her, school improvement was a personal challenge inspired by her own vision which she felt confident to lead, largely unaided or influenced by the school management. On the other hand, the NGO school head perceived efficacy as a characteristic of the school system of which she was a part. Although her underlying personal values were strong, her efforts to pursue strategies of school improvement were influenced by the vision, values and expectations of the school system for which she worked. She saw the importance of school improvement embodied in the policies of her trustees and the expectations of her principal. Finally, the Government school head appeared to be struggling to establish a sense of efficacy in a heavily constrained environment. He faced pressure from politically powerful elements of the school community he served, including education officials in various school related matters. Although he was motivated to make a difference, the possibilities of significant movement in the direction of initiating meaningful reforms were limited. As a result, for the Government head, school improvement was an uphill battle in which he received little assistance, direction, or encouragement.

All three heads, however, found themselves constrained in their possibilities of action by their personal styles and by broader cultural pressures, especially conceptions of leadership as requiring strength, assertiveness, and the imposition of hierarchical authority. Simkins et al. (2003) concluded that the three case studies indicated that

Pakistan "is a relatively high power distance culture" that upholds the belief in the "naturalness of hierarchy," where "subordinates exhibit a strong sense of dependence on their superiors and express a preference for a boss who decides autocratically or paternalistically'' (Hofstede, 1991, p. 27; Simkins et al., 2003, p. 288). Based on the teachers' interviews, the study found that teachers and community members seemed to expect all three heads to act decisively and relatively autocratically. Yet, the dynamics of power distance and dependence operated differently in each school. In the case of the private low-cost school with the strong and largely autonomous school head, there was a high degree of dependence on her which was expressed by others. This dependence arose not only from her formal position as a head but also from her personal social status as a highly qualified educator who chose to serve in a school that catered to a disadvantaged population. In the case of the NGO school head, there was some degree of teacher dependence on her based upon her position within the school hierarchy. However, other factors such as age, personality, and her own dependence on the senior school management meant that not all her subordinate colleagues express equal degrees of dependence on her. Finally, the Government head is part of a formal hierarchical structure and finds himself heavily constrained by the counter-dependent culture of the Government teaching service.

The study findings are insightful and meaningful because they demonstrate that national and community cultures create broad expectations about leaders and leadership. These broad expectations are contextualized through the cultural expectations generated,

the authority granted within particular school systems, and the individual head teacher's personal orientations that are influenced by their histories and personalities.

Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions

Researchers have recognized the need to pay close attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates as a focus of education research because teacher beliefs and perspectives can inform education practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot (Fenstermacher, 1979; Pajares, 1992; Scherie, 2002). Bybee (1993) cautioned against ignoring teachers' beliefs because teachers, as opposed to policymakers, are the change agents of education reform. Bandura (1986) described beliefs as the personal convictions and ideas one holds and therefore, the best indicators of the decisions people make throughout their lives and strong predictors of human motivation and behavior (Pajares, 1992). Theory holds that people tend to act according to their beliefs because there exists a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs, their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1992). Existing research upholds the thesis that teacher beliefs influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, impact their behavior and instructional decisions in the classroom. Hence, understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices (Ashton, 1990; Clark, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1979, 1986; Munby, 1982, 1984; Weinstein, 1989; Wilson, 1990).

According to Clark and Peterson (1986), teaching involves two major domains – teachers' thought processes that occur inside teachers' heads and are unobservable, and

teachers' actions and their observable effects in terms of student behavior and achievement. Teachers' thought processes are further categorized as teacher planning; teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions; and teachers' theories and beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986). In reviewing the relationship between teachers' thoughts and actions, Clarks and Peterson asserted that understanding teachers' thoughts and actions can provide deeper insight into how these two components combine to enhance or impede students' academic performance. However, Meloth et al. (1989) went further in underlining the importance of not only understanding student achievement and learning in terms of teachers' beliefs and actions, but also in understanding the role these two concepts may play in guiding teachers' planning and interactive decision-making. Several studies have highlighted the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices. When teachers are engaged in planning their instructional or school improvement strategies, this process includes the thoughts teachers engage in prior to their classroom interactions, as well as the thought processes and reflections that they engage in after class interactions. These influence the directions teachers will take while planning for future classroom instruction. Moreover, teachers' theories, preconceived notions, and ingrained beliefs represent their rich store of knowledge about objects, events and people, as well as their relationships with their peers and their seniors. All these components influence their planning, interactive decisions, and classroom behavior.

Moving further, Fang (1996) reviewed a small body of research on the complex relationships between teacher beliefs and practices. He expanded upon two competing notions, consistency and inconsistency, that are recurring themes in the literature on the

relationships between teacher beliefs and practices. Alluding to early research on teachers' cognitive processes, Fang asserted that such consistencies between teachers' beliefs and actions are not unexpected. This is particularly because the complexities of classroom life may impede teachers' abilities to pay attention to their beliefs and provide instruction that aligns with their theoretical beliefs (Duffy, 1982; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). This indicates that contextual factors can play a powerful role in influencing teachers' beliefs and subsequently, their classroom practices. Teachers may articulate their beliefs about being willing to participate in decision-making activities beyond the parameters of their classrooms; however, their actual practices may not correspond with their self-professed beliefs about sharing decisions with their school management or collaborating with their colleagues. Their practices may be governed by the nature of the school environment in which they work, their relationships with the school management and their peers, the degree to which the school management encourages teachers to engage in decision-making and leadership roles, and the availability or non-availability of facilitative policies and structures. These factors may either make it possible for teachers to comfortably assume additional management responsibilities or impede their efforts due to excessive instructional workload that does not allow them sufficient time to participate in professional collaboration or engage in leadership activities outside their classrooms. Kilgore et al. (1990) echoed the same perception, suggesting that administrator and collegial attitudes can support or diminish the effectiveness of beginning teachers by influencing their beliefs about themselves, their students and the school management.

This review of the literature on shared decision-making and teacher leadership in Pakistan revealed that teacher involvement in school-based decision-making is currently an infrequent and random occurrence in the Pakistani context. Typically, school management and teachers themselves do not realize the importance of teachers to the decision-making process. Instead, principals are commonly viewed as the only ones with the authority to initiate change efforts in schools (Fullan, 1982). While in some schools, teachers may be a part of committees engaged in textbook selection, curriculum development, and/or staff development, in other schools, these decisions may be predominantly made by administrators. Moreover, the education school structures and existing short term teacher education typically do not provide teachers opportunities for collegial sharing or decision-making. In only a few schools do teachers have an effective voice in decisions that directly impact the quality of their work, such as teacher selection, evaluation processes, professional development activities, class scheduling and collaboration with peers to resolve instructional problems. While it appears that against all odds, a few Pakistani schools are more responsive to eliminating top-down management approaches by creating a broader base for decision-making (Memon, 2003), there is little research evidence on the success of these school-based reforms in the Pakistani context.

Academic scholars have rarely paid attention to the perceptions and shared decision-making practices of informal teacher leaders in Pakistan, nor have they comprehensively captured the actual processes by which schools have attained success through a culture of participatory decision-making. On the contrary, existing research

predominantly examines the leadership practices of formal teacher leaders such as principals and head teachers. As a result, this study will attempt to explore Pakistani informal teacher leaders' perceptions, beliefs and practices in shared decision-making within and beyond their classrooms, and in doing so contribute to this limited area of research. Additionally, this literature review implicates the need to incorporate a teacher leadership component within teacher education programs in order to prepare beginning teachers to deal with practical issues of school governance and the nature of the teacher leadership.

Summary

Shared decision-making is a complex innovation that recognizes the potential in individuals to lead in their area of expertise. It implies a departure from the traditional concept of leadership that resides in one person to a more distributed and participatory form of leadership that includes many voices. The effective implementation of shared decision-making in a school environment requires careful alignment and planning, additional resources, time, staff development, external facilitating support and a reevaluation of the roles and responsibilities of principals, teachers, and school districts.

In this chapter, a review of the literature was conducted in four areas to inform the conceptual framework of this study: the Pakistani context and teachers' roles in Pakistani schools; the concept of shared decision-making and its impact on teacher morale and efficacy; teachers' shared decision-making in the Pakistani context, and teachers' beliefs and perceptions of shared decision-making. Although the literature on shared decision-making is largely situated in the western domain, an effort has been made to analyze the

connections between the two and to consider the application of the western literature to the Pakistani context. Chapter Three will describe in depth the relevant research methodology for examining the phenomena of teachers' perceptions and practices of shared decision-making in one NGO-managed successful community school in Pakistan.

Chapter Three: Method

An essential characteristic of qualitative research is that "individuals construct reality" and meaning as they interact with their "social worlds" (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). The world is not a fixed entity; rather, numerous constructions and interpretations can be derived from reality that evolve and "change over time" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). Qualitative researchers perceive the world "in terms of people, situations, events, and (more importantly) the processes" that link these aspects together (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). The aim of a qualitative researcher is not only to observe physical events and behavior patterns of participants, but also to examine how participants' beliefs reflect their understanding of these events and how this understanding shapes their behavior in turn. It also involves gaining insight into the processes that result in actions or outcomes under study and acquiring awareness of the particular contexts within which the participants act (Maxwell, 2013).

Scholars have pointed out that research goals are an influence on the methodological approach of a research study (Patton, 2002; Weiss, 1994). The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and perceptions of Pakistani teachers about their roles in shared decision-making in a reputationally effective community school in Pakistan in the realm of qualitative research. The intent was to develop an in-depth understanding of how and to what extent teachers in a low-cost NGO-managed

community school were involved in decision-making practices and were being encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. To achieve the purpose of understanding Pakistani community teachers' perceptions and practices about shared decision-making, I examined four research questions:

1. How do teachers in one Pakistani community school participate in shared decision-making activities in their school?

2. In what ways do these teachers feel prepared to assume decision-making roles within and outside their classrooms?

3. How does the school environment influence these teachers' decision-making abilities?

4. How do factors external to the school environment either contribute to or hinder these teachers' ability and agency to participate in decision-making roles?

Research Design

The goals of this study and research questions lent themselves to a qualitative single case study research design. Stake (1995) described a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Whereas Yin (1994) placed greater emphasis on the methodology and procedures that constitute a case study, Stake (2000) underlined that a case study was "not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied" (p. 236). Therefore, the essence of a case study research lies in its interest in individual, "specific, unique, bounded" cases (p. 436). The essential element in capturing the

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complexity of a single case is to analyze its "interaction with its (real world) context" (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Merriam (2002) further qualified Stake's definition by characterizing a case study as an "intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (p. 8).

In view of Stake's and Merriam's definitions, a single case study effectively served the purpose of exploring Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions and practices of shared decision-making. Moreover, this research design provided insight into the relationship between the school administration and the school teachers and shed light on any power dynamics at play with regard to shared decision-making. The process of shared decision-making can vary across different school sites depending upon the willingness of the school management to share power and authority, the level of participation from stakeholders, and the types of the decisions that are made through the process (Rauls, 2003). By its very design, qualitative case study is a "naturalistic" inquiry in which the "phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" without any manipulations (Patton, 2002, p. 39). The object of study, or bounded "unit of analysis," was one successful NGO-managed community school in Pakistan that served students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Placing this study within a qualitative case study framework allowed me the freedom to enter the world of the Pakistani community school teachers and explore their subjective views about what shared decision-making meant to them in the context of their work place. Case study design was also relevant in helping to capture the process of shared decision-making within the selected school and examining how Pakistani community school teachers' perspectives about participation in shared decision-

making, their interactions with the school management and their colleagues, and the prevailing school culture influenced their practices of shared decision-making. It was also interesting to observe the nature of the interactions between the teachers and the school management in terms of decision-making and to analyze how these interactions were influenced by the roles teachers played outside their classrooms and the beliefs and expectations that the school management had about the inclusion of teachers in decision-making activities. Moreover, this research design enabled me to acquire a better understanding of the culture of a community school and to engage in conversations with teacher participants about their perceptions about shared decision-making and how these perceptions measured up to the realities of participation in decision-making in their community school. This approach helped me generate and describe rich and detailed narratives about participants' attempts to construct meaning engage in decision-making activities within their particular school context. The following section will discuss the particulars of setting, participant selection, and methods for data collection and analysis employed in this research.

Site Selection Criteria

Site and participant sampling decisions form an integral part of research methodology. Glesne (2011) noted that the selection of a research site was "built into the research problem" (p. 44). In a similar vein, Maxwell (2013) argued that the choice of a case was justified in terms of "the goals of the study and existing theory and research" (p. 78). Clearly, a researcher cannot study "everyone everywhere doing everything, even within a single case" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 36, cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 96);

therefore it was important to set parameters by selecting school sites and participants who were representative and who could provide rich data to inform research and practice.

To effectively address the research goals and questions of this study, I purposefully selected one reputationally successful community school in Pakistan that served children from low-income backgrounds. This decision was driven by several factors. First, I chose Pakistan as the country in which to base my research because, despite the fact that public schools provide education to a majority of the Pakistani population, in the last decade and a half, the country witnessed a phenomenal mushrooming of private schools at the grassroots level, both in the semi-urban and rural areas, rendering private schools no longer an urban elite entity (Andrabi et al., 2006; Jaffery, 2012). These schools are usually funded by a non-governmental organization (NGO) or a Trust and cater to the low middle class or low-income groups. Owing to high levels of teacher absenteeism and low teacher performance in public schools, parents view private community schools as alternative schooling for their children. Their decision to send their children to private community schools is driven by the perceived quality and relatively lower learning related expenditures of these schools. Government schools, which are theoretically free, often require parents to pay additional expenses for learning materials or administrative costs. Currently, there is a dearth of research on the work and efficacy of NGO-managed community schools in Pakistan (Jaffery, 2012), but existing scant research suggests that NGO schools in Pakistan have played a significant role in providing access to affordable and relatively better quality education to children from underserved low-income backgrounds, particularly at the primary level (Andrabi et al,

2006; Haq & Haq, 1998: Jaffery, 2012; Khan, 2005b; Shah et al., 2005). In the wake of the Education Sector Reforms in Pakistan and decade long initiatives to devolve power to the districts and local governments, I wanted to examine whether successful NGO-managed low-cost community schools in Pakistan have adopted more decentralized leadership structures by involving teachers in school based decision-making processes.

Researcher's Identity

My interest in this research area and selection of Pakistan were borne out of my personal background, history and professional experiences. My identity as a researcher is shaped by the fact that Pakistan is my country of origin. It is also influenced by professional experiences of having served at national and international NGOs in the development sector in Pakistan. As an Education and Training Coordinator, overseeing community schools across the semi urban and rural areas of Pakistan, I found that regional level school leaders still held traditional mindsets about making decisions. In this top down mode of leadership, essential school stakeholders such as teachers were often excluded from critical decisions that directly impacted their teaching and work conditions. Thus, teachers showed little ownership towards school improvement policies, and the gap between the expectations of the school management regarding the level of teacher efficacy and actual teacher performance widened. I often wondered then whether teachers, if given a greater say in relevant school based decision-making, would feel more empowered and motivated to improve their performance in the classroom. Conducting a study in Pakistan allowed for the examination of whether teacher shared decision-making was possible in an educational culture that was typically hierarchical

and bureaucratic, and whether or not successful low-cost community schools were making the shift from an overly hierarchical management structure to one that was more flexible, participatory, and democratic. It also helped me to understand what the processes of teacher shared decision-making were at the selected school and provided insight into what facilitative structures may be introduced in a Pakistani school environment with limited resources that caters to children from underprivileged backgrounds.

Process of School Site Selection

The next step towards selecting a suitable school site for this study was to identify a reputable Pakistani non-governmental organization (NGO) that operates successful community school models for low-income populations. I was interested in examining the initiatives of a national nonprofit organization in Pakistan that had been serving in the field of formal education for a considerable period of time. Smillie and Hailey (2001) observed that the benchmark for evaluating how one Civil Society Organization (CSO) may be more successful than another, particularly in the South Asian context, is quite complex. However, their study on nine South Asian NGOs highlights ten years as the yardstick for an NGO's long-term growth and survival. Additionally, I was interested in working with an NGO that had been offering ongoing knowledge sharing opportunities to its community teachers through mentoring programs such as teacher education and professional development as a means of empowering them and building team collaboration. I also looked for an organization that had some effective practices of

providing equitable opportunities of quality education to children from low socio-economic backgrounds, particularly girls.

Using an approach based on consensus of informed NGO representatives, one NGO was identified with a reputation of exemplary practices in the field of formal education in Pakistan. Having worked in the development sector for roughly six years, I had the advantage of knowing some Pakistani NGO representatives in the field of education. Accordingly, I approached at least five NGO representatives via email and consulted them about their views on the leading national NGOs in Pakistan that have exemplary practices in operating quality schools and encouraging a more participatory form of leadership in their community schools. All five NGO representatives identified Spread the Light (STL) as a leading Pakistani education-oriented non-profit organization that has a comparatively stronger school model at the grassroots level than some of the other prominent NGOs in Pakistan. An Internet search on STL produced a few earlier studies that had been conducted on STL schools. These gave better insight into STL's initiatives and impact both inside and outside its community schools.

Selection of the community school based upon the definition of success. The process of site selection for this study began in October 2014. While still in the United States, I initiated contact with the Chairperson of the STL Islamabad chapter via email through the recommendation of an acquaintance. The email explained the purpose of the study and the possible relevance the study findings could have for STL schools, and sought permission to conduct a study in one successful STL-managed community school as recommended by the organization itself. After securing permission from the STL Head

Office, I began the process of identifying one 'successful' community school that would be a suitable site for addressing the research goals of this study. This required the identification of a high-performing community school in terms of quantitative and qualitative indicators with a moderate to high level of teacher participation in decision-making on school improvement.

A review of the literature on the criteria for successful schools revealed that there is unanimity, more or less, across western and Pakistani literature about what constitutes 'success' in a school (Edwards, 1999; Edmonds, 1979; Farah et al., 1996; Lezotte, 2011; Nathan & Thao, 2007; Retallick, 2005). Pakistani literature, similar to U.S. literature, defines successful schools both in terms of quantitative and qualitative indicators. These include indicators such as high levels of student enrollment, high student retention and low dropout rates, high student attendance, low student repetition, teacher regularity, teacher competence and commitment, and a stimulating school environment. However, Pakistani literature also emphasized other factors, such as the existence of a proper school building with a sound infrastructure, a secure boundary wall around the school, greater community support and high female enrollment as important indicators of school effectiveness. This overemphasis in the Pakistani literature on aspects such as the infrastructure of the school, a boundary wall, and higher female enrollment was linked to the cultural socio-context of Pakistan where dilapidated school buildings, lack of basic amenities (furniture, running water, electricity, and even toilets), and abysmal learning conditions in many public and private low-cost schools impede student learning and adversely impact enrollment rates, especially for girls. On the other hand, adequate public

education funding in the U.S. ensures that all schools, even those catering to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, have well equipped buildings and requisite resources.

Farah et al., (1996) found that high student achievement and attendance, high teacher attendance, teacher mastery and competence, teacher ownership and commitment, community ownership of the school, positive school climate, the presence of a dynamic school leader who encouraged teacher input in decision-making, an environment of shared goals and teamwork, the availability of a proper school building, medium- to high-level school facilities, and high female enrollment rates were some of the most consistent qualitative and quantitative indicators of school success (p. 157) in primary community schools in rural Pakistan. Retallick's (2005) case study in three successful rural based low-cost schools in Pakistan identified dynamic school leadership, teamwork and cohesion amongst the staff, trust and quality relationships between the management and the faculty, shared decision-making, empowerment, positive community involvement in the school, parental engagement, ongoing planning for school improvement, and improved physical resources as the major factors of a successful school.

STL provided a selection of their most effective schools based upon these indicators of school success as defined in western and Pakistani literature (Farah et al., 1996; Retallick, 2005). These include the following characteristics:

a. Clear vision and mission statement

b. High teacher attendance and retention

c. High average student enrollment, especially for female students

d. High student academic outcomes

e. Low student grade repetition

f. High student retention/ low dropout rate

g. Ongoing teacher education and professional development

While the above criteria were intended to determine the effectiveness of the school selected for this study, in keeping with my study's purpose, I also asked STL to identify successful schools where the school management demonstrated a relatively more participatory style of leadership. Subsequently, STL NGO representatives identified two of its schools as 'successful' based upon the above school characteristics and systematically shared year-wise quantitative indicators of two shortlisted community schools – Nusrat Primary School (NPS) and Zafar Secondary School (ZSS). These quantitative benchmarks helped me to gauge the effectiveness of the two shortlisted schools over a three to five year period in terms of the following measures:

a. Year-wise student enrollment (2011-2014)

b. Year-wise student retention/dropout rates (2011-2014)

c. Year-wise student attendance rate

d. Year-wise student grade repetition (2011-2014)

e. Year-wise teacher attrition rates (2011-2014)

f. Year-wise student achievement/percentage of passing rate (2011-2014)

The first five quantitative indicators are generally accepted in educational research as measures of efficiency, and the last as the measure of quality (Farah, et. al., 1996). After arriving in Pakistan, I met the senior NGO management to discuss at the demographics of

the two shortlisted schools that they had suggested. I also reviewed the existing school records for both the shortlisted schools in order to verify the quantitative and qualitative data provided to me by the NGO. These school records pertained to teacher retention, teacher attendance, student achievement, student enrollment trends, and student retention to ensure it is a successful school according to the definition of a "successful" school as defined by existing literature. This process helped me in selecting Zafar Secondary school (ZSS) as the research site for my study. Several reasons influenced this selection decision:

a. Zafar Secondary School (ZSS) had been established since 2005, whereas Nusrat Primary School (NPS) was a relatively new school established in 2011. I felt that duration of a school's establishment was an important consideration because the process of shared decision-making takes time to evolve and mature. I wanted to determine whether ZSS had established any formal or informal structures to facilitate the process of shared decision-making in the 10 years since its establishment.

b. The level of the school was another factor that influenced the decision regarding the school site. NPS was a primary level school only up to Grade 5. On the other hand, ZSS was a secondary school up to Grade 10. I felt that learning about the insights of Pakistani community school teachers across different grade levels would help me acquire a more comprehensive understanding of this process and add to the richness of data pertaining to their thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and practices about shared decision-making.

c. The school principal of ZSS was better qualified with a Master's degree and a teaching license of M.Ed. Moreover, she had been serving as a principal at this school for nearly eight of a total of 10 years of its existence and had a high degree of ownership. She was the recipient of the Certificate for Outstanding Performance for four consecutive years from 2010 to 2014. This award was given in recognition of her overall performance in areas such as academics, administration and accountability.

d. The teaching faculty at ZSS was better qualified compared to the teaching faculty at NPS. Twenty-two of 34 teachers had received formal teaching licenses with either a Bachelor's in Education (B.Ed) or a Master's in Education (M.Ed). In comparison, only four of 17 teachers had received formal teaching license (B.Ed and/or M.Ed) at NPS.

e. Quality indicators such as percentage of teacher retention, student retention, teacher attendance (regularity), and student grade repetition rates were similar in both schools.

f. In terms of student outcomes, the overall percentage of students passing and failing the examinations over the last five years was consistently higher for ZSS students, with 97-98% ZSS students passing the examinations from 2010 to 2014. In comparison, the overall five year student pass percentage was 92-93% at NPS. Additionally, the average student dropout rate was lower at ZSS, with 6-7% students dropping over the last five years. In contrast, the student dropout rate ranged between 6% and 14% at NPS.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data I derived through the school records, I felt that Zafar Secondary School was a more suitable research site for comprehensively exploring teachers' perceptions and practices pertaining to shared decision-making.

Setting

Zafar Secondary School (ZSS) was situated in an urban slum in the Northern Punjab region of Pakistan. This area was characterized by extreme poverty, where people could neither afford nor access quality education. Maxwell (2013) observed that decisions pertaining to research site and participants should take into consideration the "feasibility of access and data collection, research relationships with study participants, validity concerns, and ethics" (p. 99). The Northern Punjab region was preferred as a research site not only because this region has large cosmopolitan cities with high literacy levels, but also because these cities are ethnically and socio-economically diverse and representative of the wider population of the country.

Moreover, since Islamabad is my hometown, access to the selected community school for data collection was relatively easier and logistically more practical. Keeping in mind that the focus of my study was on low-income community schools catering to underprivileged children, Zafar Secondary School was situated in an impoverished urban slum area where people lacked basic amenities of life and had little access to quality educational opportunities. Owing to issues of confidentiality and anonymity of the research site and participants, pseudonyms were ascribed to the NGO, the school and the participants. While reporting findings in Chapter Four, a concerted effort was made to

conceal participants' demographic data pertaining their ages, educational qualifications, total number of years taught at this school, overall teaching experience, and the subjects they were teaching at Zafar Secondary School. Given the sensitive nature of the research, fictitious names were given to each participant to ensure that their identities were not revealed.

A Description of the School Community

The local residents were mostly migrants from Kashmir and Khyber Pukhtoonkhuwa (KPK), and their average family size ranged between six and eight members. The locals were predominantly from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and had low levels of literacy acquisition. The local community valued its traditional customs, traditions, and religious practices, and while female education was encouraged at the primary and middle school level, parents tended to withdraw their daughters from school at the secondary level because early marriages were the norm for local girls. Hence, female students found it difficult to pursue higher education.

School Demographics

Zafar Secondary School was established in 2005. Located in the urban slums of Northern Punjab, the school was registered with the Board of Secondary Education, Punjab and followed the curricula and textbooks prescribed by the provincial Text Book Boards for grades five, eight, nine and ten. The other grades followed the curricula prescribed by the NGO's curriculum wing. The school offered education up to Matriculation, equivalent to U.S. tenth grade in the Pakistani education system. It had a female faculty of 34 teachers out of which nine have been serving at the school for five or

more years. Twenty-two of these teachers had received formal teaching license (B.Ed and M.Ed). Moreover, 17 of 34 teachers belonged to the local community, while the remaining 17 teachers were from neighboring cities.

Over the years, student enrollment steadily rose from 200 students in 2005 to 379 students in 2011 to 745 students in 2015. The female to male ratio of enrollment was 56 to 44, indicating higher enrollment for girls. Additionally, the total student dropout rate for ZSS was recorded at 6% to 7%, while student retention rate increased over the last five years from 89% students in 2010 to 93% in 2014. Teacher attrition fluctuated, with only three teachers leaving the school in the year 2011-2012 compared to 11 in 2014. Marriage and lucrative job prospects were cited as the most common reasons for quitting. This was a high performing school in terms of student achievement, with 100% of students passing the annual Board examinations in the last three to five years.

School infrastructure. The school was housed in a purpose-built, three-storied building with spacious classrooms accommodating 30 students per class. It was equipped with a library, a computer room and science laboratories.

Participants

I purposefully selected the participants of this study in order to choose "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Maxwell (2013) described purposeful selection as a strategy whereby certain "settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant" to the research questions and goals, and cannot be acquired "as well from other choices" (p. 97). In qualitative research, selecting information rich cases that yield meaningful

insights into and in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study is more important than deriving empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002). Single case study findings may not typically be generalizable or applicable to the entire population, but they may shed light on the uniqueness and complexity of a phenomenon within its particular context. Furthermore, Patton (2002) emphasized that the purpose of selecting and "making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what you want to be able to say at the end of the study" (p. 229).

In view of Patton's observation, my study aimed to explore the perceptions of teachers about their roles in shared decision-making in a Pakistani community school that served underprivileged children. Hence, my unit of analysis, the research population of my study comprised two categories: Pakistani community school teachers and the school principal. These chosen participants helped to generate rich and detailed data about their beliefs and practices regarding shared decision-making, and this information allowed for a better understanding of the subtleties underlining the relationship between the school management and the school teachers in terms of decision-making for school improvement. The *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making* (TSQS) was administered to all 34 teachers at ZSS to acquire a broader understanding of the school climate and teachers' views about and predisposition towards shared decision-making. This was followed by focused, semi-structured interviews of 22, purposefully selected teachers. The interviews were conducted to generate rich descriptions of teacher participants' unique perspectives and to explore the lived meanings of the phenomena of shared decision-making through the lens of Pakistani community school teachers.

Additionally, informal observations of teachers while communicating with them in the staff room, attending staff meetings, or engaging in professional development activities during Staff Development Day and in-service training. The following participants were selected for this study:

1. Teacher participants: All 34 teachers were surveyed, and a subset of 22 teacher participants was interviewed. The purposeful selection of this subset was based on the management's feedback about teachers' willingness to participate in shared decision-making practices, as well as teachers' survey responses. The subset included a representative sample of teachers who demonstrated high, moderate, and low degrees of participation in shared decision-making. Selection of the subset of teacher participants took into account diversity of age, educational qualifications, professional experience, and grade levels and subjects taught. The teacher participants were all female, and ranged in age from less than 20 years to 39 years. Their educational qualifications ranged from Intermediate level to Master's. The number of years they taught at ZSS also ranged from less than a year to 10 years. Including a diverse number of participants in the subset helped to generate a rich pool of data about Pakistani teachers' perceptions and practices pertaining to shared decision-making.

2. Management: The school principal, Academic Coordinator and Senior Teacher were interviewed. However, I would like to clarify that these interviews were merely used as a check point to support the data I derived through teachers' survey and interview responses and my subsequent interpretation of the data.

Maxwell (2013) pointed out the challenges of developing productive relationships with less proficient teachers as opposed to exemplary teachers who may be more defensive about discussing their practices or less willing to participate for fear of exposing their inadequacies. Selecting such participants as part of the interviewee population and examining their perceptions and experiences (or lack thereof) with shared decision-making was informative in identifying areas within the selected school that were not working well to encourage teacher participation in decision-making. As a result, I made a concerted effort to develop positive and meaningful relationships with all teachers, but particularly those who did not display a high level of interest in shared decision-making. I also tried my best to make these teachers feel comfortable in my presence by impressing upon them that their input and perspectives were equally valuable for my study.

Participant recruitment. As mentioned earlier, survey participants included all 34 teachers currently serving at Zafar Secondary School. A subset of 22 teachers was purposefully selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. This subset included a wide range of teachers who were representative of the total population of teachers at ZSS. These included reputationally effective and reform-minded teachers who were actively involved in a wide range of shared decision-making practices. Additionally, the subset included teachers who demonstrated moderate levels of knowledge and inclination towards shared decision-making. Finally, those teachers were also included in the subset who displayed a low degree of knowledge and participation in decision-making. The set of criteria for selection of interview participants was three pronged: it was based on the

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recommendations of the school management; my own informal observations of teachers' inclination towards participating in shared decision-making, and the findings of the survey. Finally, the school management, comprising the principal, Academic Coordinator and the Senior Teacher, were interviewed about their roles in cultivating a favourable and participatory school climate that encouraged teachers to participate in shared decision-making.

It is pertinent to mention here that it was not my intent to report data derived from the management's interviews. Rather, these interviews were used as a check point to support the data I derived from teachers' survey and interview responses and my subsequent interpretation of the data. Management's responses helped me to gauge its level of support for teachers' participation in collaborative practices. The NGO management and the school management served as gate-keepers and informants who gave me access to the school and the participants.

Researcher Relationships

Negotiating research relationships with gatekeepers and participants is a critical aspect of data collection. According to Stake (1995), data collection is invariably "done on somebody's home grounds" and therefore involves a certain "invasion of personal privacy" (p. 57). Even though I am familiar with the development sector and have worked with a few national and international NGOs in Pakistan, I deliberately chose to conduct my study in a new setting rather than in an NGO I had previously worked with. This choice of setting was not only dictated by my research goals, but also by my need to be recognized solely in the role of a researcher in the new environment, rather than being

assigned additional roles that I had previously been associated with in a familiar NGO. I was aware of the fact that in this new setting, I would have to invest considerable time in getting acquainted with the "people, spaces, work schedules and the problems of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 59), besides making an effort to build close rapport with the gatekeepers and participants. Glesne (2011) observed that conducting backyard research may narrow one's vision due to preconceived assumptions about what is going on; on the other hand, "moving into a new culture" can open up a researcher to fresh insights and "new understandings" (p. 41).

Initiating contact with the gatekeeper, a senior representative of the target NGO, and obtaining consent to conduct my study in one high performing school managed by the NGO was a smooth process. An intermediary mutually known to both the gatekeeper and myself introduced us via email. Subsequently, I wrote to the gatekeeper briefly introducing myself and explaining my research interests, the purpose of my study, the relevance of my study to the work conducted by the NGO, and the reason why I had selected this particular NGO as an appropriate organization through which to conduct my research. I also touched upon my proposed methodology for data collection, emphasizing that the anonymity of the participants' identity would be maintained, and they would be free to withdraw from the study if and when they wished. Consequently, I asked if the NGO could facilitate my access to the school site for effective data collection. The senior gatekeeper seemed warm, welcoming, and appreciative of the fact that I had shown interest in their NGO schools as a possible site for conducting my doctoral research. She helped secure permission from the NGO head office within two weeks and connected me

with relevant NGO representatives for all future facilitation. In the beginning, the NGO representatives were very prompt in identifying two successful schools as appropriate sites for my study and in sharing basic preliminary profiling information about the two schools. However, gradually, they began to take considerably longer (two weeks to a month) in sharing relevant and detailed quantitative and qualitative indicators of the two schools or in clarifying any discrepancies in the quantitative data they had shared with me. This information was essential in helping me gauge the degree of success of the two shortlisted schools and in evaluating which of the two would be a more suitable research site to effectively address my study goals. In spite of my frustrations, I decided to take a step back and reevaluate my research relationships with my new gatekeepers.

According to Maxwell (2013), researcher relationships are "complex and changing" entities (p. 91) that require ongoing negotiation and renegotiations. Therefore, while "gaining access is an initial undertaking" (Glesne, 2011, p. 59), maintaining access requires more sustained effort, influenced by changing expectations and needs of both the researcher and the participants of the study. I reflected upon how the new gatekeepers might perceive my role as a researcher and whether power differences played a part in their changing approach and degree of engagement. The fact that I had gained acceptance at the top of the NGO hierarchy may have been viewed with suspicion by the new gatekeepers who might have felt compelled to cooperate with me owing to the recommendation of the senior NGO management. I realized that having secured permission from the senior gatekeeper, I had plunged headlong into requests for relevant information without taking the time to build a meaningful rapport with the new

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gatekeepers. Glesne (2011) underscored that trust needs to be established "before people can be willing to provide certain kinds of information" (p. 59). In an effort to establish mutual respect and trust, I told the new gatekeepers that I looked forward to establishing a positive, collaborative working relationship with them and was willing to listen to and address any concerns they may have regarding my research through Skype or email. This proved to have a more positive effect and, subsequently, they demonstrated a greater willingness to share relevant information in a timely manner.

I proceeded to Pakistan in mid-March to begin the data collection process at Zafar Secondary School. To build a trusting relationship with my gatekeepers, I first met the two NGO representatives I had been communicating with prior to my arrival in Pakistan. I shared with them details about my study, and we worked out the logistics for my visits to the school between April and June 2015. During the meeting, I also verified quantitative information I had received from them about the school demographics and rectified a few minor discrepancies at this stage.

Subsequently, I conducted my first visit to the school site. Upon arrival, I was warmly greeted by the principal, who showed me around the school and casually introduced me to the Academic Coordinator, Senior Teachers, her regular teaching faculty, and the administrative staff comprising an Administrative Assistant, a watchman, five school maids, and three bus drivers. I underlined my role as an objective researcher who had come to their school with an open mind to learn about their beliefs, perceptions and feelings with regard to shared decision-making. This approach was instrumental in helping me build a strong rapport with the school management from the very first day.

The principal made every possible effort to facilitate my study. After I shared a list of the teachers I wished to interview, she created flexibility in those teachers' timetables to ensure their availability for the interviews and arranged for substitute teachers to manage their classes in their absence. She also invited me to participate in various school events and intervention programs occurring on the school premises so that I could develop a better understanding of the different educational initiatives the school was undertaking to improve students' learning in addition to their regular education.

Within a week of my arrival at school, the principal arranged my first formal meeting with the teachers so that I could brief them about my research and confidentiality procedures. As I walked into the room and greeted them, I could sense that some of the teachers were slightly reserved and yet curious about the nature of my study. To break the ice, I introduced myself as a doctoral researcher based in the U.S. who had no affiliations with the NGO and was only interested in learning from them, listening to their voices, and gaining insight into how they viewed the phenomenon of shared decision-making. I then initiated a brainstorming session during which teachers were asked to share the first thing that came to their minds when they heard the term 'shared decision-making'. As teachers overcame their self-consciousness to respond to the query, I noticed that they gradually grew more comfortable and friendly in my presence and began to openly share their thoughts. At that point, I discussed details about my research and confidentiality procedures before requesting their consent in participating in the survey. All 34 teachers voluntarily agreed to participate in the survey.

In the two weeks leading up to the survey, I spent a lot of time around the campus, informally interacting with the principal and sitting in staff rooms to chat with teachers either individually or in groups. Teachers asked about my life in the U.S, whether I planned to stay in the U.S. or return to Pakistan after completing my degree, and what scholarship prospects were available if they wanted to pursue advanced studies in the U.S. I occasionally attended 'Teacher Time' during which I noticed teachers grouped together by subject area to reflect upon their practice. As I had completed my Master's in English Literature and Linguistics, the English teachers would sometimes ask me about innovative instructional strategies for imparting grammatical concepts. At other times, I observed teachers collaborating with one another in designing lesson plans, discussing pedagogical challenges or dealing with parents during break or 'Teacher Time'. I also made it a point to join teachers as they performed morning and break discipline duties and casually inquire about any extra-curricular activities they participated in besides teaching. Such an approach was helpful in making participants feel less intimidated and more forthcoming about their views, perceptions, and feelings regarding collaborative decision-making in school. It also enabled me to acquire some understanding of the kind of shared decision-making practices teachers were involved in prior to the survey and the interviews.

Interspersed during the research, I was able to attend five staff meetings as a participant observer, two professional development sessions on Staff Development Day, and three training workshops during an annual in-service held in July. These experiences provided me deeper insight into the cooperative relationship between the management

and the teachers and the degree of collaboration between teachers. The staff meetings were interactive and participatory; teachers, with the exception of a few, shared ideas and different points of views about pedagogical issues under discussion.

I felt that these preliminary introductions and casual conversations with teachers in staff rooms, in the corridor, or outside in the playground enabled me to build a relationship of trust and to get to know them at a more personal level. This was one of the reasons why 29 of 34 teachers consented to participate in the interviews. Some of the teachers repeatedly asked me when I would schedule an interview with them. Moreover, these informal meetings with participants provided me an opportunity to privately allay any possible concerns the teachers had about the consequences of participating in interviews. A majority of the interview participants were vocal in expressing their views about the school environment, their relationship with the management, pleasant or strained, and how they actually felt about shared decision-making. I had anticipated that teachers who were less inclined toward participating in shared decision-making would not openly admit it. Contrary to expectations, these teachers were quite vocal about acknowledging that they were either shy, under-confident, or not willing to participate in shared decision-making because they believed that the primary job of a teacher was to teach. Teachers' enthusiastic participation in the interviews and comprehensive exploration of various aspects of shared decision-making revealed that community teachers at the grassroots were interested in conveying their feelings, beliefs and thoughts if provided with the opportunity.

Data Collection Procedures and Design

Multiple data collection sources were used to explore Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions of and participation in shared decision-making in an effective, low-cost, community school. These included a *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making* that was administered to all 34 teachers at ZSS; in-depth semi-structured interviews of 22 purposefully selected teachers, interviews with the school principal, Academic Coordinator and Senior Teacher, and field notes generated during informal observations of teachers in staff meetings.

After obtaining approval for conducting research from the George Mason Human Subjects Review Board, I proceeded to Pakistan in March 2015 to collect data for my research. The total data collection process spanned three months. In the first week, I met my gatekeepers, the NGO management representatives, and verified the preliminary quantitative information (teacher retention and attendance, student enrollment and retention, and student achievement records) about Zafar Secondary School that they had provided to me prior to my arrival. Next, I visited the selected community school to meet the school management and teachers and to get a general sense of the school environment. My preliminary visits to the school in the two weeks prior to the administration of the teacher survey enabled me to build a rapport with the NGO school management and teachers and to establish a positive working relationship with them in order to generate rich and detailed data.

During a scheduled staff meeting, I introduced myself to the school teachers and discussed the purpose of my study, my data collection strategy, and the importance of

their participation in the study. I also explained the confidentiality procedures at length, emphasizing that the identity of the participants and the school would remain anonymous and that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym to maintain strict confidentiality. Moreover, I clarified to the teachers that participation in the survey and the interviews was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. Following an explanation of the confidentiality procedures and voluntary participation, the Urdu version of the informed consent forms were distributed to the teacher participants to ensure that they fully understood the contents of the form before signing them. Teachers were requested to carefully read the forms and sign them if they chose to participate in the survey. All 34 teachers gave their consent to participate in the survey. There were two separate levels of participation: one for the survey and one for the interviews. Informed consent was obtained for the survey two weeks before the survey was administered, while informed consent for participation in interviews was obtained from teachers on the day they took the *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making*.

School management interviews. Two weeks after I began the study, I interviewed the school management (Principal, Academic Coordinator and Senior. The interview protocol for the school management (see Appendix C) inquired about the participants' vision of a successful school, their perceptions about teacher shared decision-making, and their efforts to introduce any policies or structures to support teachers' inclusion in different aspects of shared decision-making at the school site. Additionally, participants were asked whether teachers had the requisite knowledge and

skills to assume leadership roles and whether opportunities were provided to them to nurture their leadership and engage in professional collaboration. All interviews were conducted in Urdu and audio-taped. At the end of the interviews, the school management was requested to identify teachers who, in their opinion, demonstrated a high, moderate, or low degree of ownership and willingness to engage in decision-making activities beyond their classrooms.

Teachers' survey. Creswell (2012) described survey research designs as procedures in quantitative research in which "investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population" (p. 376). For this study, the *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making* was designed by incorporating components drawn from Rauls' (2003) *Teacher Perceptions of Shared Decision-making Survey* (TPSDS), Lukacs' (2008) *Teacher Change Agent Scale* (TCAS), and Lambert's (2003) *Leadership Capacity School Survey* (LCSS). It should be noted, however, that the components derived from these questionnaires were specially modified and adapted to the Pakistani education context. This survey served two purposes:

1. It allowed the researcher to ascertain the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and practices of all the teachers at ZSS regarding collaborative decision-making. It also gauged the capacity of the larger teaching population at ZSS for participating in shared decision-making with a view to describe trends within the data.

2. It was a tool for purposefully selecting a subset of 22 Pakistani community school teachers for interviews.

***Survey questionnaire*.** The survey itself was comprised of two parts (see Appendix B). Part One contained eight open- and closed-ended questions, deriving information on teachers' demographic and academic backgrounds, professional experiences, and whether or not they received pre-service or in-service training on any concepts or leadership, management, or decision-making during the span of their teaching careers to facilitate their understanding of the notions of change agency and teacher leadership.

Part Two contained an additional 25 closed-ended items that incorporated essential components such as ownership, empowerment, motivation, risk-taking and collaboration. The items required participants to specify their opinions and practices about shared decision-making and determine whether they had the inclination and autonomy to incorporate concepts of shared decision-making within and outside the classroom settings. Survey participants were also asked to check off the shared decision-making roles and responsibilities they participated in during the current school year or previous school years. The final question asked participants if they are willing to be contacted for a follow up one-on-one interview about their views on shared decision-making. The survey was assessed on a Likert scale that provided responses such as 'Strongly Agree,' 'Agree,' 'Undecided,' 'Disagree,' and 'Strongly Disagree.' These intervals aimed at giving participants a larger range of response options so that they could more accurately delineate their responses. To encourage participant response consistency, a few of the items in the survey were purposefully designed to convey similar connotations. However, an effort was made to place these items at a considerable

distance from each other so that the response to the first item was not too prevalent in the minds of the participants when they came across the next item that was similar to the first one.

Pilot-testing data collection instruments. To assess the reliability of the survey instrument, I pilot tested it on a former Pakistani community school teacher who had a professional background similar to that of my study participants. I also pilot tested the survey on a former NGO colleague who had supervised community schools and worked extensively with community school teachers in Pakistan. Both the pilots completed the survey within 30 minutes. Once the survey had been completed and collected, the two pilot participants were asked for their feedback in terms of how well they understood the questions. I asked whether any items were unclear and prompted them to explain why they answered the way they did. Generally, there were no major concerns, and both pilot participants believed the survey was well drafted. However, the community school teacher suggested that I should have finer distinctions for the questions: 'Total number of years you have taught to date?' and 'How many years have you taught in this school.' Additionally, my pilot pointed out her unfamiliarity with terms such as "Teacher Education" and "Professional Development" and felt that terms such as "Pre-service" and "In-service" would be more easily understood in the Pakistani context. She also misunderstood my implication in the statement: "I feel unprepared to take on leadership roles and responsibilities in school other than teaching." Whereas I meant "unprepared" in terms of whether the participant had received relevant pre-service or in-service training to equip her with the knowledge and tools to assume leadership responsibilities, my pilot

interpreted the word "unprepared" in terms of whether she had the inclination and willingness to undertake leadership roles in school. Finally, the pilot respondent suggested that I should be more specific about the type of decision-making I was referring to in some of the survey questions because there are many dimensions of decision-making in a school.

This exercise was an invaluable learning experience for me. It allowed me to assess how efficiently my survey would address the phenomenon of interest and highlighted the importance of using terminology in questions that is culturally relevant to the context in which the study is being conducted. This process also helped me to revise and rephrase some questions that fell short of conveying my actual research purpose, in light of my participant's constructive suggestions. I engaged the expertise of two Urdu and English language experts in translating the survey questionnaire from English into Urdu.

Administering the survey. Following the school management interviews, I administered hard copies of the *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making* to all 34 teachers who had given me their informed consent. The survey could not be administered electronically owing to limited number of computers available at the low-cost community school. Whereas five teachers preferred to respond to the survey in English, the remaining 29 participants requested the Urdu version of the survey.

Subsequently, I analyzed the survey data and compared the findings with the school management's feedback about teachers' level of empowerment, as well as my own informal observations about teachers' willingness to participate in shared decision-

making. This comprehensive analysis led me to purposefully select 22 teachers as participants for the one on one interviews. This subset of teachers was representative of the wider teaching population at ZSS. It took into account diversity of age, educational qualifications, teaching experience, subjects and grades taught, and level of commitment towards shared decision-making. Additionally, the subset included a mix of teachers who demonstrated a high degree of willingness to participate in shared decision-making; ta moderate degree of commitment to shared decision-making and low levels of inclination towards engaging in decision-making practices.

Teacher observations. As mentioned earlier, another method used to generate data included informal observations of teacher participants in their natural setting - in staff rooms or during faculty meetings, Staff Development Day, 'Teacher Time', and INSET. Maxwell (2013) described observations as a "direct and powerful way of learning about people's behavior and the context in which this occurs" (p. 103). Observations allow a researcher to note not only what participants are saying but also what they are doing and how their actions correspond with their words. Hence, this approach was beneficial in studying the interactions of teachers with the school management and their decision-making practices beyond the sphere of the classroom. I also observed teachers interacting with their colleagues for collaborative planning, mentoring, problem solving, shared reflection, conflict resolution, and engagement with parents and community members. Through observations, I acquired a better understanding of how hierarchical or participatory the general school culture was; how essential policy related decisions were made at ZSS; what shared decision-making

practices teachers engaged in on a day-to-day basis; the extent to which teachers voiced their opinions and provided input on issues pertaining to teaching and learning during staff meetings; and to what extent the school management was receptive to teachers' perspectives on shared decision-making.

Maxwell (2013) presented a meaningful standpoint about supplementing interviews with observations, emphasizing that interviews provide one facet of information on participants' perspectives, but observations can "enable one to draw inferences about this perspective that one cannot acquire by relying exclusively on interview data" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 103). Therefore, observing how the school principal responded to teachers' attempts to offer suggestions on school improvement gave me insight into the school climate, the principal's perceptions about shared decision-making, and the nature of the power dynamics that existed between the management and the teachers. Similarly, observing which teachers took initiative to offer fresh ideas and innovative suggestions, or actively engaged in collaborative practices helped to provide a better understanding of teachers' actual perspectives on shared decision-making.

Observation process. During the course of my three month data collection period, I attended five staff meetings, three of which focused on designing school improvement plans (SIPs) at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. I also attended 'Teacher Time' (teachers' collaboration time at the end of the school day), as well as Staff Development Day and the annual in-service training in July. I also informally observed teachers and recorded my field observations about the physical setting of the school, the teacher-school management relationship, and interactions between teachers in the

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staffroom and outside on the playground while performing disciplinary duties. A central issue with observation is that participants who are aware that they are being observed may deliberately change their behavior, in a more socially acceptable manner or in accordance with the observer's expectations. To address this issue, I tried to maintain a relaxed and friendly rapport with the participants during the data collection period so that they did not feel I was a stranger intruding upon their personal space and privacy. Moreover, I made every possible effort to conduct observations in an informal and unobtrusive manner, making a point to take down brief notes only when it was absolutely necessary. I did not want my participants to become reserved and withdrawn due to the constant scrutiny of an outsider observing them and scribbling away in her notebook. Hence, I elaborated upon these preliminary points at a later stage when I was on my own.

As my study focused on shared decision-making perceptions and practices, I informally observed teachers' willingness to voice their opinions and share meaningful input during staff meetings or their inclination to collaborate with the school management and their peers in school-wide decision-making activities geared towards school improvement. Subsequently, I recorded my observations through field notes. This approach enabled me to draw inferences from teachers' survey and interview responses by connecting their words to their actual collaborative behaviour and the context in which it occurred (Maxwell, 2013).

Teachers' interviews. Finally, additional data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the 22 purposefully selected teachers. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) posited that the key to understanding how people perceive their world and their

lives is to talk with them. Through conversations, we learn about people's lived worlds, gain insight into their "dreams, fears and hopes," and understand their "views and opinions in their own words" (p. xvii). My rationale for conducting one-on-one, semi-structured interviews as a data collection strategy was built into the purpose of my study – to understand Pakistani community teachers' perspectives and roles in collaborative decision-making in a successful low-cost community. Interviews are "a way of knowing" (Seidman, 2006, p. 7) that provide opportunities to understand the world through the observations of others (Maxwell, 2013); to study actions and events that took place in the past, and to explore alternative explanations of what one can see (Glesne, 2011). Thus, these interviews were valuable in helping me gain access to teachers' thoughts, feelings, emotions and beliefs about their lived experiences regarding shared decision-making.

Interview protocol. Two interview protocols were designed: one for the school management, and the other for the 22 community school teachers who were purposefully selected from amongst the larger teaching population. The interview protocol for teacher participants (see Appendix D) asked teachers to share their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about shared decision-making; their relationships with the school management; their level of preparedness for supporting the school management in essential decision-making beyond their classrooms; their decision-making practices; and their engagement with parents and the local community to enhance school improvement. I opted for a semi-structured interview guide rather than a structured approach because I wished to capture the unseen (Glesne, 2011) and fully comprehend the ways in which the school management and the teachers viewed the concept of teacher shared decision-

making. The essence of a qualitative, semi-structured interview lies in the understanding that the questions are not binding and can be modified or abandoned if they fail to adequately address the research question.

Thus, such a broad scale approach allowed me the flexibility to probe deeply by following up brief responses of participants with sub questions and developing new questions on the spot to examine unanticipated leads that arose during the course of the interviews. Clearly, the semi-structured interview protocol enabled me to understand shared decision-making in its fullest possible complexity and to analyze it from several angles. It also provided a platform to teacher participants to open up about their perceptions and freely voice their opinions, yet at the same time, giving them direction to remain focused and not get carried away.

I shared my draft interview protocols with my Ph.D committee and my critical friends' team for incisive and multidimensional feedback. They were instrumental in helping me craft and refine my interview protocol. Their insightful observations uncovered some of my personal biases and assumptions, assumptions that I had not been aware existed. They also drew my attention to several closed-ended questions that I had overlooked despite going over the questions many times. This practice allowed me to develop a more critical lens in assessing just how narrow, broad, or leading my questions really were and to rephrase a few questions to ensure they were as open-ended and 'position neutral' as possible.

Interview process. The teacher interviews began on May 1st, 2015 and ended on June 15th, 2015 before the school closed down for summer break. I conducted two

interviews per day so that I could give my undivided attention to the interviewees without feeling pressed for time. I also wanted to give ample time to my participants to reflect upon their beliefs, share rich insights and candidly express their opinions. This exercise helped in generating data rich in detail and embedded in context.

The process of scheduling interviews went smoothly due to the facilitation of the school management and cooperation of all my interview participants who were extremely accommodating. All interviews took place in the library located on the first floor. This room was designated to me by the principal who believed it was a relatively quieter area that would ensure minimum disruptions as well guarantee privacy of the conversations to enable participants to comfortably share their views with me. Before each interview, I made a concerted effort to relax my participants by engaging them in small talk and reassuring them that the interview was not a test of their knowledge, that there were no right or wrong answers, and that I was only interested in hearing their side of the story, their unique perspectives and practical experiences with regard to shared decision-making. Almost all interviews spanned roughly one and a half hours with three interviews spanning two hours. As mentioned earlier, teachers had informally indicated their consent to participate in the interviews by responding to the last survey question: Would you be willing to participate in a follow up interview about your views on shared decision-making? However, before each interview, I reiterated the confidentiality procedures with them and reassured them that they would be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. All participants signed the informed consent form formally

indicating their agreement to be interviewed and giving me permission to record their conversations through a digital tape recorder.

I set up the recording device, my list of questions, and a notebook in which I jotted down non-verbal cues, or brief notes about insightful observations or comments made by the participants as the interviews progressed. I was equally conscious about maintaining eye contact, listening closely to the conversation and giving my undivided attention to my interviewees so that they felt I was fully engaged in the process. Therefore, I restricted myself to recording only non-verbal cues and observing my participants' body language to determine the effects of my questions on them. Moreover, I tried to speak less, only offering elaborations where necessary, and provided appropriate wait time to the participants to enable them to reflect upon their perceptions, beliefs and opinions with ease and express their thoughts more comprehensively and coherently.

Interviewees were asked to share their views about shared decision-making and their level of participation in different decision-making domains pertaining to curriculum development, engagement with parents, knowledge sharing, budget, teacher hiring, and school discipline. Besides responding to the interview questions, interviewees were also asked to elaborate upon any point that was not clear in their survey responses. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

Language for data collection. As per the comfort level, language proficiency, and preferences of the interviewees, all interviews were conducted in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan. Pakistan, a former British colony, has the third largest English speaking population in the world; approximately 49% of the Pakistani population is able

to communicate at an intermediate level of English, 30% has a good level of proficiency in English, and 13% of the population is fluent in English (Wikipedia, 2016). Although English is used as an official language at the government level and as an everyday language among the affluent social class in Pakistan, most Pakistanis either use Urdu or a regional language to communicate on a day-to-day basis. Habib (2013) concurred with this view, asserting that people from underprivileged backgrounds in Pakistan are usually not "well versed in English" (p. 86). In view of the fact that the study was conducted in a low-cost community school situated in an urban slum, Urdu seemed the more suitable medium for conducting the interviews. It enabled participants to express themselves more spontaneously and candidly, rather than having to fish for appropriate English words to convey their meaning, which may have hindered smooth communication between the interviewer and the interviewees. I also conducted the interviews in Urdu because, as Habib (2013) aptly pointed out, using Urdu in interviews would be a subtle way of showing respect for the participants' natural language, thus creating a closer rapport between the researcher and the researched. This was certainly true in my case, wherein using Urdu helped me to bond well with my interviewees and allowed them to freely explore and communicate their thoughts.

Following each interview, I reflected upon the interviewees' responses to identify initial themes and patterns. I also examined my own interviewing technique to work on areas that needed improvement in order to elicit relevant responses to research questions in subsequent interviews. After the interview data collection process ended, all interviews were transcribed verbatim in Urdu by playing back the recordings in slow mode and

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typing the responses into Microsoft Word files. The software, Urdu Inpage was used for typing participants' words in Urdu. The recordings and transcriptions were saved under pseudonyms assigned to the interviewees and stored in a password protected computer to maintain the anonymity of the data.

Data Analysis

Analysis, Stake (1995) asserted, is a matter of taking something apart and "giving meaning to first impressions" and observations, "as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). Qualitative research data analysis is an ongoing process that should begin with the collection of the first pieces of data after the first interview or field observation, as this will steer researchers into a meaningful direction (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell, 2013). Patton (2002) concurred with this view, asserting that the "fluid and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry" blurs the distinction between data collection and data analysis (p. 436). Thus, the development of codes in qualitative data began during the course of fieldwork when ideas and analytical insights for making sense of this preliminary data emerged.

The main challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of a considerable amount of data (Patton, 2002). Therefore, analysis involves carefully reading through raw data and reducing it by separating significant information from irrelevant data, identifying key themes and patterns, and creating a suitable framework for presenting the crux of the data findings. My case study data comprised survey results, interview transcripts, observation field notes, and artifacts such as school records and teacher and

principal training manuals. In the following section, I will provide an in-depth description of my data analysis strategies.

Survey. Standard survey analysis was conducted. This involved tabulating survey results, analyzing frequency of responses for each question, and calculating the percentage for each response. Additionally, the central tendency (mean, median, and mode) was determined for each response on closed-ended items. I also inferred whether participant responses were consistent across the various survey items or whether participants shifted their stance on items that implied the same meaning. Participants' responses to open-ended questions were reviewed and categorized to identify emergent themes and patterns of teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making. I code the survey results in terms of the following broad categories: a) teachers' perceptions about shared decision-making; b) teachers' practices of shared decision-making; c) school climate (teachers' interactions with school management in terms of decision-making and teachers' engagement with colleagues to promote team building and collaborative decision-making); d) staff development on shared decision-making.

Participants' survey responses were also analyzed in terms of demographic data derived in the first part of the survey: age, gender, level of educational qualification, duration of teaching experience, and grade level taught. Based on these organizational codes, I developed some explicit substantive codes for participants' responses to open ended questions and the interviews as explained in the next section.

Interviews and observations. I listened to the tape recorded interviews of the school management and the 22 teacher participants and transcribed them in Urdu.

Following this, I carefully read and reread the interview transcripts and analyzed the data in Urdu. I only translated those passages or teachers' quotations in English that I included in the findings of my dissertation in Chapter Four.

Use of participants' native language in data analysis. To ensure authenticity of analysis, careful consideration was given to the interpretation of meaning of the words in the cultural context of Pakistan. Translation is an interpretive act, and meaning may be lost in the translation process. Therefore, I analyzed the data in the original language (Urdu) as much as possible and made an effort to provide the best possible representation and understanding of the interpreted words and experiences of the participants. Halai (2007) observed that interviews are embedded within participants' culture and should not be thought of simply as spoken words. She further emphasized that because interviews reflect the lived experiences of people; an analysis of these interviews must take into consideration the target culture (Halai, 2007 as cited in Habib, 2013). I was careful about translating teacher's perceptions from Urdu to English by keeping the context in mind - the context that participants referred to in their narratives. To ensure that meaning was not lost in translation, I requested an Urdu language expert in Pakistan to review the translations and verify that I had effectively conveyed teachers' actual thoughts and feelings.

The qualitative data derived through interviews was analyzed through open color coding techniques involving categorization. I read, reread and reflected upon the interview transcripts to acquire an understanding of the content and essence of the interviewees' conversations. I also reviewed the brief memos that I wrote after each

interview, as well as my observational field notes and notes on what I could infer from the data at the early stage of data analysis. These notes helped me to develop "tentative ideas" about emerging themes and "categories and their relationships to one another (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105).

I used open coding to make sense of what the participants really wanted to say and what the data revealed. This process involved sorting through the data to separate significant information from data that seemed irrelevant in addressing the research goals and questions. This was followed by developing coding categories by assigning conceptual labels to derive overarching themes across the data. Based upon the themes running through the interview protocol, I initially assigned some broad categories such as 'teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making', 'teachers' practices in shared decision-making', 'school managements' perceptions and practices to promote collaborative decision-making', 'school culture and the decision-making process', 'teacher-school management power dynamics', 'factors facilitating shared decision-making', 'barriers to shared decision-making' and 'staff development in shared decision-making'. However, after conducting a thorough data analysis of the interviews, I decided to collapse these larger categories into narrower organizational categories, thus identifying five overarching organizational categories. The following organizational categories helped me to consolidate my thought process in a succinct manner:

1. Teachers perceptions of shared decision-making
2. Teachers' practices in shared decision-making
3. Teachers' degree of preparedness in assuming shared decision-making

4. Facilitative or inhibiting factors within school

5. Facilitative or inhibiting factors outside the school

During data analysis, I realized that I kept progressing from broad to narrow and then broad and then narrow again in an attempt to reorganize the organizational categories and substantive themes and codes as per each research question. This exercise helped me to acquire a clearer sense of the teacher participants' narratives and to ascertain the essential aspects of data that I needed to highlight in my findings so as to effectively convey the essence of teachers' perceptions regarding shared decision-making.

For each of the broad categories listed above, I identified substantive themes emerging from survey and interview data and coded the interviews and participants' responses to open-ended questions accordingly. Under the organizational category of teachers' perceptions, I fit the following seven substantive categories or themes: (a) rudimentary knowledge about shared decision-making; (b) positive beliefs about shared decision-making; (c) collaborative decision-making process; (d) mixed views about level of autonomy; (e) difficult to change traditional mindsets; (f) frustration over increased workload; (h) encouragement.

Additionally, under the broad category of teachers' shared decision-making practices, 14 recurring substantive themes pertaining to their decision-making practices were identified that were collapsed into three organizational categories namely pedagogical decisions, curricular decisions and managerial decisions. Pedagogical decision-making practices included the following four substantive themes: knowledge sharing and collaboration, planning and providing staff development, setting standards,

and consulting additional instructional/learning materials. Curricular decision-making practices included the following two substantive themes: curriculum planning and development and providing feedback about prescribed textbooks. Managerial decision-making practices included the following eight substantive themes: providing feedback to parents, mobilizing school community to enhance enrollment, performing discipline duties, organizing and participating in school events, collecting student fees and filling scholarship forms, preparing daily duty schedules, teacher hiring and budget.

Moreover, under the broad category of teachers' degree of preparedness in shared decision-making, two organizational categories arose: (a) intrinsic factors and (b) extrinsic factors. Subsequently, substantive themes were assigned to these two organizational categories. Substantive themes emerging out of intrinsic factors were: (a) confidence or low self-esteem and (b) inner drive. Substantive themes fitting in the category of extrinsic factors included (a) encouragement from management, (b) support from peers.

Furthermore, for the broader category of facilitative or inhibiting factors within school, the following six substantive themes were identified: (a) supportive school environment; (b) self-motivation; (c) time constraint; (d) little inclination to participate; (e) lack of support from the management; (f) negative attitudes of colleagues.

Finally, under the broad organizational category of facilitative or inhibiting factors outside school, six substantive themes were identified as impacting teachers' agency to participate in decision-making activities at ZSS. These included: (a) limited school funding; (b) school policies determined by the NGO; (c) uncooperative attitude of

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parents; (d) family restrictions on mobility; (e) community influence; (f) adverse effect of physical structure of school building.

I organized survey and interview data by creating matrices for each research question. In those matrices, I lifted out relevant participant quotations from the survey and interviews and pasted them under the relevant coding categories to look for trends, similarities and differences across data. I also used color coding to analyze emic concepts in the data and look for meaning behind the stories that the teachers narrated. Maxwell (2013) described emic perspectives as categories drawn from the "participants' own words and concepts" that reflect the participants' "own meanings and understandings" (p. 108). As the purpose of my study was to understand the outlooks of selected Pakistani community school teachers about their roles in collaborative decision-making, it was appropriate to employ an emic analytical approach. Moreover, in analyzing the interview data, I drew connections between teachers' perceptions of their role in decision-making practices and my own observations of the actual decision-making activities in which they participated.

Finally, I examined the interview and observation data through the strategy of constant comparative analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined constant comparative analysis as a technique of comparing different parts of data for similarities and differences. I compared themes and trends across the 22 teacher interviews and the three management interviews. This involved making comparisons between statements and events within a single interview, followed by comparisons of similarities and differences between interviews within the same group (teacher participant group and school

management group) and finally, comparing the threads running through the interviews of both groups (teacher participants and school management participants). However, as indicated earlier, the data derived from managements' interviews were only used for the purpose of cross checking the data drawn from teachers' survey and interview responses to support the final interpretation of the findings. It will therefore not be reported in Chapter Four on study findings.

Pakistan is my country of origin, and I also have the experience of working in the development sector. Therefore, I have an insider's perspective on the cultural context being studied, as well as an understanding of and familiarity with NGO managed schools where the study will be conducted. In view of this, I tried to analyze participants' perspectives about shared decision-making in accordance with their personal characteristics, professional background, and the socio-cultural milieu in which they work. I was also cognizant of the fact that educational structures in Pakistan are traditionally hierarchical with a top down management approach. Hence, it was interesting to explore through the participants' narratives whether shared decision-making practices were possible in a hierarchical organization, and whether a successful school as identified by quantitative indicators could be open to a climate of collaborative decision-making.

Limitations

Every study has certain limitations, and in qualitative research, the credibility of the research methodology depends to a great degree on the skills, competence, and rigor of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Maxwell (2005) described validity as the "credibility of

a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 122).

An essential component of validity is the need to conceptualize validity threats that may

weaken a researcher's ability to draw reliable conclusions from findings. Once a

researcher has designed the research questions, it is important for him/her to think about

potential "rival hypotheses" (p. 123) that could indicate other possible ways of making

sense of the data or could direct their attention towards relevant data they may have

consciously overlooked because it does not correspond with their analysis.

In this study, I used systematic approaches to demonstrate rigor and consistency

in my research and recognize my inherent biases in order to increase any value my

findings may bring to the field. As a first step towards maintaining rigor, I integrated

validity within my research design so as to hypothesize plausible threats and devise

concrete strategies to deal with those threats. Additionally, as the literature mentioned,

shared decision-making is an elusive and complex concept and the roles and

responsibilities it is associated with are still relatively vague and ill-defined in many

schools (Rauls, 2003). As a result, I recognized that my conception of shared decision-

making was largely borne out by the theories and practices of shared decision-making as

defined by western literature. Pakistani teachers' beliefs and perceptions of shared

decision-making will be determined by the environment in which they work, the socio-

cultural climate of their respective schools, the process of decision-making in their

schools, and the extent to which they are involved in decision-making. I was conscious of

the intrinsic relativity of the data that were derived through interviews. Therefore, I tried

to ensure that my subjective perspectives about shared decision-making did not in any

way influence my ability to present valid and authentic information about Pakistani teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making that were grounded in the reality of their unique school context.

Researcher's Bias in Interpreting Data

Based on the literature review, I began the study with the assumption that teacher shared decision-making could have a positive impact on school improvement and teacher motivation and effectiveness. Moreover, I also held the conception that a school that is successful in terms of quantitative indicators would also be one that promotes teacher shared decision-making. In view of this assumption, I may have deliberately overlooked data that does not fit into my interpretation or overemphasized some aspects of the data that correspond with my perceptual lens.

Counter Strategies

Patton (2002) underlined the need for researchers to "reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias and error" without ambiguity in their studies (p. 51). In agreement with Patton, Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers should clearly explain their possible assumptions and discuss how they will address this issue in their study. While it was not possible to totally eliminate my subjectivities and perceptual lens, however, by acknowledging these biases and assumptions, I consciously tried to prevent them from intervening in this study during data collection and data analysis. The essence of a credible research strategy lies in the fact that the "investigator does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths (Patton, 2002, p. 51). Following Patton's advice, I made every effort to set aside my

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assumptions and maintain a neutral stance with regard to reporting findings about shared decision-making. Having identified my researcher biases, I entered the data collection process with an open mind, comprehensively exploring any impediments within the school environment that teachers felt discouraged them from participating in shared decision-making practices.

Yin (1999) observed that the "analysis of rival explanations in case studies constitutes a form of rigor in qualitative analysis parallel to the rigor of experimental designs aimed at eliminating rival explanations" (cited in Patton, 2002, p. 553-554). To achieve this rigor, I realized that my role as an objective researcher was to report discrepant cases just as accurately as the confirmatory evidence because data analysis is not simply restricted to finding consistent patterns. Therefore, I interviewed a wide range of teachers who displayed high, moderate, and low degree of empowerment and inclination towards shared decision-making practices. During the course of the interviews, I encouraged participants to freely discuss why they did not feel inclined towards shared decision-making or why they believed it should only be practiced to a limited extent. Additionally, I made a concerted effort to report the study findings in an impartial manner, identifying the positive aspects of shared decision-making as well as highlighting its perceived negative impact on teachers' pedagogical responsibilities as reflected in teachers' interview responses. I tried to study the phenomenon of shared decision-making with all its complexities, examining multiple perspectives as they unfolded and tried to understand why a Pakistani community school that was successful

in terms of quantitative indicators, did not promote as broad a culture of collegial participation in decision-making as defined in extant literature.

Triangulation. To enhance the validity of my study findings and minimize researcher bias, I derived data from multiple sources; using only one method of measurement may have resulted in inaccurate inferences. Triangulation involves using a variety of methods with different strengths and limitations as a check on one another to assess if they all lead to one conclusion (Maxwell, 2013). Consequently, by using the survey questionnaire, interviews, and informal observations, I counterbalanced the shortcomings that may be inherent in any single data collection methodology. More importantly, multiple data collection methods enabled me to understand Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions of and practices in shared decision-making more comprehensively by generating rich contextually grounded data.

Independent examination of data analysis and findings. To ensure accurate data analysis and to enhance the credibility of my study findings, I involved two Pakistani educators and a researcher from Teaching and Teacher Education to independently analyze my interview transcripts and to survey results, data analysis, and findings. I then compared my interpretation of data with their analysis. This approach enabled me to interpret data in terms of 'what is' rather than what I believed it should be. It also helped me to examine the emerging themes and patterns in accordance with the social, cultural and educational context of Pakistani community school teachers' lived experiences.

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Respondent validation/member checks. After initial data analysis, I shared the transcribed interviews with the interviewees for feedback during a follow up meeting. This strategy allowed the teacher participants to verify that the transcripts accurately represented the words, beliefs and perceptions they communicated during interviews.

Reactivity

Another potential threat to my study was reactivity – the "influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). The researcher is part of the world he or she studies, and is therefore a powerful influence on the participants. During the first staff meeting I attended, I felt that the principal and some of the teachers were particularly conscious of my presence. Some of the teachers were shy about expressing their views when questioned by the management, while the principal too began asking them for their views too vigorously even though that was not really required. Moreover, I sensed that a few interviewees were initially guarded about revealing their real perceptions regarding factors within the school environment that hindered their participation in shared decision-making or in discussing what they actually thought about the management's style of leadership in terms of shared decision-making.

Counter Strategy

To avoid influencing the survey and interview respondents, I clearly explained the purpose of my study and its relevance to teachers before data collection began so that participants were not suspicious about the supposed actual reason of my study. Moreover, to allay participants' anxieties, I explained to them that I was an independent researcher and doctoral student and not a representative of the school administration. Additionally, I

provided credible reassurance of confidentiality by emphasizing that all survey, observation and interview results would be stripped of identifiers (neither the school nor the teachers would be identified by name in the report of the findings). To minimize the influence of my presence on participants' responses, I was careful not to assert my own perceptions either directly or indirectly during the course of data collection. Moreover, after my participation in the first staff meeting, I tried to build a stronger rapport with the participants, interacting with them informally and getting to know them at a more personal level. As a result, they gradually grew accustomed to my presence in subsequent staff meetings. I also sat amongst trainees during staff development sessions and actively participated in pair work and group work activities. Hence, they began to consider me as one of their own.

Moreover, my interview protocols were carefully designed to elicit candid and multidimensional views about the phenomena under study. The semi-structured approach of the protocol allowed me the flexibility to ask participants' follow up questions at times when I felt they were not being forthright in expressing their actual thoughts. To assess the reliability of the study instruments, I pilot tested the survey questionnaire and the interview protocols two Pakistani educators who shared similar professional experiences and socio-cultural background as that of my study participants.

Self-Report Bias

Another validity threat to my study was self-report bias. Participants are sometimes biased when they report on their own experiences. They may consciously or unconsciously report experiences that are considered to be socially acceptable or

preferred, or they may make their situation seem worse if they do not enjoy cordial relations with the management. I felt during the course of the interviews that a few of my participants either exaggerated about their positive feelings or negative outlook regarding the role of the management in facilitating or impeding their participation in shared decision-making. Their perceptions about shared decision-making were influenced by their relationship with the school management.

Counter Strategy

To assess the validity of self-reported data, I compared the results of one self-report measure, such as the survey, with other self-report measures such as interviews and observations. This allowed me to gauge whether participants' responses about their perceptions and practices of shared decision-making were consistent across the three measures or not. The survey questionnaire was specially designed to assess for consistency across responses. By corroborating the self-reporting interview and survey data with the data generated through informal observations enabled me to cross check for reliability of the conclusions.

Time Constraints

Owing to time constraints, my stay in Pakistan only spanned three months, which may have impacted the validity of my study findings. Owing to time constraints, I was not able to observe teachers for extended periods of time because I had to administer the survey and back-to-back interviews in the short time that I was there. My sustained long-term presence on the school campus would have allowed me to acquire a much deeper

understanding of the daily challenges teachers faced in the school context that impeded their participation in shared decision-making.

Counter Strategy

I compensated this validity threat by conducting in-depth interviews with participants. I also examined the accuracy of my interpretation of participants' perceptions and their narratives through member checks. To make up for lost time, I purposefully initiated contact with the selected NGO five months before the data collection process began. This gave me a head start in smoothing out initial roadblocks and developing a good working relationship with my gatekeepers. Alongside the NGO gatekeepers, I also fostered durable relationships with the school principal and the teachers who continued to be accessible through phone after my return to the U.S. and provided me with additional information about any aspect I felt required further clarification. Finally, my own professional experiences in the development sector in Pakistan and my insider's perspective on Pakistan's culture, education system, and society was valuable in extending my understanding of the process of shared decision-making and the power dynamics at play between the school management and the teachers in a school context that I am familiar with. Thus, this prior knowledge enabled me to analyze the data through a more authentic lens.

Summary

Case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social entity such as an individual, group, institution, or community (Merriam, 2002). This study sought to provide a much needed understanding and documentation of Pakistani

community school teacher's perceptions of their roles in shared decision-making. The process of shared decision-making involves the sharing of power, information, resources and accountability through the inclusion of many voices, particularly of those who are closest to student learning. Situating my study in the geographical context of Pakistan and exploring the phenomena of shared decision-making in one NGO managed successful community school, I chose single case study as a research design for addressing my research goals.

Using a survey, interviews, and observations as data collection tools, I analyzed data and derived themes and categories to explore the processes of shared decision-making from the perspective of community school teachers. I also examined the power dynamics that existed between the school management and the teachers; teachers' relationships with colleagues in promoting collaborative decision-making; and the need for relevant professional development teachers in the shared decision-making process. Study findings will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Hearing the Voices of Pakistani Community Teachers

In this chapter, I present the findings from the study conducted at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS), a successful, low-cost community school, located in an urban slum area of Northern Punjab, Pakistan. These findings are drawn from teacher surveys and interviews and supported by researcher observations and field notes. First, I will provide an ethnographic account of the community context within which the school, teacher participants and shared decision-making processes studied are immediately situated. This will be followed by a brief description of the school site and a profile of the school principal. Subsequently, teacher demographic data as derived through the survey will be examined, and finally, an in-depth exploration of the findings pertaining to each research question, as supported by survey responses and excerpts from teachers' interviews, will be conducted.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the primary objective of this study was to explore the beliefs, perceptions and practices of Pakistani teachers about their roles in shared decision-making in a reputationally effective community school in Pakistan. To revisit the research questions, the following four guided the focus of this study:

1. How do teachers in one Pakistani community school participate in shared decision-making activities in their school?

2. In what ways do these teachers feel prepared to assume decision-making roles within and outside their classrooms?

3. How does the school environment influence these teachers' decision-making abilities?

4. How do factors external to the school environment either contribute to or hinder these teachers' ability and agency to participate in decision-making roles?

Each research question was informed by the data collected from open-ended and closed-ended survey questions and interviews of teachers within the NGO managed community school. Data collection also included informal observations of teachers engaged in the decision-making process at faculty meetings, and during casual conversations in the hallways and staff room. This research explored Pakistani community school teachers' voices about the concept of shared decision-making and the scope and limitations of their involvement in decision-making practices within their school setting. Hence, analysis of data and resultant findings were based on emic perspectives, the participants' own words and understandings as drawn from their interviews, which were conducted first in Urdu and then translated into English. As many of the teachers' interview responses were embedded within the context of the school community, it is essential to present a broader depiction of the community through my personal reflections and through excerpts from the management and teachers' interviews.

The Community Context and the School

On a crisp spring morning, I am finally on my way to the NGO managed community school I have selected as the research site for my study. The NGO Area Manager is leading the way to the school in another car. The school itself is located in a far flung urban slum area of Northern Punjab, nearly one and half hours away from my residence. As I near my destination, I experience a range of mixed emotions: both excitement at finally setting the ball rolling with regard to data collection, and also anxiety at the challenges lying ahead, including the level of cooperation extended by the school management and teachers given the somewhat intrusive nature of my study.

With these conflicting thoughts racing through my head, I gaze outside, taking in the row of large bungalows with sprawling, well-manicured lawns on a quiet tree-lined main street, indicating an affluent upper-middle-class neighborhood. The driver suddenly swerves into a side road and rather surprisingly the landscape begins to change almost immediately. The smooth road gives way to an uneven muddy, dirt road with the car bouncing up and down as it hits potholes. Small, dilapidated brick and mud houses with sagging roofs and plaster peeling off the walls begin to line the roadside. Sanitation is negligible with flies and half-starved stray animals feeding off piles of garbage. Bright-eyed young children with unkempt hair, soiled and tattered clothes, play barefoot in the narrow lanes, casting curious glances in our direction, perhaps intrigued to see strangers in their midst.

As we make our way up the steep winding path through the congested slums, the road becomes even narrower, allowing only one car to pass at a time. Just half a

kilometer away from the school, the driver brakes to an abrupt stop. Outside the window I see a water tanker blocking the road, with groups of men, women and children lined up with empty buckets, bottles and containers to fill them with clean drinking water. It takes half an hour before the tanker completes its work and allows us to move ahead.

According to the NGO Area Manager, this is a daily ritual here due to lack of access to safe water supplies. Despite having worked in the development sector myself and being familiar with scenes of squalor and deprivation, the sight of desperate people lined up early in the morning for clean drinking water unsettles me. I am burdened by the thought that while I have access to basic amenities and quality educational opportunities because of my privileged family background, for others deprivation is a harsh and painful reality of their daily lives.

Immersed in these thoughts, an imposing and impressive three storied school building suddenly appears in the midst of the squalid surroundings and I realize that we have finally arrived at the NGO funded Zafar Secondary School (ZSS). The school principal greets us warmly and after a brief exchange of pleasantries, and a discussion about my research topic and data collection strategy, she takes me on a tour of the school. I can sense her feelings of pride and ownership for the school as she repeatedly refers to the institution as "my school" or "our school" and "my teachers" and informs me that she has been serving as principal there for nearly eight of the ten years of its existence.

As she takes me around, I am pleasantly surprised to find separate campuses for boys and girls in keeping with the cultural norms of the area. The classrooms are well ventilated, spacious and adequately furnished, with beautiful artwork decorating the

walls. There are three staff rooms for pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers; a considerably large play area given the space constraints; a relatively well-stocked library and computer and science labs to provide students with a stimulating learning environment. It is heartening to see that the NGO, Spread the Light (STL) provides free educational opportunities to children from deprived backgrounds, who would otherwise have been excluded from mainstream education.

Since the Final-term break is on, I ask the principal if any teachers are present in the school. She points toward a room explaining that teachers are busy working together to compile results before the Result Day and Parent Teacher Meeting (PTM). I look through the glass windows to see teachers huddled together in groups, sharing ideas and assisting one another in compiling students' results. This is my first casual encounter with shared decision-making practice in this school through teachers' engagement in collaborative activity with each other. I suddenly feel a lot more hopeful about my study and about exploring teachers' perceptions of their levels of autonomy within and outside the classroom and their efforts to navigate through hierarchical structural constraints to engage in the process of decision-making in this community school (reflections from field notes, spring, 2015).

The above narrative provides a glimpse into the school and community setting through the lens of a researcher who is from this country, and who works in development herself. It captures my first impressions of poverty stricken parents and community and their day to day struggles to make ends meet. Research indicates that children in poverty often have less educated and less involved parents, thus lacking supervision at home for

their school work. Worldwide, economically deprived parents' struggles to meet their families' basic needs far too often impede their ability to fulfill the higher level needs of their children by working in partnership with teachers to improve the academic and social performance of their children (Ahmed, 2005; Davis, 2000). Here is no exception. During participant interviews, both the management and the teachers alluded to the dismal backgrounds of the school community and the challenges they face as educators in building positive partnerships with parents to support their children's learning needs.

The principal described the school community as a "low income population, mostly employed on daily wages." Concerning the livelihood of the community, she elaborated that the womenfolk were generally employed as "domestic help" in affluent households while the menfolk predominantly worked as "laborers." The average family size was quite large, comprising roughly six to eight members with typically only one breadwinner. She also pointed out that "diseases such as "Hepatitis, kidney malfunctioning and skin ailments were widespread" in the area due to lack of clean drinking water and ingestion of contaminated water.

Providing deeper insight into the personal struggles of the community, the principal reported:

> These children grow up in disruptive home environments where they see a lot of negativity, and witness numerous social ills such as, drug abuse, debt and, deteriorating social and moral values. Some of these children hail from broken homes where fathers have married multiple times and yet indulge in extramarital affairs. In such situations, the responsibility of directing students' thinking

towards a positive track and inculcating in them good moral values falls upon the shoulders of school teachers.

Additionally, the principal shared that the school offers scholarships to children based on a five category eligibility criteria. She emphasized that owing to the socio-economic status of the community, "ninety percent" of the school children fell in the first scholarship category under which they were eligible for "free of cost tuition, books and uniforms". Similarly, when asked about the community context, the views of all 22 teachers interviewed, resonated with the perceptions of the school principal. Deliberating over the challenges of dealing with children and parents, one teacher asserted:

Initially, I found it difficult to teach the children of this community. You know this is a slum area, and parents being mostly uneducated, take little interest in their children's education. So, the responsibility of teaching children, instilling moral and social values, and helping them with school work solely rests upon the shoulders of teachers. In the beginning, parents were least concerned about what their children were doing in school, but gradually, they have become more aware of their responsibilities regarding their children's education.

Another teacher reflected upon how the mindset of the parents and the community has evolved more positively over the years:

When I joined this school five years ago, parents were not very cooperative. Whenever, we invited parents to Parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs), they would consider these meetings a waste of time and would not take an active interest in the proceedings, asking few questions about their children's progress. However,

with time, parents seem to have realized that education is beneficial for their children's future and if teachers are making efforts to groom their children, they too should be cooperative and supportive of teachers' efforts.

School Demographics

Before moving on to examine the themes/codes/ideas emerging from the survey and interview data and the subsequent findings related to each research question, it would be pertinent to provide an overview of the teacher participants' demographic data, as reported in the survey. This demographic information was derived through Part One of the *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making,* comprising eight open and closed-ended questions on teachers' demographic and academic backgrounds and, professional experiences.

Teachers' demographic information. All 34 school teachers completed the demographic section of the survey which included (a) gender; (b) age; (c) highest degree earned; (d) total number of years taught to date; (e) number of years taught in this school; (f) grade level; (g) subjects taught; (h) pre-service training received.

Table 1

Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	34	100.0

Table 2

Age Group

Age groups	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20 years	2	5.9
20 to 29 years	22	64.7
30 to 39 years	10	29.4
Total	34	100.0

Table 3

Highest Educational Degree Obtained

Highest educational degree obtained	Frequency	Percentage
FA/intermediate	5	14.7
Bachelors	15	44.1
Masters	14	41.2
Total	34	100.0

Table 4

Total Number of Years Taught To Date

Total number of years taught to date	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a year	3	8.8
1 to 3 years	9	26.5
4 to 6 years	12	35.3
7 to 10 years	7	20.6
11 to 15 years	3	8.8
Total	34	100.0

Table 5

Number of Years Taught in this School

Number of years taught in this school	Frequency	Percent
Less than a year	9	26.5
1 to 3 years	14	41.2
4 to 6 years	6	17.6
7 to 10 years	5	14.7
Total	34	100.0

There are a total number of 34 teachers in the school catering to the educational needs of nearly 700 children. Of these 34 teachers, 18 belong to the local community whereas the remaining 16 were not community teachers. All 34 school teachers signed the informed consent form, indicating their willingness to take the *Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-making*. Hundred percent ($N = 34$) of the school teachers responded to all of the items on the survey (demographic questions in Part One and questions related to teachers' shared decision-making perceptions and practices in Part Two). They all completed and returned the survey, hence there were no sampling errors pertaining to missing responses. Additionally, out of 34 school teachers, 29 gave their informed consent to be interviewed in detail about their perceptions regarding shared decision-making. Of these 29 teachers, 22 were purposefully selected for subsequent one on one interviews.

The following sample profile was developed from participants' responses to the demographic survey (Tables 1-5). All 34 of the teacher participants were female and

approximately 71% of these teachers fell in the age group category of less than 20 years and between 20 and 29 years, indicating a fairly young teaching force in terms of average age (see Table 2). This was consistent with previous research that reported that teachers in low-cost private schools are mostly female and relatively younger, compared to the teaching force in public schools (Andrabi et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2007). Nearly half (44.1%) of the teachers had earned their Bachelor's Degrees and another 44.1% had Master's Degrees, whereas only 14.7% ($n = 5$) had completed their Intermediate level of education (up to 12 years).

Demographic data also demonstrated that, to date, the majority of the participants (64.7%) had an overall, mid-level to high level teaching experience (see Table 4). Thirty five percent of the participants had taught for a total number of 4-6 years, 21% participants had an overall 7-10 years of teaching experience, whereas 9% of the participants had more than 11 years of total teaching experience. However, interestingly, 23 of the 34 participants' (67.7%) teaching experience in this school ranged from less than a year to three years (see Table 5). On the other hand, 11 of the teachers on staff (32%) at the Zafar Secondary School were experienced teachers with six of these participants teaching from 4-6 years and the remaining five participants teaching from 7-10 years. This indicates that a majority of the teachers at this school were relatively new. Research suggests that teacher turnover is a common occurrence in low cost schools due to a lower teacher salary scale compared to the salary scale at public and elite private schools in Pakistan (Khan, 2005a). Darling-Hammond (2010) also reinforced this view, emphasizing that teachers' flight from less-affluent schools is strongly linked to

"dissatisfaction with salaries and existing working conditions, including weak administrative support" (p. 20).

Participants' open ended responses indicated that they were fairly evenly distributed between pre-primary (KG-2), primary/elementary (3-5), Middle (6-8) and secondary (9-10) grade levels with some of the participants teaching at more than one grade level. Similarly, teacher participants were well represented in terms of the various subjects they taught.

Data Analysis and Findings by Research Questions

The findings pertaining to Research Question One encompassed both teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the concept of shared decision-making as well as teachers' participation in shared decision-making activities in their school. I begin the presentation of my single case study findings by first reporting about how Pakistani school teachers in one low-cost community school perceived the concept of shared decision-making in order to provide insight into their level of understanding and knowledge about the concept under study.

Research Question One - Section One: How Do Teachers in One Pakistani Community School Participate in Shared Decision-Making in their School?

As mentioned earlier, the first section of findings pertaining to Research Question One discusses in detail teachers' knowledge, understanding and perceptions of shared decision-making; the decision-making process prevalent in their school, and their own level of autonomy in decision-making. Seven overarching themes related to teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making emerged across data derived from participants'

survey and interview responses. These included: (a) rudimentary knowledge about shared decision-making (b) positive beliefs about shared decision-making, (c) collaborative decision-making process, (d) mixed views about level of autonomy in decision-making, (e) difficult to change mindsets about traditional roles of decision-making, (f) frustration over increased workload and (h) encouragement. An examination of these themes will follow, supported by representative quotes selected as examples of perceptions and beliefs that emerged across the participants.

Defining Shared Decision-Making

During teacher interviews, participants were asked to define the term shared decision-making and explain what it meant to them. Interestingly, all 22 teachers were consistent in their beliefs about what shared decision-making was and what the process entailed. Interviewees commonly interpreted shared decision-making in terms of collaboration, team work, taking everyone along and mutually arriving at a decision. They felt that shared decision-making in the school context referred to the idea of all staff members sitting together, deliberating upon an issue, offering suggestions and then based upon those suggestions, working out viable solutions to reach a mutual decision. The following quotes captured and exemplified these specific themes across interviewees. As one teacher, Amina explained:

> Shared decision-making implies that one does not take decisions in isolation but consults others as well. As the saying goes, one mind cannot come up with as good a decision as a hundred minds can. A decision taken through mutual consultation proves to be more successful.

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All interviewees underlined the idea of collaboration and consultation as integral to shared decision-making. Sobia reinforced the importance of asking "people to work in groups, to brainstorm ideas, and to give divergent views" on issues, so as to arrive at better informed decisions collaboratively. Reflecting similar views, Zarish highlighted the need to secure teachers' consent for participating in decision-making activities:

> Shared decision-making means that all stakeholders' opinions should be solicited, their willingness to assume leadership responsibilities should be taken into account, and no one's input should be ignored.

Additionally, 13 of 22 teachers perceived shared decision-making as a way of giving voice to teachers in decisions concerning student learning. This view was based on the notion that teachers are closest to students and have a better understanding of their learning needs, hence, the decisions they make, will be well grounded in contextual realities. One teacher eloquently expressed this view:

> Shared decision-making is a process of bringing everyone together on one platform and involving them in critical decisions. If the school principal takes all important decisions herself and does not bother to ask teachers about their problems regarding instruction, or engagement with students and/or parents, teachers may feel alienated and dissatisfied with the school environment. There are certain issues that only teachers can be aware of and knowledgeable about because teachers are closer to students and can fully understand their psyche. So, they should be particularly involved in decisions affecting them and their students.

Rudimentary knowledge of shared decision-making. To gauge teachers' prior knowledge of shared decision-making, teachers were asked during interviews to share how or when they first heard about the concept and became fully aware of its multidimensional characteristics. Ten of 22 teachers indicated that they first learnt about shared decision-making after joining Zafar Secondary School (ZSS). Another 10 interviewees acknowledged that until their involvement in this research, they only had rudimentary knowledge of the concept, and were largely unaware of the many facets it embodied. Only two teachers became acquainted with the concept of shared decision-making in the previous schools where they worked, where decisions were taken through mutual consensus and the suggestions of the majority were valued and incorporated."

The 10 teachers who stated that they became familiar with shared decision-making after joining ZSS explained that it was because teachers' input was routinely solicited during staff meetings. They compared this experience with their previous schools, where they were only required to teach while all management related decisions were taken by the school head. Reflecting this view, Amina explained that in her previous school, shared decision-making was not practiced to the extent that it was at ZSS and if "anyone faced an issue; the principal would call that person separately to her office to discuss the matter." She elaborated:

> In this school, whenever teachers face a student or subject related problem, the
> management immediately calls a staff meeting in which everyone openly
> discusses the issue, exchanging varied perspectives, offering suggestions and

weighing the pros and cons of a likely decision. Such a collaborative strategy makes it easier for us to reach a well-informed decision.

Another representative quote was that of Farah's who pointed out that there was a culture of collaborative decision-making prevalent at ZSS. In her words:

Even though I was aware of the concept of shared decision-making before I joined this school, I first saw its practical manifestation after coming here. Our school's vision itself reflects the notion of collaboration, emphasizing that all staff members should work together and no one should be left out.

Five of these 10 teachers also explained that they acquired a basic understanding of the concept through a one-time in-service session on 'teamwork,' recalling that they learnt that a decision made through mutual collaboration was more effective. In this regard, Shama noted:

I first came across the idea of shared decision-making through a training session on teambuilding during INSET. The concept appealed to me because it highlighted the notion of collaboration and taking everyone along. I learned that teamwork always proves more successful than individual work.

On the other hand, 10 of 22 teachers recognized that they had never heard the term "shared decision-making" prior to this study and only had a basic knowledge of the concept. They felt that they were unconsciously participating in different areas of shared decision-making without being aware of it, or consciously giving much thought to its definition or importance in practical terms. One teacher, Komal captured this view well:

Before you arrived on the scene for your research, teachers generally collaborated on instructional issues related to the syllabi. However, it was not really being practiced to a great extent, and definitely not as per the many dimensions that we have now come to understand embodies shared decision-making.

Ayesha echoed the same idea, emphasizing that she never consciously gave much thought to shared decision-making before:

We once received training on teambuilding but I only considered it a training session and not something to ponder over too deeply. We actually started thinking about shared decision-making and understanding its various facets after you arrived here for your research.

Finally, Bismah shared that she only had a "vague and sketchy idea" about shared decision-making, admitting that although she was familiar with terms such as 'team', 'team-building' and 'leadership', she had never heard about the term 'shared decision-making' before:

To tell you quite honestly, I had little idea that shared decision-making could encompass so many different aspects, some of which are new to us. In fact, in the entire span of my teaching career, I have never come across some of the instructional, curricular and managerial domains of shared decision-making mentioned in the survey questionnaire form we filled out.

Positive beliefs about shared decision-making. Another significant theme that emerged from the survey and interview data was teachers' positive perceptions of shared decision-making. Participants were asked to indicate their feelings, beliefs and

perceptions regarding shared decision-making by first responding to the closed-ended

Survey Questions 18 and 35 (see Appendix B) and second, by responding to Interview

Question six (See Appendix D): how do you feel about school-wide shared decision-

making now that you are involved in the classroom?

As Table 6 indicated, around 94% of survey participants believed that the school

management should involve teachers in decision-making practices beyond the classroom

setting. Only two of 34 teacher respondents disagreed with this statement, reflecting a

preference for the traditional view that the sole responsibility of a teacher was teaching

within the parameters of the classroom, while all leadership responsibilities fell within

the domain of the school head.

Table 6

Involve Teachers in Decision-Making beyond the Classroom

Involve teachers in decisions	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	5.9
Agree	19	55.9
Strongly agree	13	38.2
Total	34	100.0

Moreover, 88% of the teachers (see Table 7) either agreed or strongly agreed that

they prefer the process of shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making

model while 12% of the teachers were undecided.

Table 7

I Prefer Shared Decision-Making

I prefer shared decision-making	Frequency	Percent
Undecided	4	11.8
Agree	14	41.2
Strongly agree	16	47.1
Total	34	100.0

To explore in greater depth participants' perceptions of shared decision-making, teachers were asked a follow up question during the interview: How do you feel about school-wide shared decision-making now that you are involved in the classroom? Participants' interview responses were consistent with their survey responses. All interviewees reported that the impact of shared decision-making on teachers' psyche and behavior would be positive both inside and outside the classroom. They believed that shared decision-making would enhance teachers' level of confidence, instill in them a sense of ownership, and increase their commitment towards decisions and policies they helped to formulate. Teachers also felt that the practice of shared decision-making would generate fresh, innovative ideas, and lead to more balanced and democratic decisions. Furthermore, it would give them the opportunity to acquire new managerial skills in addition to their pedagogical skills, and strengthen the line of communication between the management and teachers. Two of the 22 interviewees alluded to the commonly held belief that shared decision-making was a difficult concept to implement because everyone had differing views. However, they felt that if the management counselled

teachers about effective ways to collaborate and negotiate, they would be able to reach a decision through consensus.

Teachers noted that their confidence level would be boosted by the realization that the management and their colleagues appreciated their views. Hence, they would feel motivated to offer meaningful suggestions in future to resolve issues and enhance student learning. Farhana echoed this view in the following excerpt:

A teacher's confidence will increase when she finds out that a decision she was instrumental in bringing about, has generated positive outcomes. She will feel valued as a person because her opinions have been given due importance.

Additionally, interviewees felt that giving teachers a voice in decision-making would cultivate a spirit of ownership among them and increase their buy-in towards school policies and decisions. They believed that if decisions were not imposed on teachers and they were allowed to work in a pressure free environment, they would inevitably own the decisions they helped frame with the management and would perform at optimum level. This sentiment was powerfully captured by Zara:

Teachers will feel honored to be involved in decision-making. Their confidence level will increase and they will show greater commitment towards fulfilling their responsibilities. When authority is vested in people, they automatically feel more responsible and make a greater effort to work with dedication.

A few teachers expressed the view that soliciting teachers' input in essential school related matters would lead to more balanced and informed decisions because when teachers' suggestions were heard and valued, they would feel more confident about

sharing innovative ideas with both the management and their colleagues. This point was well articulated by Ayesha who noted:

Often teachers have new and creative ideas for school improvement but no one listens to them, hence teachers keep those ideas to themselves. I feel that the management should listen to everyone and give more importance to teachers who offer useful and workable suggestions.

Interviewees also recognized the fact that teachers were closest to student learning and therefore more knowledgeable than the management about problems faced by their students. As a result, they emphasized that teachers should be involved in decisions pertaining to student teaching and learning because those decisions would be more informed and cater to the needs of the students. Shama argued:

A teacher knows her students at a deeper level than the principal; therefore, a principal should incorporate the informed suggestions of her teaching staff. Only then will her school be successful. Decisions taken by the management have to be implemented by the teachers and if those decisions reflect teachers' views, then teachers will own them and take greater responsibility in following them through.

Furthermore, teachers showed preference for shared decision-making because they believed it would help to build a more trusting relationship between the management and the teaching staff by strengthening the line of communication between them and making them more tolerant towards and accepting of each other's points of view and subsequent decisions. Finally, four interviewees believed that it was beneficial for teachers to acquire a little managerial skill besides the ability to teach because this

experience would empower teachers to deal with a wide range of issues beyond the classroom. Sobia's quote exemplified this belief:

> Let us suppose that the principal is on leave, and a management related issue arises in her absence. There should be some regular teachers who have prior knowledge and exposure to managerial issues and can easily handle the situation. By delegating some authority and involving teachers in leadership responsibilities, teachers will feel more valued, and at the same time, the burden of the principal's responsibilities will be significantly reduced.

Positive inclination toward participation in decision-making. Data derived through Survey Questions 17, 24 and 30 (see Appendix B) indicated that a majority of the teachers were favorably inclined towards participating in shared decision-making activities beyond the parameters of their classrooms. As Table 8 revealed, 94% (32 of 34 teachers) of the participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that what happened outside their classroom was not their concern. In a similar vein, Table 9 illustrated that 85% of teachers (29 of 34) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey statement that their sole responsibility was to teach students. Only one participant was undecided whereas, four participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this view. Furthermore, Table 10 demonstrated that 62% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed about not being able to envision themselves making a difference beyond the classroom. Approximately 21% of participants agreed with the statement indicating that they felt they could only bring meaningful change within the classroom and nearly 18% of participants were undecided.

Hence, a large number of survey respondents believed that their role was not just restricted to teaching within the classroom, but also oriented towards supporting the management in decision-making responsibilities beyond the classroom.

Table 8

Affairs outside Class Are Not My Concern

Outside affairs not my concern	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	15	44.1
Disagree	17	50.0
Undecided	1	2.9
Strongly agree	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

Table 9

My Only Job is to Teach My Students

Only job is to teach students	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	5	14.7
Disagree	24	70.6
Undecided	1	2.9
Agree	2	5.9
Strongly agree	2	5.9
Total	34	100.0

Table 10

I Am Unable to Make a Difference beyond my Classroom

Cannot make difference beyond classroom	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	4	11.8
Disagree	17	50.0
Undecided	6	17.6
Agree	6	17.6
Strongly agree	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

Perceptions on limited participation in shared decision-making. Findings indicated that a wider percentage of survey participants perceived their decision-making roles in broader terms both inside and outside their classrooms, and all the interview participants felt that shared decision-making practices benefitted teachers' psyche and the school climate in positive ways. Yet, interestingly, nine of the 22 interviewees (41%) indicated that they would prefer to participate in shared decision-making activities only up to a certain extent and would not wish to be included in all domains of decision-making. Many of these teachers perceived their roles in shared decision-making as limited to offering valuable suggestions to the management, but not assuming wide leadership responsibilities. Six of these nine teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred the process of shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model. However, during their respective interviews, they were doubtful about wanting to be too deeply involved in decision-making citing time constraints, increased workloads

and/or a belief that the management was more informed about school policies and management issues as reasons for their stance.

Farheen was one of the two school teachers who disagreed with the survey statement that the school management should involve teachers in decision-making beyond the classroom setting. When asked about the reason for her negative response, Farheen candidly shared:

> I feel that teachers already have heavy workloads, and if they get involved in decision-making outside the classroom as well, it might adversely affect their teaching roles. I have personally observed a teacher in this school who was frequently absent from her class due to involvement in extracurricular activities with her students creating a lot of disturbance in her absence.

Farheen, however felt that teachers could, to some degree, participate in decision-making by "openly sharing their views and problems with the management" so that the management could "accommodate their views and facilitate them" as best as possible.

Another teacher, Fatima explained that teachers should be involved in shared decision-making only up to a certain extent because there was limited time and teachers had to fulfil their teaching responsibilities first. She felt that if additional time were provided for shared decision-making practices within school hours, she would be more open to participating in decision-making to a greater degree. Moreover, Sumra conceded that she would "not like to be involved in all domains of shared decision-making" because it would interfere with her teaching responsibilities. When asked to identify the decision domains she would like to contribute to, Sumra indicated preference for

decision-making pertaining to "preparing the syllabus break up, designing the timetable" and issues related to "staff development" and student learning. She asserted that she would not like to be involved in budgetary matters or be part of an interview panel to hire new teachers:

> I am teaching board classes at the secondary level, so I need to be totally focused on improving my students' learning. Every opportunity I get, I use it to guide my students …. If tomorrow the principal asks me to be part of a teacher selection interview panel, I would not want to do it, although I would feel obliged to listen to her. So while my heart might not be in it, if I am delegated a leadership responsibility, I shall carry it out to the best of my ability.

Zarish was the only teacher who strongly agreed with the survey statement that what happened outside her classroom was not her concern. She believed that a teacher's "primary job" was to "instruct children within the classroom," declaring that she did not "want to be involved in extracurricular activities" to a great extent:

> I feel that shared decision-making is a positive concept that may be practiced to some extent but perhaps not in entirety. The principal should be the one taking administrative decisions since that is her prerogative, while our role may be limited to airing our views if and when she seeks them.

Meanwhile, three teachers were undecided about whether they favored shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model. Their neutral responses appeared driven by their beliefs that while some decisions should be taken through mutual collaboration, there were others that could only be handled in the traditional

manner by the school leader. Ayesha believed that the principal had "greater insight into and more background knowledge about" policy related issues than teachers which explained why she took the final decision. She effectively articulated this thought:

Teachers sometimes feel frustrated at what they perceive as the management's lack of interest in their views and their failure to integrate these suggestions in their final decisions. However, they fail to realize that the principal is compelled by other considerations as well including the macro picture when taking decisions.

The findings in this section were consistent with existing research that found that teachers believed educated decisions for school improvement are made by those closest to student learning and the teaching process (Kilgore et al., 1997; Rauls, 2003; Weiss et al., 2008) and that empowerment, or the idea of empowerment may not necessarily inculcate a sense of ownership among teachers, especially those teachers who feel they have little expertise, inclination or time to wholeheartedly commit to participation in shared decision-making activities (Dimmock, 1995; Keung, 2008).

Decision-making process at Zafar Secondary School. To acquire a deeper understanding of the decision-making process at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS), participants were asked two questions during the interview. Questions 2 and 2a (see Appendix D) related to Pakistani community teachers' perceptions of how decisions about school improvement were made in their school and in what ways the school administration sought teachers' input in decisions. Teachers' unanimously described the decision-making process as "collaborative," involving regular faculty meetings where

teachers' opinions were solicited. They explained that whenever a new policy was received from the senior NGO management, or whenever teachers faced problems pertaining to pedagogy or school discipline, the management convened a faculty meeting during 'Teacher Time' or Staff Development Day (scheduled on the last Saturday of every month) to discuss those issues. After everyone gave their input, the management finalized the decision based upon the suggestion supported by a majority of the teachers. One teacher, Eshal gave an interesting depiction of the interactive and participatory decision-making process at ZSS through a personal narrative:

> A staff meeting was convened on the third day that I joined ZSS. I was quite surprised because I had never attended such a meeting before. All the teachers were asked to share their action plans in dealing with students who procrastinated during the summer vacations and did not complete their assignments. Teachers unanimously decided that parents should be called and requested to make their children devote at least an hour in the evenings toward completing their homework. At the end of the meeting, the principal supported the teachers' stance. It was then that I realized that everyone's input is sought in this school.

Giving details about the decision-making process at ZSS, another teacher Humaira explained that staff meetings were usually held between the school teachers and the school management, and on rare occasions between teachers and the senior NGO management during which, teachers were asked about academic related issues. She noted that the school management sought teachers' opinions on various occasions:

After every INSET, teachers are asked to fill out a Performa, identifying topics

they find difficult to teach and wish to receive training in to clarify their concepts.

The management also asks teachers' views about a newly framed policy, and the

final decision is taken after reviewing the suggestions of all teachers.

Humaira also noted that staff meetings were conducted to seek teachers' input

about issues pertaining to school discipline and pedagogy, such as, lesson planning,

teachers' reflections on lessons that went smoothly, or posed problems, and how best to

overcome those problematic areas.

Reflecting upon the supportive attitude of the management and the participatory

decision-making process, Tehreem shared that the "principal was not confined to her

office but took regular rounds" all over the school observing teachers and providing

support wherever needed. Farah also agreed with Tehreem emphasizing:

The principal's doors are always open for consultation purposes. During 'Teacher

Time', all teachers get together to collaborate. The principal also joins us on

occasions when an issue needs to be discussed with everyone and we all share our

views on the matter. Sometimes we also have staff meetings during break time.

On the other hand, some teachers conceded that although the decision-making

process itself was consultatory, "all high level decisions" were taken by the NGO and

school management and teachers had little role in changing policies. Bismah observed

that there was generally a "fifty/fifty percent chance" of teachers' ideas and suggestions

being accepted by the management. Additionally, Ayesha asserted that the school

management and teachers did not "play a very significant role in high level decision-

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making" because many of the "important policy initiatives were pre-decided at the senior NGO management level" and they had to abide by these. She stated:

> When asked, we offer our views and suggestions on rules and policies, but our points of view are seldom accepted or reflected in the final decision which is generally taken by the principal herself.

Mixed beliefs about teachers' degree of autonomy in decision-making. The patterns in survey and interview data also indicated the emergence of autonomy as an overlapping theme in Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making. Survey Questions 19, 22, 27 and 34 (see Appendix B) were connected to community teachers' perceptions of their level of autonomy in school-wide decision-making at Zafar Secondary School. Table 11, illustrated that nearly 68% of the respondents (23 of 34 teachers) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers easily gave in to the principal's opinion even if they had differing views. Twenty nine percent (10) of the respondents disagreed with this statement and only one respondent remained undecided.

Table 11

Teachers Easily Accept Principal's Opinion

Teachers easily accept principal's opinion	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	10	29.4
Undecided	1	2.9
Agree	15	44.1
Strongly agree	8	23.5
Total	34	100.0

To gain insight into teachers' responses to Survey Question 19, interviewees were asked to clarify why they accepted the principal's decisions despite holding conflicting views. Most of the interviewees identified the pressure to conform to existing school policies as a major reason for giving into the management's opinion. Others cited the management's strong convincing ability and logical arguments as reasons for acceding to their proposals, whereas a few teachers acknowledged that some of the suggestions offered by teachers were not viable in a given situation whereas the principal provided an alternative suggestion that was more informed and practicable.

As mentioned earlier, 23 of 34 survey participants believed that teachers easily accepted the principal's opinion. Many of them felt that "certain policies were imposed" on teachers by the NGO senior management and they had little choice in the matter but to act upon them. Komal acknowledged that some teachers did not freely share their opinions during staff meetings and had to be prompted to speak up:

> Maybe some teachers hesitate to express their views for fear that they might be wrong or they might not be able to effectively articulate their thoughts to others. As far as I know, the management has never restricted anyone from expressing their views. If they feel that a teacher's suggestion is not workable, they will not implement it, but they will not reprimand anyone for offering suggestions.

Additionally, four interviewees were of the view that the management had good persuasive powers and used logic to convince teachers to reach consensus on an issue they had differences about. They felt that the management discussed different dimensions of an issue to help teachers see various sides of the story and arrive at a more workable

solution. Hence, teachers ultimately changed their decision in line with the one proposed by the management. This perception was well articulated by Parveen:

> The principal carefully listens to the opinions of all teachers but, some of our suggestions are not feasible and when the principal logically explains to us why our suggestion might not be workable in view of school policies or ground realities, we become satisfied by her explanation and accept her decision.

Other teachers cited hierarchical power dynamics as the real reason behind teachers' submission to the management's point of view. Zarish highlighted this perspective through the following excerpt:

> Teachers easily give in to the principal's opinion because even though we offer differing views, whether those are accepted or not is the prerogative of the management. So, we are obliged to accede to the management's final decision.

Umber was more vocal in expressing her thoughts, arguing that teachers accepted the opinion of the principal because they had little choice in the matter. She noted:

> She imposes her will on us and we have to eventually accept her decision. But I also feel that sometimes the principal's hands are tied, and even if she wants to accept our suggestions and incorporate them in the final decisions, she cannot do so in view of existing policies or directives from the NGO management.

Additionally, Sumra was the only teacher who was undecided about whether teachers deferred to the principal's views or not. She gave the following reason for her neutral stance:

I am undecided because secondary teachers do argue with the management on various issues and freely voice their opinions. If the principal sees any logic in their argument, she agrees but most of the time, the principal convinces them to accept her decision.

On the other hand, 10 of the 34 participants believed that teachers did not easily give in to the principal's opinion and freely expressed their own views to the school management. However, they conceded that in the end, it was up to the management to decide whether teachers' suggestions could be integrated in existing school policies. Both Tehreem and Bismah were amongst these 10 teachers who felt that teachers did not immediately defer to the principal's opinion, but when the management did not accept their suggestions, they had to "perforce become quiet." Farhana voiced her support for the management, arguing that teachers did not easily surrender to the principal's views:

The principal values the suggestions of her entire staff and does not take any initiatives without first seeking input from everyone. She specially involves those teachers in decision-making whom she considers relevant to the issue at hand and feels can offer more informed suggestions.

Finally, Amina offered an interesting perspective into why she believed teachers did not defer to the principal's opinion. She explained that despite eventually accepting the management's decision rather than openly opposing it at the time, "some teachers shared their doubts about it later in private, insisting that the decision was thrust upon them." So although teachers did undertake the responsibilities assigned to them, it was "seldom with wholehearted acceptance."

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More than half the teachers do not perceive themselves as decision-makers.

Meanwhile, Table 12 demonstrated teachers' perceptions about whether or not they were decision-makers in their school. Responses were fairly evenly divided with 44% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had the autonomy to take decisions in the school environment. Around 35% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement whereas nearly 21% of the participants were undecided about whether they were decision-makers or not. These mixed responses indicated that on the whole teachers were skeptical about their ability to make school decisions freely because they felt they lacked the autonomy to do so.

Table 12

I Am a Decision-maker in My School

I am a decision-maker in my school	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2.9
Disagree	11	32.4
Undecided	7	20.6
Agree	14	41.2
Strongly agree	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

Moreover, as indicated in Table 13, 62% of the teachers agreed with the statement that they could not pursue innovative ideas if they faced resistance from the school management. Only 24% of the teachers believed they could cope with resistance form the management whereas, 15% of the respondents were uncertain.

Table 13

I Cannot Cope With Resistance to My Innovation

I cannot cope with resistance to my innovation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2.9
Disagree	7	20.6
Undecided	5	14.7
Agree	17	50.0
Strongly agree	4	11.8
Total	34	100.0

To acquire insight into teachers' perceptions of their levels of autonomy in school based decision-making, the 22 interview participants were asked to deliberate upon their responses to Survey Questions 22 and 27. Out of these interview participants, nine perceived themselves as decision makers, eight felt they lacked autonomy in decision-making, and five were uncertain about their ability to take decisions within and outside their classrooms.

Nine interviewees considered themselves decision-makers because they had autonomy in decisions related to pedagogy, student learning, discipline, and suggesting initiatives for school improvement to the management. Farhana reflected this perspective during her interview, asserting that the principal encouraged teachers to "take whatever pedagogical measures they deemed appropriate" to enhance the performance of academically weak students. Building upon this view, Farah noted that if her students did not comprehend a concept in class, she had the "freedom to adapt her teaching strategy"

according to their "level of understanding." She had "no hesitation" in expressing her views during staff meetings, and was also "free to take decisions outside the classroom" in maintaining school discipline:

> The school management has been extremely helpful in involving us in school-wide decision-making. It seeks our advice on issues related to syllabus, pedagogy, and discipline, and considers an exchange of ideas as an essential component of decision-making. Therefore, future planning and decision-making is carried out in view of the more meaningful and innovative ideas shared by staff members

Similarly, Maliha reiterated that everyone was given an "opportunity to voice their views" about school related problems, "everyone's opinion was respected" and the entire staff was "striving towards a shared vision and a common goal." Additionally, Fatima, one of the longest serving teachers at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS), cited intrinsic factors, such as self-confidence and a sense of ownership, and extrinsic factors, such as management support, as catalysts to her participation as an active decision maker in school. The following excerpt from her interview sheds light on her views:

> I am confident enough to directly suggest initiatives for school improvement to the principal and the Area Manager and get my proposals approved by them. When offering suggestions, I always think of the benefit to the school rather than my own personal gain. If a representative from the senior management is visiting our school, the principal invites me to her office and encourages me to share any suggestions or innovative ideas I might have.

However, Fatima recognized that the "authority to make the final decision rested solely with the principal." She explained that if the principal considered teachers' suggestions to "be constructive and meaningful, she would incorporate them in her final decisions" but if she did not, then "teachers had little choice but to do as they were told" because the principal too had "certain constraints" and could not entirely change the system of one school.

Although Sumra confided that she wanted a limited role in decision-making due to time constraint and low confidence, she still believed that she was a decision maker in the school. Her response was based on the following rationale:

If I want to take any decisions regarding my teaching strategy or what I would like to teach, I have the autonomy to do so. However, there are some decision-making responsibilities that I myself prefer not getting involved in but there are no restrictions from the management.

As teachers' responses to Survey Question 22 indicated, there were clearly some divergent views. Eleven of the 34 survey participants disagreed that they had the autonomy to take decisions in school and 7 of the 34 teachers were uncertain about their role as active decision-makers in school. Eight of the 13 interviewees who were either undecided or disagreed that they were decision-makers, cited red tapism and/or the compulsion to conform to school policies as reasons for their feelings of disempowerment. Eshal was undecided about her ability to take independent decisions because while on the one hand she was "free to offer suggestions" to the school management, on the other hand, it "was the management's call whether or not to

incorporate any of her suggestions" in school policies. Ayesha echoed similar thoughts bemoaning that teachers offered valuable suggestions whenever asked, and the management listened to those suggestions, but they "seldom acted upon them" because in the end, "the final word was always that of the principal." Moreover, Umber underscored the point that teachers were bound by existing school policies and had little role in certain decisions. The following excerpt reflects this dilemma:

> We have no role or input in a lot of decisions such as, curriculum planning and development, student admissions, and designing of mid-term and annual examination papers for students. I am unable to envision myself making a difference beyond my classroom because all authority is vested in the management and even if we want to change a decision or revise a policy, we do not have the authority to do so. At an individual level, I can change the school environment by improving the learning and achievement of my students, or by decorating the school but I cannot change anything at the managerial level.

Three of the interviewees believed that teachers were not decision makers because they had to seek permission even for instructional initiatives and could not take initiatives independently. They noted that if they wished to deviate from their lesson plans to a certain extent, they needed to discuss their revised pedagogical strategy with the principal, and seek her approval before doing so. Noreen felt that she lacked decision-making power in day to day affairs owing to red-tapism, asserting that for every issue, whether it pertained to "reducing a deserving student's fee or providing him with a

uniform or something related to class management," teachers were obliged to discuss the matter with the management first. She noted:

Getting our proposals approved is a long winded process because we first have to discuss the issue with the academic coordinator, then seek permission from the principal, then approach the assistant accountant to implement the decision. So I do not feel I am free to take initiatives on my own without seeking the management's approval.

Noreen however acknowledged that teachers had "relatively more freedom in taking decisions within the classroom." She recounted the time when she wanted to make a few "revisions in her pedagogical strategy and not totally follow the Teacher Guide" as teachers were required to do in the first two years of their teaching experience. Hence, the management "permitted her to make a few modifications" by incorporating additional learning activities to enhance students' learning.

Furthermore, Bismah reiterated the perception that teachers lacked the "power" to make decisions. She observed that teachers had "innovative ideas" but these "never found expression" because no one was prepared to implement their views. Underscoring that the management made the final decision by consulting only "two or three people" and then announcing it to the rest of the teachers, she believed that preferential treatment was meted out to some teachers while others were excluded from the decision-making:

I would like to participate in the process of decision-making, but at times, some teachers including myself are overlooked although the entire staff should be involved in decision-making. While assigning duties, our opinion is not sought,

nor is the timetable designed according to our convenience. Consequently, we have only one free period in a day.

Finally, a few teachers mentioned personal inhibitions, such as low confidence and doubts as to the viability of their suggestions, as reasons for uncertainty about their degree of autonomy in decision-making. As a relatively new teacher, Sobia assumed that she had not "been in the school long enough" for her suggestions to be given due importance. She explained that the school was being run by a huge management that oversaw innumerable schools all over Pakistan and all policies and critical decisions originated from the NGO Head Office. Hence, she was unclear whether the management would "value the suggestions of a teacher in one of their many schools."

This section examined teachers' perceived autonomy within the work setting through participants' responses to survey questions and clarification of those responses during their respective interviews. Findings revealed that nearly half of the teachers interviewed believed they had relatively greater autonomy inside the classroom than outside the classroom and had to first seek approval from the management before they could effectively implement any innovative school improvement initiatives. A few teachers also cited intrinsic factors, such as low confidence or self-doubt about the feasibility of their suggestions as reasons for their low sense of empowerment in the school environment. Others felt disempowered either due to the practice of red-tapism, or because they had to conform to existing school policies. Hence, they felt that even though the school management solicited their suggestions, the final decision seldom reflected their views.

Participants' sense of autonomy in school-wide decision-making could also be gauged through their responses to Survey Question 34, as illustrated in Table 14. Findings indicated that more than half of the respondents (53%) were not reluctant to suggest improvement initiatives because they felt their opinion would not be valued. On the other hand, approximately 29% of the respondents were hesitant to offer innovative suggestions to the management, whereas 18% of the respondents were undecided.

Table 14

I Am Reluctant to Suggest Innovation

I am reluctant to suggest innovation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	8.8
Disagree	15	44.1
Undecided	6	17.6
Agree	8	23.5
Strongly agree	2	5.9
Total	34	100.0

Eighteen of 34 survey participants felt confident about suggesting innovative initiatives to the management because the school climate was participatory and facilitated a free exchange of varied ideas. Eshal was amongst the 18 survey participants who felt confident about sharing valuable input with everyone because "neither the management nor her colleagues had ever discouraged her" from expressing her views. She recalled that when she first joined the school, she was "self-conscious and reluctant to speak up" for fear that her more experienced teaching peers "may not appreciate her views."

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However, she gradually grew more comfortable with the environment when she noticed that all her colleagues actively voiced their opinions during faculty meetings. According to her:

> Now I openly share my thoughts about ways to improve pedagogical practice. If one of my fellow colleagues has been put on the spot by the management to suggest ways to enhance student learning in a particular subject, and she cannot think of any innovative ideas, I step in, and speak up, sharing ideas irrespective of whether it is a subject I teach or not.

Nevertheless, 16 survey participants either felt reluctant to suggest initiatives for school improvement or were undecided about whether they were reluctant to share their input because their opinions would not be valued. While four interviewees cited low confidence as a reason, a majority of the teachers informed that they were hesitant to suggest innovative initiatives to the management because they felt their suggestions would not be taken seriously. A few representative quotes reflecting these sentiments are mentioned below.

Novice teachers, such as Sobia explained that they were reluctant to share innovative ideas because at the back of their minds was the thought that "the management was more knowledgeable about school affairs and policies," and based on that knowledge, they were probably already taking good initiatives. Hence, they presumed that the management may not really need to hear or value the suggestions of a relatively new teacher. Similarly, Zarish, another novice teacher, candidly admitted that she lacked confidence in her ability to voice her opinions in front of others:

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I can share my ideas with others on a one on one basis but I lack the confidence to voice my opinions in a group. In any case, I speak less and tend to get confused easily, therefore, I often wait for others to express their views first.

On the other hand, Huma was reluctant to suggest improvement initiatives for an entirely different reason. She believed there was no point in sharing ideas and voicing her opinion to the management when it would not be valued, as she so eloquently stated:

When no one takes your suggestion seriously the first time, then one does not feel like giving any suggestions the next time. It is futile to give input over and over again when no one really values or appreciates it.

Finally, Farheen observed that she was selective about sharing her views with the management because it did not value her input. Only where she believed it was absolutely necessary, or when she was specifically asked about her opinion, did she speak up and share her views. She noted:

I feel that I am not being valued as a person; therefore, it is better to remain silent. I have considerable experience as a school leader and educationist. Hence I fear that if I suggest something that is perceived as irrelevant, the management might criticize me and my peers may lose their high opinion of me. So I stay quiet and mostly listen to the management's point of view.

Difficult to change beliefs and mindsets. A theme that not only emerged separately in teachers' interviews but also merged into other recurrent themes arising from participants' perceptions about shared decision-making pertained to difficulty in changing people's mindsets and beliefs about their traditional roles of Decision-making.

The 22 interview participants were asked to discuss whether they believed it was easy or difficult to change people's mindsets and beliefs about their traditional roles and how decisions are made in school (Question 17 a, see Appendix D). An overwhelming majority of participants (90%) believed that it was difficult to change people's preconceived notions and existing mindsets about their roles and responsibilities pertaining to decision-making. Only two of the 22 interview participants (9%) were positive that people's mindsets about their traditional roles and responsibilities in decision-making could be gradually changed. Five of these 22 teachers believed that the management encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making activities, but some teachers showed greater resistance in assuming leadership responsibilities owing to increased workload. Additionally, three participants felt that the management was more inflexible about conceding some of its authority to regular teachers in decision-making. Conversely, twelve of 22 (55%) interviewees believed that inflexibility and resistance towards reexamining their traditional roles of decision-making was equally present among the management and the teachers.

Fatima was amongst the two teachers who believed that traditional mindsets could be changed. Recognizing that "changing mindsets was a slow process," Fatima insisted that it was not difficult to "convince teachers and the management to reexamine" their beliefs about their traditional roles through "constant appreciation and counselling, as appreciation served to enhance people's morale and self-esteem." Additionally, Shama felt that the management could easily influence teachers' to change their mindsets about their decision-making roles and responsibilities by involving them in more domains of

decision-making. She observed that if teachers' input was solicited in curriculum development, teachers would possibly be more motivated to perform additional tasks rather than considering them a burden. Shama recalled an occasion when the NGO management suddenly decided to "replace the existing English medium Mathematics book at the pre-primary level with a newly designed Urdu medium version" without taking the concerned teachers into confidence. She noted that even though the management would "seek teachers' feedback about the book within a year of its introduction," it would have been much better if they had ascertained how the teachers felt about the proposed change before actually introducing the book." Shama stated that she had "enjoyed teaching the English medium Mathematics book and was now teaching the Urdu medium version under duress, because her heart was not in it." She underlined the need for the management to "duly consider teachers' suggestions" before taking critical decisions on issues pertaining to teaching and learning.

Twelve of the 22 (55%) interviewees believed that both teachers and the management were equally inflexible and resistant towards reexamining their traditional roles of decision-making. They felt that teachers resisted additional responsibilities either due to increased workload, low confidence and insecurities about their professional expertise, whereas, the school management was reluctant to give more decision-making authority to teachers in domains such as curriculum development, budget and teacher induction and was constrained to take decisions in view of the policies and directives of the senior NGO management. Amina echoed this view, observing that in "about fifty percent cases, teachers themselves avoided extra-curricular responsibilities," whereas the

management was "equally reluctant to allow teachers greater autonomy" in decision-making. She felt that some teachers became upset on being assigned decision-making responsibilities besides teaching:

> Many class teachers are unhappy about having to collect students' monthly fees because it detracts them from their actual work of instruction. Some teachers perform this task willingly while others are unwilling to do so, but have little choice in the matter. They consider fee collection an additional burden that they are obliged to carry out.

Furthermore, Huma noted that she would not like to blame the management alone because there was equal resistance against reexamining mindsets about decision-making roles on both sides. She aptly summed up the situation, observing:

> When the management wants to give us more authority and involve us in decision-making activities, we are not willing to accept it and when we demand more autonomy in certain domains, then they are not willing give it.

Huma asserted that the management preferred to "hold on to its authority in certain areas" so as not to give teachers more voice in policymaking. Her views on teachers' resistance resonated with those of some of her peers as she emphasized that teachers typically resisted additional responsibilities such as collecting students' fees, filling up the scholarship forms and participating in science projects. She added that some teachers were even unwilling to contribute articles to the NGO's literary magazine 'Bazm-i-Adab' due to their increased pedagogical responsibilities.

Five of these 12 teachers highlighted the rigors of increased workload as an impediment to teachers' willing participation in extra-curricular activities. They felt that their pedagogical responsibilities involving comprehensive lesson planning, writing detailed reflections about their practice and future action plans, and managing their classrooms made increased demands on their time, thus leaving them with little energy to assume extra-curricular responsibilities. Zarish effectively articulated this viewpoint:

> I feel that we should not be delegated too many leadership responsibilities beyond the classroom so that we can concentrate on our teaching practice. It is challenging for a teacher to carry out her instructional responsibilities and at the same time, be expected to participate in decision-making.

Komal too stated that teachers were "burdened with pedagogical responsibilities" and found it difficult to manage additional decision-making responsibilities. She further observed that changing mindsets was a "gradual process that required a lot of time and effort." If the management introduced a new policy initiative in a faculty meeting, "some teachers may immediately accept it and start implementing it, whereas others may not." Hence, she believed that only when the management "constantly motivated" teachers to implement the new initiative by discussing the "likely successes and gaps" pertaining to effective implementation, would teachers eventually "warm up" to the new policy and accept it wholeheartedly. She also recommended that the management should distribute decision-making responsibilities equally amongst all teachers so that one teacher does not feel unduly burdened and should ask teachers if they were willing to perform a task or

not, because some teachers were more willing to participate in extracurricular activities than others.

> I feel that the management has to get work done so it tries to involve teachers in extracurricular activities, but sometimes teachers are reluctant to accept these additional responsibilities. However, the management does not involve teachers in certain decision-making domains such as teacher induction and budget allocation, so we can also say that there is equal amount of resistance on both sides.

Other teachers observed that some "decisions of consequence at the higher policy level" were made without teachers' input. However, they acknowledged that the school management was accountable to the Board of trustees, therefore it had to understandably take into account the requirements of the senior NGO management before arriving at critical decisions.

A few interviewees also pointed out that some teachers were reluctant to assume additional leadership responsibilities due to insecurities about their professional expertise. Farhana mentioned an occasion when the principal had asked all teachers to prepare individual portfolios on lesson planning so that she could share them with the senior NGO management. She admitted that some teachers did not prepare the portfolios because they lacked confidence in their ability to do a satisfactory job, adding: "I myself did not send it because I still feel I have much to learn and cannot do a very good job at this stage."

Sumra too cited low confidence as one of the reasons for her reluctance to participate in shared decision-making. She observed that the management generally tried

to involve teachers in decision-making, but some teachers like herself, did not freely offer suggestions or participate in a wide range of decision-making activities, instead preferring to passively listen to the principal's point of view. She elaborated:

Sometimes, I feel like sharing my views, but then I change my mind when another teacher comes out with the same suggestions before I can overcome my shyness and speak up. So I prefer to remain silent rather than be repetitive.

Moreover, five of 22 teachers believed that the management encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making activities, but some of their more passive colleagues believed that "their sole responsibility was to teach." Hence, no matter how hard the management tried to involve these teachers in extra-curricular activities, they "remained disinclined" towards changing their mindsets about their roles in decision-making. Maliha's and Parveen's quotes exemplified this particular viewpoint. Maliha noted:

Some teachers are unhappy if they are assigned responsibility as In-Charge of a student house and asked to prepare students for student week competitions. They resent being asked to participate in extracurricular activities and feel that this isn't their job. Some teachers also resent being asked to substitute in place of absent teachers in their free period because they feel that they have been treated unjustly and not allowed to avail their free period.

Additionally, Parveen emphasized that the management "tried not to overburden teachers with too many responsibilities" but some teachers tended to "overreact about being assigned additional tasks" such as, fee collection or discipline related duties. She further elaborated that some teachers disliked being assigned morning, break or off-time

duties thrice a week, or being given substitution tasks in their free periods or being asked to volunteer in the summer camp.

> I believe that there is greater resistance on the part of the teachers in accepting decision-making responsibilities and I feel they need to change their rigid way of thinking. I think differently. I feel that a teacher's role is not just limited to teaching and then going home but she also carries the responsibility to take meaningful initiatives for school improvement beyond her classroom. I have never argued about being assigned substitution periods in place of my colleagues who are on leave, even if it entails missing my free periods.

Finally, three interviewees believed that the management was more inflexible about conceding some of its authority to regular teachers. Advocating a more involved role for teachers in decision-making, these teachers urged the management to "learn to trust teachers" by expanding their decision-making roles, appreciating their efforts and polishing their leadership skills. They asserted that even if some teachers resisted additional tasks, it was the management's responsibility to try to understand the reason behind their resistance.

Farheen stated that even though it was difficult to change people's beliefs and mindsets about their traditional decision-making responsibilities, attitudes could eventually be changed in "a friendly work environment." She felt that the management did not distribute leadership responsibilities equitably among teachers, elaborating that during Staff Development Day (SDD), "only one or two teachers" were delegated responsibility of "conducting training sessions." She was of the view that the positions of Academic

Coordinator and Senior Teacher should be routinely rotated so that other regular teachers also got an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and assume managerial responsibilities. She noted:

> I have observed that in the past four years, the same person has been serving as the Academic Coordinator and the Senior Teacher and these positions are not rotated amongst other teachers. Other teachers should also be given a chance to serve against these positions. The entire staff says that collecting student fees and filling up scholarship forms should be the responsibility of the administration assistant. We are told that one admin assistant cannot do so much work so we are obliged to find time for these clerical duties out of our own teaching time.

Encouragement. Yet another dominant theme that came up in the participants' survey and interview responses was the degree of encouragement or appreciation teachers received for participating in school-wide shared decision-making activities. Survey Question 20 addressed participants' perceptions of whether or not the management encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making. Responses to Survey Question 20 (see Table 15) indicated that 74% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the school management encouraged them to participate in decision-making. Nearly 15% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and 12% of the participants were undecided.

Table 15

School Administration Encourages Participation in Decision-Making

School admin encourages participation in decision-making	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	5.9
Disagree	3	8.8
Undecided	4	11.8
Agree	19	55.9
Strongly agree	6	17.6
Total	34	100.0

Although a majority of the survey respondents believed that the management encouraged them to participate in school-wide shared decision-making, the 22 teachers shortlisted for the interview were requested to explain their survey responses in greater detail in their respective interviews. This exercise helped the researcher to acquire a clearer understanding of the kind of encouragement teachers' received to participate in shared decision-making at Zafar Secondary School. It also provided insight into why nine of the 34 participants felt they were not encouraged to participate in shared decision-making activities. .

Twenty five survey participants (of a total of 34) and 15 interviewees (of a total of 22) responded positively about receiving encouragement for participating in school-wide decision-making. They identified verbal appreciation as the most common form of encouragement teachers received for undertaking decision-making activities. They also advocated for the provision of dedicated awards, medals or appreciation certificates to recognize the services of those teachers who excelled in extra-curricular and managerial

activities. Humaira revealed that besides verbal appreciation, teachers who underwent a comprehensive Training of Trainer (TOT) Program to become master trainers were "awarded a Master Trainer certificate" in recognition of their services for staff development.

Additionally, an annual function was held to present the Best Teacher Award to four deserving teachers at the pre-primary, primary, middle and secondary levels. Those teachers were nominated for the Best Teacher Award who displayed a positive attitude, maintained cordial relations with their colleagues and students; created an interactive classroom environment; demonstrated sound content knowledge; efficient lesson planning and delivery and innovative pedagogical skills; maintained good discipline; dealt effectively with parents, were regular and punctual and participated in extra-curricular activities to some extent. Humaira also informed that teachers received "yearly increments" based on their performance in teacher assessment tests that were administered to assess their content knowledge.

Komal agreed that the management mostly encouraged teachers "through verbal appreciation." She explained that the principal convened a staff meeting after every school event such as the annual Result Day or Student Week, and appreciated teachers for their efforts, particularly those teachers who performed exceptionally well, observing; "sometimes words of encouragement are more than enough to motivate teachers."

Besides, Farhana mentioned that teachers received "a lot of encouragement." Not only were teachers presented the Best Teacher Award every year for overall exemplary performance, but during staff meetings, the principal "made it a point to appreciate those

teachers by name who performed well in certain domains." Farhana referred to an occasion when the principal "presented a bouquet and applauded one of the teachers who had not availed a single day's leave." She also encouraged other teachers to "follow her example by being more regular, so that they could also be likewise honored and appreciated." She further stated that during the annual award ceremony, an appreciation award was presented to teachers who was regular in attendance throughout the year, disclosing:

> I am also a recipient of the Best Teacher Award because I was teaching all subjects except English and Math to my class and all the students in my class passed the examination with flying colors.

Sobia meanwhile discussed in detail the various forms of encouragement that teachers received for participation in shared decision-making practices. She revealed that teachers who performed well, and willingly carried out extra-curricular tasks were "verbally appreciated by name". Additionally, teachers were also presented the Best Teacher Award for overall performance, the Five year Award and the Seven year Award for serving in the school for five or seven years respectively, and an Appreciation Award for being regular and not availing any casual leaves. Sobia explained that appreciation certificates were given to teachers who served as Master Trainers and imparted in-service training to their colleagues while bonuses were offered to teachers who voluntarily participated in the summer camp.

Moreover, Parveen explained that some teachers in the school "resented being assigned substitution duties" but she "never felt that way." She proudly informed that the

teachers and management gave her a standing ovation for never arguing about

substitution duties, adding:

> I felt a sense of pride that my efforts had been lauded. My self-confidence grew
> and I was inspired to perform even better in future so that I could earn more
> respect in the eyes of the principal.

Farah, explained that while she strongly believed that the management

encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making, her response pertained to verbal

and merely token encouragement teachers received for sharing their views and

suggestions on various issues without any appreciation or reward in practical terms. She

acknowledged that many teachers felt that the appreciation they received for actually

participating in decision-making was not to the extent that it should be:

> I am amongst the few teachers who believe that the management encourages us as
> much as they can because I make it a point to complete all my assigned tasks.
> However, while some teachers complain about the degree of encouragement they
> receive for participating in shared decision-making, they themselves are sadly
> lacking due to their failure to complete their assignments.

Additionally, Fatima noted that the management "praised" teachers for their

efforts in school-wide decision-making. She recalled that she had not only received a

trophy as Student House In-Charge for leading her students to victory during the Student

Week competitions, but she had also been the first recipient of the Best Teacher Award

for her sound pedagogical skills, effective lesson planning, cordial relations with

colleagues and close interaction with parents. However, Fatima suggested that the

management should "permanently display the names of the recipients of the Best Teacher Award on a display board" in formal acknowledgement of their efforts. She felt that this would not only be "an incentive for all teachers" but failing such acknowledgement, these "teachers' outstanding contributions might be forgotten forever." Building upon this, both Noreen and Ayesha strongly recommended that besides having the generic Best Teacher Award to recognize teachers' services in instructional, curricular and extra-curricular domains, the management should offer appreciation certificates, medals or awards especially for teachers excelling in extra-curricular and managerial activities. They believed that these incentives would motivate teachers to participate in leadership and decision-making responsibilities beyond the classroom more enthusiastically.

Seven of 22 interview participants were either unsure or disagreed with the survey statement that the management encouraged them to participate in school-wide decision-making. Contrary to the views of the majority, these teachers believed that the management offered very little verbal encouragement and/or appreciation in terms of bonuses to teachers who participated in shared decision-making. They also felt that the management's attitude was sometimes harsh and they reprimanded teachers for not planning their lessons or noting down their reflections as they were guided to do or following school policies. Huma regretted that the "amount of encouragement teachers received was not proportionate" to the amount of work they did. She noted:

> I feel they [teachers] should be offered special bonuses and appreciation letters for their involvement in extracurricular activities.

Farheen expressed her disappointment at the degree of encouragement she had received from the school management for participating in decision-making activities, asserting: "I have been working here for quite some time and still have not received the Best Teacher Award."

Bismah too was quite vocal in articulating that teachers were not accorded any appreciation certificates or remuneration for participating in extracurricular activities. She revealed that the management and the secondary grade subject teachers had mutually decided to provide extra coaching to secondary students appearing in the Annual Board examinations in order to improve their performance. For three weeks, she and her colleagues stayed back after school to guide their students, despite not receiving any extra remuneration for overtime.

Findings revealed that a majority of the teachers at ZSS believed that the management encouraged them to participate in shared decision-making, informing that the form of appreciation was mostly verbal. On the other hand, few teachers disagreed with this perception, noting that they received very little verbal appreciation and no remuneration for participating in shared decision-making. There was unanimity amongst teachers that a separate award should be offered to teachers for the exclusive purpose of participating in managerial and extracurricular responsibilities besides instruction.

Summary. To sum up the first section of findings, a number of themes emerged from teachers' survey and interview responses about their perceptions regarding shared decision-making. Teachers appeared to possess a basic knowledge of the concept of shared decision-making, recognizing it as a process whereby the management and

teachers made decisions in a collaborative manner at school level. However, many teachers acknowledged that they were largely unaware of the multiple instructional, curricular, extra-curricular and managerial dimensions that the concept encompassed. Additionally, teachers consistently indicated positive beliefs about the benefits of shared decision-making on teachers' psyche and the overall school climate. Although, an overwhelming majority of teachers favored shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model and believed that the management should involve teachers in decision-making beyond the classroom, nearly half of the interview participants indicated that they would prefer to participate in shared decision-making activities only up to a certain extent and would not wish to be involved in all domains of decision-making. They cited either extrinsic factors such as increased workload and time constraints or intrinsic factors such as low inclination to participate in decision-making or low confidence in their ability to offer viable suggestions for school improvement or for undertaking leadership responsibilities beyond the classroom. Participants described the decision-making process as collaborative, involving frequent faculty meetings in which teachers' suggestions were sought.

Nonetheless, teachers expressed mixed feelings about their degree of autonomy in decision-making, with many participants observing that they were bound by school policies and although the management sought their views, it seldom incorporated their suggestions in the final decisions. Furthermore, a majority of the teachers felt that it was difficult to change people's beliefs and mindsets about their traditional roles and responsibilities in decision-making. Finally, participants believed that the management

encouraged them to participate in shared decision-making mostly through verbal appreciation, with some participants advocating institution of a dedicated award in the form of an appreciation letter or a medal to recognize teachers' active participation in extra-curricular and managerial decision-making responsibilities.

Research Question One - Section Two: How Do Teachers in One Pakistani Community School Participate in Shared Decision-Making Activities in their School?

As mentioned earlier, Research Question One encompassed two parts – one, teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making and two, teachers' practices in shared decision-making. Whereas, the previous section comprehensively discussed Pakistani community teachers' beliefs and perceptions about shared decision-making, this particular section will examine Pakistani community school teachers' practices pertaining to shared decision-making at Zafar Secondary School.

Research Question One investigated how teachers in one Pakistani community school participated in shared decision-making activities in their school. Study participants were given several opportunities through closed-ended and open-ended survey questions and interview questions to specify the types of shared decision-making activities they participated in at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS). This research question was addressed by analyzing data collected from closed-ended Survey Questions 9, 13, 15, 16, 28, 31 and 32 and open ended question 12 (see Appendix B). Additionally, Interview Questions 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15 and 15a (see Appendix D) were created to also draw out information related to teachers' perceptions of their practices in shared decision-making.

Among a variety of survey and interview responses pertaining to teachers'
participation or lack of participation in shared decision-making practices, 14 recurring
themes or decision-making practices were identified that were collapsed into three broad
categories, namely pedagogical decisions, curricular decisions and managerial decisions.
Pedagogical decision-making practices included: knowledge sharing and collaboration,
planning and providing staff development, setting standards, and consulting additional
instructional/learning materials. Curricular decision-making practices included:
curriculum planning and development and providing feedback about prescribed
textbooks. Managerial decision-making practices included: providing feedback to
parents, mobilizing school community to enhance enrollment, performing discipline
duties, organizing and participating in school events, collecting student fees and filling
scholarship forms, preparing daily duty schedules, teacher hiring and budget.

Pedagogical Decision-Making Practices

Under the broader theme of pedagogical decision-making practices, four sub
themes were grouped together. These included: knowledge sharing and collaboration,
planning and providing staff development, setting standards, and consulting additional
instructional/learning materials.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration. A powerful theme that emerged through
teachers' perceptions of their participation in decision-making both across the survey and
interviews related to knowledge sharing, professional collaboration and reflective
practices. Participants' responses to closed-ended Survey Questions 9 and 13 indicated
that of all decision-making activities that teachers participated in, knowledge sharing was

the most common. As Figures II and III illustrate, a majority of the teachers (94%) usually engaged in knowledge sharing and reflected upon pedagogical practices with their colleagues. Survey Question 9 asked teachers to specify the typical way they spent their time before and after a class when they were not engaged in teaching. Thirty two of 34 (94%) teachers (see Figure 2) indicated that they spent their free time in sharing knowledge and reflecting upon their practice with colleagues, 28 of 34 teachers (82%) utilized their free time in checking copies, 23 of 34 teacher (68%) prepared lesson plans by themselves, 22 of 34 teachers (65%) preferred to spend their free time in reflecting upon their pedagogical practice on their own, whereas only 13 teachers (38%) used their free time to engage with their students' parents.
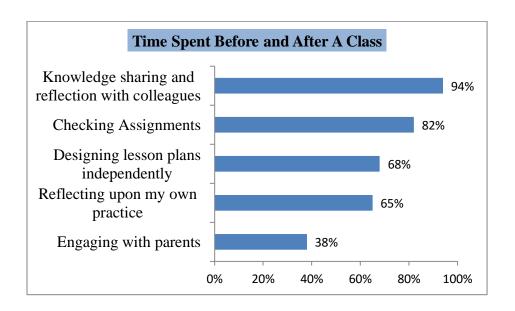

Figure 2. Time Spent Before and After a Class

Survey Question 13 asked teachers to check from a list the types of decision-making activities they had been involved in at their school. Respondents could mark more than one item resulting in totals greater than 100%. Similar to Survey Question 9, teachers' responses to Survey Question 13, as reflected through Figure 3, demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of teachers identified knowledge sharing (94%) and interaction with parents (88%) as decision-making activities they generally participated in. On the other hand, teachers' involvement in budget and the teacher hiring process was found to be negligible.

Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making Activities

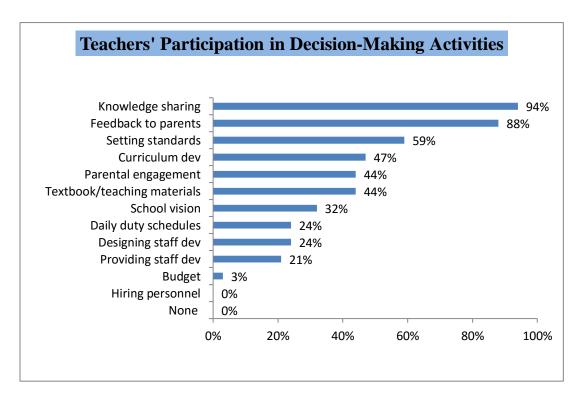| Activity	Percentage
Knowledge sharing	94%
Feedback to parents	88%
Setting standards	59%
Curriculum dev	47%
Parental engagement	44%
Textbook/teaching materials	44%
School vision	32%
Daily duty schedules	24%
Designing staff dev	24%
Providing staff dev	21%
Budget	3%
Hiring personnel	0%
None	0%

Figure 3. Participation in Decision-Making Activities

Collaboration. Professional collaboration and collegiality are critical components of shared decision-making (Rauls, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Shah & Abualrob, 2012; Weiss, 2008). Tables 16 and 17 indicated that all of the survey respondents were positively inclined towards collaborative decision-making and agreed that they valued working cooperatively with their peers as part of a team.

Table 16

I Value Working Collaboratively with Other Teachers

I value working collaboratively	Frequency	Percent
Agree	6	17.6
Strongly agree	28	82.4
Total	34	100.0

Table 17

I Believe Teachers Must Work Together

I believe teachers must work together	Frequency	Percent
Agree	5	14.7
Strongly agree	29	85.3
Total	34	100.0

Additionally, Tables 18, 19 and 20 illustrate that teachers were engaging in collaborative practices in the school. Around 97% of teachers agreed that their colleagues frequently sought their advice and guidance about instructional practices. All 34 teachers

agreed or strongly agreed that they spent their time talking to their colleagues about ways

to improve each other's pedagogy, whereas 33 of 34 teachers (97%) indicated that they

freely expressed their views to their colleagues.

Table 18

My Colleagues Frequently Seek My Advice

My colleagues frequently seek my advice	Frequency	Percent
Undecided	1	2.9
Agree	26	76.5
Strongly agree	7	20.6
Total	34	100.0

Table 19

I Like Peer Consultation

I like peer consultation	Frequency	Percent
Agree	16	47.1
Strongly agree	18	52.9
Total	34	100.0

Table 20

I Openly Express My Views to My Colleagues

Openly express views	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	2.9
Agree	24	70.6
Strongly agree	9	26.5
Total	34	100.0

To shed further light on teachers' responses to closed-ended survey questions, participants were asked through an open ended question to briefly describe the nature of their involvement in school-wide decision-making activities. With the exception of the four newly inducted teachers who wrote that they did not participate in shared decision-making activities other than performing disciplinary or substitution responsibilities, the responses of the remaining 30 participants were somewhat alike. The most frequent responses are exemplified through the following representative quotes:

> I have been involved in various shared decision-making activities pertaining to school discipline, designing action plans for student improvement, instilling moral and social values in students, and collaborating with fellow teachers to enhance student learning. While designing School Improvement Plans (SIPs), the management seeks our input about reasons for the students' underperformance in certain subjects in the annual examination. She then solicits suggestions for improving students' performance in these subjects. The management listens to us and gives due importance to everyone's opinions.

Another participant wrote:

> During staff meetings, we have complete freedom to exchange views about school management, classroom rules and discipline, and effective teaching strategies. This leads to many useful suggestions that form the basis for future planning.

Respondents commonly noted that the management solicited teachers' input in decisions related to students' learning and performance, discipline issues, interaction with parents, and the assignment of school duties. Others asserted that teachers enjoyed

"autonomy in instructional domains" such as selecting suitable teaching methodologies to cater to the learning needs of a diverse range of students; supplementing the prescribed syllabus with additional learning material, and identifying stimulating topics to include in the in-service training for teachers every year. One respondent listed several school-wide decision-making activities she was involved in such as, performing discipline duties, preparing students for competitions during the annual Student Week, creating artwork for school decor, interacting with parents, giving feedback to the management about the "NGO prescribed textbooks" and "undergoing and imparting professional development" during the monthly Staff Development Day (SDD) and the annual In-service training (INSET). A few respondents also mentioned their role in "overseeing student admissions" and "filling up scholarship forms" to facilitate substantial tuition concessions for deserving students from underprivileged backgrounds.

Teachers' Interview Responses

To acquire deeper understanding of teachers' roles in shared decision-making, the 22 interview participants were asked to discuss how regular teachers who were not holding formal leadership positions were involved in school-wide leadership practices at Zafar Secondary School (see Questions 9, 12 and 13 in Appendix D). Responses were grouped into emergent themes according to frequency, and interview findings were found to be fairly consistent with participants' responses to closed-ended and open-ended survey questions.

Teachers answered Interview Questions 9 and 12 in a variety of ways, not always showing unanimity about their areas and degree of involvement. Interview responses

indicated that participants were in considerable agreement about participating in decision-making pertaining to knowledge sharing and professional collaboration, planning for school improvement, consulting additional instructional/learning materials, giving feedback to parents, collecting monthly student fees, filling scholarship forms, performing school discipline duties, and organizing and participating in school events. Additionally, participants were categorical about their lack of involvement in activities and decisions related to budgetary allocation, teacher hiring, co-teaching, planning and developing the curriculum, prescribing text-books, designing mid-term and end-term examination papers, involving parents in classroom activities and formulating staff improvement plans such as salary benefits and leaves. However, participants' responses were mixed with regard to their involvement in domains such as setting standards for their own and their students' performance, planning and providing staff development, increasing student enrollments through community mobilization and timetable scheduling. As stated above, three categories of school decision-making practices surfaced through participants' interview responses: pedagogical, curricular and managerial decisions. The following types of decisions were identified by the teachers under each category in Tables 21 and 22.

Table 21

Decision-Making Domains in which Teachers Participated

Serial No.	Pedagogical	Curricular	Managerial
1.	Lesson planning and delivery	Effecting modifications in the syllabus break-up and Teacher Guides.	Implementing school rules/ performing discipline duties.
2.	Planning and providing staff development.	Providing feedback about prescribed books designed by STL.	Substitution for absent teachers.
3.	Maintaining class management and discipline.		Organizing and participating in school events.
4.	Knowledge sharing, problem-solving, professional collaboration.		Fee collection and maintaining fee register.
5.	Designing School Improvement Plans.		Filling scholarship forms.
6.	Setting standards and assessment planning.		Student admissions.
7.	Consulting additional instructional/learning materials.		Providing feedback to parents.
8.			Increasing student enrollments through community mobilization.

Table 22

Decision-Making Domains in which Teachers Did Not Participate

Serial No.	Pedagogical	Curricular	Managerial
1.	Co-teaching	Planning and designing curriculum	Budget – resource allocation for instructional programs, educational trips, and school-wide activities.
2.	Designing Mid-term and Final-term examination papers.	Choosing syllabus textbooks	Staff improvement plans (salaries, leaves).
3.	Involving parents in classroom activities.		Teacher hiring.
4.	Interacting with teachers from other NGO funded community schools.		Preparing daily duty schedules – timetable scheduling

Knowledge sharing and collaboration. While formal teacher leaders assume roles as department chair, master teacher, or instructional coach, informal teacher leaders have no positional authority. They spontaneously gain prominence from amongst the teacher ranks based on the respect they command from their colleagues through their knowledge, instructional expertise and practice. Research indicates that one of the many leadership qualities of an informal teacher leader is their ability to collaborate with their peers to create a quality teaching environment (Weiss, 2008).

Continuing with the theme of knowledge sharing and collaboration, results suggested that all 22 interviewees' perceived knowledge sharing, professional

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collaboration and reflection as essential decision-making practices that enabled them to improve their practices, acquire stronger pedagogical skills and enhance student outcomes. They felt that the more informed and effective they were as educators, the more their students would benefit; hence they viewed knowledge sharing as a professional tool that helped them develop into effective practitioners and instructional leaders in their field of study.

Similar to the survey participants, the interviewees noted that the management provided teachers various platforms to participate in ongoing collaboration and reflection with their colleagues and the management itself. These included regularly convened faculty meetings during which teachers shared opinions and suggestions about school improvement strategies and existing as well as newly designed policies with the management; 'Teacher Time', the last lesson of the day spanning 30 minutes during which teachers engaged in a pooling of ideas about pedagogy and indulged in collaborative practices; the monthly Staff Development Day (SDD), and the annual INSET (In-service).

Teacher Time. Teachers described the daily 'Teacher Time' lesson as shared planning, consultation and collaboration time that was carved out of the school day for teachers to meet and plan pedagogical strategies and participate in problem solving and inquiry based activities with a view to improving student learning. During 'Teacher Time', they engaged in various decision-making activities such as one on one coaching of novice teachers, mentoring grade level colleagues in groups, sharing innovative ideas and knowledge about successful classroom pedagogical strategies and mutually solving

problems pertaining to lesson planning and delivery. Teachers explained that they met colleagues belonging to the same subject area and reflected upon the quality of their lesson plans, exchanged notes about topics their students found easy or difficult to grasp and mutually devised instructional strategies to address students' learning problems. Additionally, teachers explained that they carefully listened to one another, especially paying close attention to the concerns of new teachers, admitted pedagogical related mistakes they had made, sought assistance from colleagues about unsolved pedagogical issues and shared relevant learning materials with colleagues. Besides these shared decision-making collaborative activities, teachers noted that they also cooperated with the management and their colleagues in designing School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and worked with their fellow teachers as part of a team to prepare students for competitions during Student Week.

Theoretically, shared decision-making involves devolution of decision-making to the local school level characterized by greater participation of both teachers and parents in local school processes. However, in reality, the nature and extent of decentralization and teacher and parent involvement varies across schools, subject to contextual factors and the existence of external and internal support structures (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Liontos, 1993; Rauls, 2003. Hence, teachers at ZSS interpreted their involvement in shared decision-making practices in view of the increasingly complex cultural, social and economic context within which they operated. It is pertinent to mention here that all 22 interviewees viewed collaborative practices such as knowledge sharing, professional collaboration and reflection, including coaching and co-teaching as essential aspects of

shared decision-making. Reflection requires teachers to carefully think about what they do before, during and after their lessons either independently or with colleagues. Lambert described reflection as teachers' "cognitive guide for growth and development" that they must continuously engage in (p. 22).

In this regard, Humaira observed that there was "a lot of emphasis on reflective practices" both as part of lesson planning and during teachers' professional development. She pointed out that teachers reflected upon their classroom experiences and lesson delivery in their lesson planners by analyzing their "own pedagogical strengths and weaknesses," identifying any class management issues that intervened with their instruction and recognizing the "difficulties they faced in explaining certain subject related concepts" to their students. They then shared these reflections with their colleagues to seek their input about ways to address the instructional and discipline related challenges they had identified in their lesson planners. Humaira mentioned that teachers used problem solving and inquiry based techniques to help each other in addressing pedagogical issues, adding:

> Suppose I am independently designing my lesson and I hit a roadblock, I then
> share the problem with my colleagues during break or 'Teacher Time'. We try to
> work through the problem by considering various alternative options.
> Constructive and meaningful feedback from my colleagues helps me to
> effectively resolve the issue.

Based upon these reflections, teachers devised action plans to address the identified gaps in future lesson delivery. Another teacher, Sumra explained:

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Actually we record our reflections about our practice in the planners at the end of every week, noting down the strengths and weaknesses of our lesson delivery and examining reasons why a certain lesson went well or did not go well. We then discuss these issues with the management and other subject teachers during 'Teacher Time' and seek their guidance about innovative approaches to address our shortcomings.

Shared decision-making is built on the premise that decision-making must be collective and learning must be interrelated with leading so as to nurture the leadership capacity of the school community and enhance student learning, job satisfaction and professional growth (Lambert, 2002). Teachers revealed that shared reflective practices were built into the life of the school and besides reflecting about their practice in their lesson planners and sharing their reflections with colleagues, teachers also indulged in reflective practices during professional development on Staff Development Day and In-service training. On these two occasions, the management involved teachers in decision-making by asking them to engage in self-reflection and shared reflections about the quality of the training sessions and to provide feedback to the NGO training wing and the master trainers about issues pertaining to what they learned in the sessions, how they could incorporate the newly acquired knowledge in their lessons, difficulties they faced during the training sessions, topics to include in the next in-service and suggestions for future improvement. Eshal, a master trainer and a secondary grade teacher at ZSS explained that teachers' reflective input about the master trainers' expertise and the quality of staff development imparted during SDD and INSET, helped to inform better

practice by encouraging master trainers take stock of their strengths and gaps as teacher educators so as to redress their inadequacies and improve the quality of training sessions in future. She noted:

> On the last day of INSET, teachers are asked to write down their reflections on the training sessions spanning nearly twelve days. Reflective feedback from our colleagues about the quality of the training is beneficial because they help us to evaluate our skills as teacher educators. We become aware of our weaknesses as well as the areas in which we need further improvement. We also get ideas about common topics that teachers would like to receive extensive training on during future INSET.

There appeared to be general consensus among all 22 interviewees that collaboration was a key element of shared decision-making. They revealed that they worked collaboratively, in pairs or in groups with same subject area teachers within and across grade levels, sharing knowledge and identifying and resolving pedagogical problems outside the classroom. Teachers believed that reflecting together did not merely mean that colleagues reviewed their classroom experiences; rather it involved the interactive process of engaging in "collective inquiry into best practices, learning about one another's points of view" and acquiring knowledge and understanding of "different strategies, and new ways to interpret challenges" that helped to collectively broaden their vision as practitioners and improve student learning. This perception was well articulated by Farah who spoke about her collaborative experiences at ZSS:

I have never taught a lesson together with a colleague but there have been many

occasions when my colleague and I have taught the same topic in our respective

classes, and later analyzed the gaps in our teaching, and jointly identified

alternative strategies to overcome our inadequacies and improve our pedagogy

during 'Teacher Time'. This has helped us to maximize each other's strengths and

develop shared goals with regard to lesson planning and delivery.

Providing further insight into her collaborative practices, Farah explained how she, being a class teacher, would "meet subject teachers for her class" during 'Teacher Time' and discuss the "common learning problems faced by various students in their respective subjects." She would also bring to their attention any complaints made by parents and collectively devise strategies to alleviate parents' grievances. Whereas Tehreem termed 'Teacher Time' as a "good initiative," Sarah felt that the "best thing" about her school was it offered teachers 'Teacher Time' to discuss issues pertaining to "lesson planning, instruction and/or students' learning and discipline related issues." Teachers also viewed coaching as an essential aspect of developing leadership qualities among teachers. Amina, an expert subject expert informed that teachers collaborated with one another during their break time, free periods and/or the 30 minute 'Teacher Time'. They discussed issues related to "students' performance, pedagogical challenges, and teacher reflections, besides sharing innovative instructional strategies specified in their lesson plans and providing guidance to new teachers on ways to improve their practice. She recounted that when new and veteran teachers approached her for guidance, she tried to provide collegial support by facilitating productive dialogue among them about

teaching and learning. Amina underlined the need to build reciprocal rather than dependent relationships amongst colleagues pointing out that as a Master Trainer and a subject specialist; she contributed to the learning of new teachers by "sharing successful and time tested instructional strategies." However, likewise, new teachers "brought with them fresh perspectives" that helped her to broaden her own vision and improve her practice so the interaction was a "two way street based upon mutual respect" and a recognition of each other's strengths. The following is an excerpt from her interview:

> As an expert teacher, I try to expand my colleagues' pedagogical perspectives by challenging them to think deeply about their practice. When primary or secondary teachers are unclear about how to impart a particular concept to their students and approach me for guidance, I immediately try to address their problems by sharing best practices but also encouraging them through dialogue, questioning and reflection to reexamine their pedagogy and plan strategies for addressing the problem themselves. This helps them to emerge as reflective practitioners and to gradually take charge of their field.

Staff development day. Findings revealed that teachers at ZSS not only work together during 'Teacher Time' but also got a chance to engage in mutual discussions and professional collaboration during Staff Development Day (SDD). This knowledge furthered my definition and understanding of shared decision-making because it made me realize that community teachers regarded professional collaboration as a major component of shared decision-making. Their interview responses indicated that their sense of empowerment was strongly linked with the development of participatory school

structures that allowed them to learn and collaborate together and share leadership responsibilities oriented towards improving pedagogy and practice. They felt that leadership entailed not just seeking the views of other and learning from them, but also influencing the learning of their colleagues.

Giving details about SDD, participants recounted that the two to three hours staff development session was held every month to provide teachers "ongoing learning opportunities" to "enhance their knowledge and understanding of concepts" that they found difficult to convey to their students. Additionally, participants described SDD as a "platform for teachers to share ideas" about addressing learning problems common to students across different grade levels," including "poor handwriting skills" or "weak comprehension of a certain mathematical concept." Some need based issues peculiar to various academic levels also emerged, usually discussed in separate groups for pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers.

School improvement plans. Another school-wide decision-making responsibility that regular teachers engaged in was to design the yearly School Improvement Plan (SIP) in collaboration with the school management. Umber observed that all teachers were included in designing School Improvement Plans. This process involved asking teachers to pinpoint common learning gaps/weaknesses manifested through student assessments and to recommend feasible strategies for addressing these academic inadequacies to improve students' learning and achievement. Farheen and Farhana discussed this process at length. Farhana explained that after the compilation of the annual examination results, School Improvement Plans were made for those subjects in which students consistently

underperformed. All subject teachers at different grade levels were asked to identify questions in the examination papers that a majority of the students found difficult to answer or to specify topics or concepts that most students found problematic. She added that teachers regularly maintained a record of students' strengths and weaknesses based on their assessment tests and mid-term and end-term exams all the year round. Farhana elaborated:

> During Staff Development Day (SDD), subject teachers at pre-primary to secondary levels for separate discussion groups to identify common student failings in their respective subjects and ways to redress them. Subsequently, a School Improvement Plan meeting is convened by the school management where teachers offer subject-wise suggestions for improvement of student performance, also proposing academic targets for the following year. Based on these recommendations, an action plan for school improvement is designed and sent to the Head Office for approval.

Knowledge sharing with teachers from other STL funded schools. Teachers at ZSS recognized sharing knowledge across community schools as an essential component of developing leadership and decision-making skills. They believed that teaming up with teachers belonging to community schools managed by Spread the Light NGO and other NGOs would give them opportunities to "generate fresh ideas, acquire new insights and identify novel possibilities" in their work in their pursuit to improve their practice and student learning. It would also help to build strong relationships between community teachers across various schools and strengthen a culture of professional learning amongst

them. Amina revealed that teachers not only collaborated with their own colleagues but also shared knowledge and expertise with teachers from other community schools run by the same NGO 'Spread the Light' (STL). Recalling one such visit by a group of secondary level subject teachers to Zafar Secondary School, Amina shared that the visiting teachers spent the entire day attending their lessons and observing their interactive style of teaching in order to get ideas on how to effectively incorporate activity based learning in their teaching methodologies at the secondary level. She elaborated that the classroom observations were followed by a simulating exchange of ideas about best practices that enabled them and the visiting teachers to learn from each other.

Additionally, both Sarah and Huma noted that they got opportunities to interact with teachers from STL managed schools located in other regions during their annual In-service trainings. Underlying the need for "more frequent and intensive collaborative interactions" between teachers from her own school and teachers from other STL schools, Sarah deliberated upon the benefits of such interactions:

> We jointly participate in learning activities during training workshops and exchange views about pedagogy. We learn fresh, innovative ideas about teaching strategies from them and they learn similar strategies from us because every teacher has his/her own unique vision and style of teaching.

Sarah felt that sharing knowledge with colleagues from other community schools did not amount to "idle conversation," rather the opportunity enabled them to comfortably "share and explore diverse points of view" and support each other in

reevaluating their approaches to teaching and learning through a fresh lens. She believed that "such rich group sharing helped teachers to grow in the profession" and provided them with a great deal of information pertaining to pedagogy that they could utilize in informing future planning and practice.

Huma also felt that sharing knowledge and interacting with teachers from other STL schools serving different communities was a useful experience:

> During discussions, the teachers are able to deliberate over problems peculiar to their own schools and communities. Such discussions prove beneficial because at times we learn about a particular problem and the way the concerned school staff solved it. In this way, we are able to learn from each other's experiences and try those solutions in our own school setting as well.

Meanwhile, Uzma, Tehreem and Sumra asserted that teachers could nurture their decision-making skills by being part of professional learning communities across community schools. They believed that professional learning communities both at the management and faculty levels would help the teachers and the management to collectively improve their practice and broaden their vision for bringing positive change in disadvantaged communities. Sumra reflected this view in the following excerpt:

> We got an opportunity to collaborate with subject teachers working at other schools run by this NGO. However, I feel that we should also be given a chance to collaborate with teachers from other schools not associated with the NGO so that we can learn about new ideas and innovative teaching strategies to enhance our performance.

Huma was more eloquent in emphasizing that the ZSS management and teachers should collaborate with the principals and teachers of schools run by other NGOs or organizations who too are working to bring positive change in society. In her words:

If we are striving to improve this community, it would be productive to meet the principals and teachers of other schools in this locality and acquire an understanding of their vision for making a meaningful difference in the community and learn about the pedagogical tools and strategies those teachers use in enhancing their students' learning.

Limited teacher collaboration across grade levels and subject areas. Building upon their perceptions of collaborative practices, a few teachers noted that owing to time constraints, increased workload, or low confidence, they found it difficult to collaborate with teachers across grade levels and disciplines. This finding indicated that community teachers believed that the nature of cooperative practices and their ability to emerge as confident team players could only be deepened as the degree of integration and collaboration between teachers expanded at all levels; hence increasing their sense of empowerment.

During interviews, teachers at the primary and secondary levels mentioned that they collaborated with subject area teachers across grade levels to enhance their own pedagogical skills and/or build the expertise of their colleagues, particularly that of novice teachers. Farhana recounted that when she was initially asked to teach Mathematics at the primary level, she was very unhappy because she disliked the subject immensely. She noted:

I tried to convince the Academic Coordinator to assign me another subject to teach but she persuaded me to take it up as a challenge. So, I sought guidance from some of my grade-level colleagues teaching Math at the primary level but they were not as helpful as the secondary Mathematics expert, Ms. Amina who encouraged me at every step and showed me how to improve my lesson planning. Thanks to her, I now really enjoy teaching Mathematics.

However, a few pre-primary and primary teachers disagreed with this perception, pointing out that many a time, teachers in the same subjects were not communicating with peers at another grade level and collegial exchanges between teachers often took place within the same grade level and discipline. Umber felt that most of the secondary level teachers "departmentalized their teaching" and did not freely reach out to teachers at the primary level, unless approached by the pre-primary and primary teachers themselves. She asserted that there was "little interaction between primary teachers and secondary teachers because secondary teachers did not like to mingle much" with pre-primary and primary grade teachers. She observed:

> During Staff Development Day, pre-primary teachers sit in one group, primary teachers sit in another group and secondary teachers sit in a third group. I feel that the management should make an effort to enhance collaboration and communication between primary and secondary teachers so that they can cultivate more amicable and collaborative relations with one another.

Shama, a pre-primary teacher, agreed with Umber that there was "minimal teacher interaction across grade levels" but she cited different reasons for limited

collegial exchanges between pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers.   The following excerpt reflects her views in this regard:

> We do not communicate much with secondary teachers other than greeting them, and neither do they. I really do not know why because it is not like we have been restrained from interacting with each other. Perhaps limited time and fewer opportunities of interaction across grade levels are the reason, because mostly our free periods do not coincide. Or maybe we are hesitant to communicate with secondary teachers because they are teaching at a higher level than we are.

She elaborated that break was scheduled at different timings for pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers, and secondary teachers sometimes utilized 'Teacher Time' to provide extra coaching to weak students. Shama added that during 'Teacher Time' and Staff Development Day, teachers were specially asked to sit in separate groups according to their grade-levels or subject areas because they were engaged in various subject related activities. However, during faculty meetings, teachers at different grade levels did exchange views on students' subject related weaknesses common to all grade levels and ways to address them at a lower grade level so that they do not get aggravated as a student progresses to a higher grade.

Parveen a secondary teacher, commenting on the views expressed by Umber and Shama, clarified that secondary teachers understandably sought advice for instructional problems from grade level subject specialists rather than sharing the issue with an expert subject teacher at the primary level. However, she emphasized that secondary teachers did coordinate with primary teachers for effective checking and rechecking of

examination papers after the Mid-term and Final examinations. She suggested that additional time should be allocated and greater effort should be made by the management to promote meaningful professional collaboration between primary and secondary level teachers. On the other hand, Farah, a secondary grade teacher disagreed that the management was not doing enough to promote greater teacher interaction across grade levels. She pointed out:

> You must have noticed during our meetings that teachers from different grade levels are sitting separately – pre-primary teachers are discussing in one group, primary teachers are deliberating over pedagogical issues in another group while secondary teachers are in a third group. However, when the principal introduces a general activity, she reshuffles the groups so that teachers get a chance to work with colleagues from different grade-levels and disciplines.

Farah cited paucity of time as one of the reasons for limited interaction between teachers belonging to different grades. She went on to explain that the duration of 'Teacher Time' was only 30 minutes and if more time was available, teachers would then be able to have a closer rapport and interaction with one another. She also clarified that "some of the primary teachers negatively reacted if the secondary teachers pointed out any shortcomings" in their performance and tried to counsel them. Farah further commented that the management made concerted efforts to bring about greater collaboration between teachers from different grade-levels. For instance, during the training sessions and SDD, the management encourages the primary and secondary teachers to sit together and consult one another. The findings in this section necessitated

additional time and a relatively relaxed workload to facilitate meaningful shared work among teachers across different grade levels.

Co-teaching. A sub theme of knowledge sharing and professional collaboration was co-teaching that emerged through participants' interview responses about shared decision-making practices they participate or do not participate in at their school. When asked if they participated in collaborative practices such as co-teaching, majority of the teachers stated that although they regularly consulted their peers about pedagogical successes and challenges and collaborated with them in planning lessons, overseeing school discipline and organizing school events, this collaboration took place outside the classroom. Only four of 22 teachers at the pre-primary and primary grade levels revealed that they had co-taught with colleagues to help them explain difficult concepts to their class, admitting that this was however, an infrequent practice owing to time constraints and difficulties in corresponding teaching schedules. Conversely, teachers informed that the principal, Senior Teacher and the Academic Coordinator often guided and co-taught with new teachers or sometimes with experienced teachers to support them in effectively delivering their lessons. As Ayesha observed:

> The principal has frequently told us that if we face any difficulties in imparting a lesson, we should feel free to call her and she will co-teach with us and help to explain the concept and deliver the lesson with us.

Participants' responses indicated that regular teachers, particularly at the middle and secondary levels did not engage in collaborative team teaching and mostly taught in isolation. They cited lack of co-planning time, scheduling issues and workload as reasons

for resisting collegial partnerships inside the classroom. Nonetheless, 14 of the 22 interviewees indicated that if a conducive environment were created through provision of flexible scheduling and additional planning time, they would be open to the prospect of co-teaching with colleagues and viewed co-teaching as an aspect of shared planning and shared decision-making. Tehreem was among the 14 interviewees who were positively inclined towards co-teaching practices, noting:

> I liked your idea of co-teaching and feel it should be facilitated in the school environment because it gives us a chance to learn from our shared ideas and expertise. If a teacher finds it difficult to impart a concept to her students and her colleague helps in clarifying it to her students, it will be a meaningful learning experience for that teacher and beneficial for her students as well. I suggest that the timetable be designed in such a way that it facilitates the practice of co-teaching and ensures that if a subject teacher has a lesson, the other subject teacher is free in that period so that she can co-teach with her colleague.

Many teachers deliberated over the possible barriers to co-teaching at ZSS. Zarish discussed the impediments to co-teaching at length:

> There is a shortage of teachers in this school and regular teachers are sometimes required to perform substitution duties in their free periods. Teachers have limited time because they only have one free period in a day during which they have to do a million things so they may not be available for co-teaching with a colleague.

Setting standards. Setting performance standards also emerged as a vital factor in participants' overview of shared-decision-making practices. Teachers were asked through Survey Question 13 to specify whether or not they believed they set standards for their own and their students' performance as well as defined standards for school discipline. Participants' responses as shown in Table 23 varied significantly, whereby approximately more than half (59%) of the teachers agreed that they determined the criteria for their own and their students' performance as well as had a role in designing and implementing school rules pertaining to discipline. On the contrary, 41% of the survey participants felt that they played no part in setting performance and discipline related standards in the school and that these standards were defined by the school management.

Table 23

Setting Standards

Setting standards	Frequency	Percent
No	14	41.2
Yes	20	58.8
Total	34	100.0

Teachers were requested to expand upon their survey responses in their respective interviews. They reported that although the management set essential performance targets for everyone, but they also defined benchmarks for their own and their students' performance. The most frequent responses indicated that teachers reflected on their own

practices and mutually reviewed their pedagogical strengths and weaknesses with their colleagues. Besides, teachers frequently engaged in peer discussions about students' academic outcomes in one subject and measured that outcome with their performance in other subjects. Interviewees also shared that in cases where students were "found to be struggling in a number of subjects," the class teacher and the subject teachers "jointly formulated strategies to help them overcome gaps and enhance their achievement according to the learning objectives" they had defined for each subject. In other cases, where a student consistently failed to meet those standards, teachers mutually decided to request the principal to demote the student.

This perception was reflected by Fatima who observed that she along with her grade level teachers "mutually discussed benchmarks for lesson delivery and the strategies to adopt to further improve their instruction" She also pointed out that the teachers used their own initiative for taking measures to enforce discipline. Only when a "disciplinary problem reached a point where teachers found it difficult to handle it themselves," did they bring it to the notice of the management. Moreover, Amina observed that teachers were free to set performance standards for themselves and their students" and to "constantly upgrade those standards" in light of new knowledge. She added:

> The management also sets targets for teachers' performance and regularly conducts classroom observations to gauge whether teachers are meeting those targets or not.

Additionally, Bismah indicated in her survey response that teachers established standards for their own and their students' performance. Elaborating upon her response in the interview, she acknowledged that the management determined subject-wise academic targets for students, but teachers too set learning objectives for their students. She revealed that she often held meetings with colleagues belonging to the same discipline in order to jointly devise challenging targets for the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills. She pointed out:

> I want my students to acquire a broader understanding of my subject and not just to excel in the Board examinations. I would like them to actively engage with the content, to participate in classroom discussions, and apply their conceptual knowledge to real life situations.

Meanwhile, Umber observed that she was constantly engaged in redefining standards to gauge her own and her students' performance. Elaborating upon her efforts to set performance standards, she noted that she was always examining "her current classroom behavior vis-à-vis a variety of alternative classroom behaviors" that she could adopt to bring out the best in her students. She also reviewed the "learning areas in which her students needed guidance" and explored effective ways through which she could provide that guidance. Regarding students' performance, Umber noted that she analyzed her own "conception of classroom management and discipline' from time to time. This helped her in "constructively tackling undesirable disciplinary behaviour" demonstrated by some of her students and in effectively "grooming" their personalities.

Furthermore, Shama asserted that as a teacher, she was "fully aware of the essential aspects to consider while overseeing school discipline." She therefore took "on the spot decisions" about ways to tackle disciplinary problems" and undertook effective measures to ensure that students followed rules, avoided aggressive behaviour and did not resort to damaging school property. Finally, Farah informed that while the broader academic targets were set by the management, teachers constantly reflected upon their practice with colleagues, mutually identifying gaps in their lesson delivery and devising strategies to effectively meet their targets in future. She quoted her own example in the following excerpt:

Last year I observed that my students displayed weak writing skills despite reading proficiency. As a result, this year I have been paying particular attention to improving their writing skills to achieve the academic standards I set for them.

Consulting additional learning materials. An important theme emerging from teachers' survey and interview responses was teachers' role in creating and consulting additional learning materials that enabled them to become reflective and effective practitioners. An essential trait of effective teacher leaders is that they have strong expertise in content knowledge and pedagogy, and possess a natural curiosity that makes them life-long learners. Nearly 77% of the interviewees at ZSS believed that consulting reference material was a manifestation of a curious mind that was open to new information, and was committed to providing the best possible avenues for learning to their students. They considered teachers' willingness to avail additional learning

materials and their interest in remaining informed about new developments in their field as an important aspect of shared decision-making.

As indicated in Table 24, more than half of the survey respondents (56%) indicated that they did not choose books or additional learning materials other than the prescribed textbooks to enhance students' learning. Only 15 of 34 survey participants (44%) acknowledged that they consulted learning material in addition to the prescribed syllabus.

Table 24

Consulting Additional Instructional/Learning Materials

Consulting additional learning materials	Frequency	Percent
No	19	55.9
Yes	15	44.1
Total	34	100.0

To acquire deeper insight into teachers' survey responses, interview participants were questioned about whether or not they took initiatives to access reference materials and/ or develop teaching materials for their students (Interview Question 8, see Appendix D). Whereas, 15 of 34 survey participants stated that they referred to extra learning materials, during interviews, 17 of 22 (77%) teachers mentioned that they frequently looked up reference books in the library or sometimes searched the internet for subject specific information. However, they pointed out that the school did not offer internet

facility, and they availed the internet from home. Teachers emphasized that they had "complete freedom in their pedagogical practice" and could access additional learning materials to expand their own knowledge about their subject area, thus improving students' literacy skills and learning outcomes.

Amina reported that she used flash cards and other teaching aids to impart key concepts to her students through activity based instruction. Regarding access to onsite learning/teaching resources, she noted that the school had a "well-stocked library" with reference books on a several topics, and although the school had a computer lab, it was not equipped with internet facility. Hence, if she felt the need, she would search and download useful information from the internet at home, asserting:

> We have full autonomy in planning and delivering our lessons as we like, including consulting additional learning materials. It is essential for teachers to supplement the prescribed textbooks with additional material so as to remain up to date with the latest research and to also expand students' content knowledge.

Additionally, Parveen believed that the library was reasonably well equipped with a wide range of books on different subjects and additional teaching aids such as, maps and globes. However, she underlined the need for internet facility in school because "sometimes certain information could not be obtained through reference books" available in the library and more comprehensive research was required. She recalled the occasion when she needed to share information about the burial sites of various prophets with her students but was unable to find this data from the existing books in the library. Hence she had to download the information through internet facility available at home in order to

meet this requirement. Moreover, Komal revealed that besides consulting library books, she used authentic teaching materials, such as newspapers and magazines, to teach her students the four language skills. Besides, Huma informed that she often reviewed textbooks and story books of children in her family or the locality attending other schools, in order to share new and useful ideas with her own students. She explained that she incorporated additional learning material in her daily teaching:

> I take tuitions in the evenings, so I get a chance to go through the books of children attending other schools in the community which are different from STL textbooks. If I find any relevant topic of interest in their books, I make a note of it and share it with my STL students to supplement their knowledge.

The majority of the teachers believed that despite budgetary constraints, the management would procure additional reference books for the library if recommended by the teachers. Farah mentioned that initially there were no Urdu dictionaries available in the library and teachers would "dictate word meanings to the students" or ask them to "guess the meaning of words in an activity without consulting the dictionary." Farah therefore requested the principal to purchase Urdu dictionaries so that children could learn to consult dictionaries and use them in learning activities. She added that the principal recognized the utility of this learning resource and immediately arranged the supply of dictionaries to the library.

Conversely, five teachers gave a lukewarm response about availing additional learning resources. Tehreem considered the textbooks prescribed by STL as

comprehensive and adequate for meeting the intellectual needs of students. According to her:

> I do not feel there is a need to look up additional reference materials to supplement the prescribed textbooks; so I only consult library books occasionally.

Zarish, on the other hand, candidly admitted that she depended entirely on prescribed textbooks and saw no reason in carrying out additional research:

> There is no need to consult extra books because the prescribed textbooks contain requisite information and I am satisfied with them. Besides, I do not have time to search for books in the library and I usually just modify the questions in their textbooks, knowing that children score higher marks when they stick to the prescribed textbooks.

Planning and providing staff development. Survey and interview responses of participants showed that few teachers took the initiative to design staff development programs and/or provide staff development to their colleagues. As Table 25 demonstrates, only eight of 34 survey participants indicated that they designed staff development programs whereas, seven of 34 teachers (see Table 26) imparted professional development to their peers during their the monthly Staff Development Day or the annual In-service Training (INSET). Approximately 77% of the teachers said they had never been involved in designing in-service training programs and 79% of the teachers indicated that they had never provided in-service training to their colleagues.

Table 25

Planning and Designing Staff Development

Planning and designing staff development	Frequency	Percent
No	26	76.5
Yes	8	23.5
Total	34	100.0

Table 26

Providing Staff Development

Providing staff development	Frequency	Percent
No	27	79.4
Yes	7	20.6
Total	34	100.0

To facilitate additional input regarding teachers' perceptions of their roles in planning and providing staff development at ZSS, participants were asked to expand upon their survey responses during the interviews. Eshal recollected that her desire to become a teacher educator was first kindled when she "attended in-service as a trainee "and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. She added that the following year, the principal asked her about her willingness to travel outstation to undergo the comprehensive Training of Trainer (TOT) Program in order to become a master trainer. Eshal immediately accepted the offer and subsequently cleared the qualifying assessment for

master trainers. She described her first in-service training experience as "daunting and exhilarating" at the same time because it involved "imparting key concepts" to a diverse group of teachers, some of whom were more "knowledgeable and accomplished" than she was. In the process, she also acquired "organizational skills to efficiently manage time," and to prepare relevant and "informative hand outs and display charts for every session." Eshal praised the management for supporting her in effectively imparting her first INSET.

Furthermore, Amina recounted that the "principal offered to send her for training as a Master Trainer". Consequently, she successfully qualified the selection test" and attended the Training of Trainer (TOT) program for 15 days. Describing the master training program as "comprehensive, rigorous, conceptual and activity based," Amina related that she returned to her school to deliver in-service training in her subject area. She shared that master trainers had autonomy to adapt the pre-designed training modules according to the needs of the trainees, noting:

> The training manual was prepared by the NGO training wing but I had the
> freedom to incorporate correlated themes, concepts and activities in the manual. I
> felt that some of the examples given in the manual were not adequate or relevant
> to the topic under review so I added my own examples from real life situations.
> Even though the training module is developed by the NGO, the master trainers are
> given free rein to improvise as they see fit.

Another teacher educator, Humaira revealed that she was not "really interested in becoming a master trainer" and was encouraged by the principal to take the final plunge

in that direction. She recalled that the "principal had approached many teachers" and offered to send them to the Training of Trainers (TOT) Program but "none of them had agreed, owing to domestic reasons." The principal eventually persuaded her to go using the argument that, unlike some of her colleagues, she was free from "domestic constraints," thereby reposing confidence in her ability to become a master trainer. Humaira expressed her feelings accordingly:

> In the beginning I was hesitant to assume this responsibility but once I went for training, I really enjoyed the experience. Since the past four years I have been serving as a master trainer in this school and I try to provide instructional scaffolding assistance to novice and experienced teachers not just during professional development but throughout the year, to help them meet pedagogical challenges and master the art of teaching.

Staff Development Day. A few interview respondents shared that they participated in the monthly Staff Development Day (SDD) not just as learners but also as mentors. They explained that sessions were conducted by the academic coordinator, the senior teacher or any regular teacher with expertise relevant to the selected training topic. The "training modules for SDD sessions were also pre-designed by the NGO training team but mentors had the freedom to adapt them according to their needs." Similar to In-service training (INSET), the themes at the SDD sessions ranged from "content support across subjects and an exploration of "pedagogical approaches" and "assessment methods" to more generic themes such as "character building or ways to interact with parents and colleagues." Teachers elaborated that the management also utilized SDD for

sharing information about new school policies and inviting teachers' views about effective strategies to implement those policies. Amina stated that besides executing training during INSET, she had also delivered subject specific training sessions during SDD to improve teachers' conceptual knowledge and practical application.

Although not a master trainer herself, Sumra noted that she assisted the expert secondary Mathematics teacher in imparting training on key concepts during Staff Development Day. She elaborated that she thoroughly enjoyed the experience because the session was conducted in a "friendly and interactive manner." She also reflected upon her learning experiences in the annual in-service as a trainee, adding:

> When I first joined this school, I had no confidence at all. However, during in-service, all teachers, whether shy or bold, are asked to give presentations in front of their peers and to participate in group or pair activities. As a result, my confidence level has gradually grown.

Another teacher, Farah revealed that she had a strong desire to become a Master Trainer but owing to family restrictions against travelling outstation, she was unable to attend the TOT. However, she was able to satisfy her desire for conducting professional development when she was asked by the principal to deliver training on techniques of improving students' handwriting skills on SDD. In her words:

> The entire school faculty attended my session and I learnt a lot through this experience. Since then, the management has included the topic of 'improving students' handwriting skills' as an essential component of the yearly School Improvement Plans.

Sarah too admitted that her "family did not permit" her to travel alone out of the city to attend the Training of Trainers (TOT). Nonetheless, she volunteered to participate in the NGO's adult literacy program called 'Aagahi' first as a trainee and then as a trainer for nearly three years. After undergoing training in adult literacy, Sarah imparted functional skills in basic Urdu to approximately 30 to 40 mothers of ZSS students, and local women who could not read or write. These evening sessions were conducted at the adult literacy center opened at ZSS after school hours. She explained that the aim of the program was to create ownership amongst the community by teaching basic reading, writing and calculation to uneducated mothers with a view to improving their communication abilities, self-confidence and their ability to become more involved in their children's education and monitor their homework and academic performance.

Nearly 64% of the survey participants agreed that they had never designed or provided staff development at ZSS. When asked why they had never undergone training as master trainers or conducted professional development during the annual INSET, 15 of 22 teachers cited family restrictions, domestic compulsions, distant training venue and low motivation to participate as reasons for their lack of involvement in planning and imparting staff development. Umber explained that her parents were "educated and generally supportive," but when the principal requested her to impart training on Urdu concepts during INSET, she declined on grounds that her parents "would not allow her to travel to the training venue situated at a distant location." Additionally, Shama confided that even though she had been teaching at ZSS for nearly half a decade, she had never

provided staff development either during INSET or on SDD because she "lacked confidence to train teachers." She elaborated upon this view in the following excerpt:

> While I can teach children, I feel I haven't as yet acquired enough expertise to train teachers. Perhaps I might muster a little courage to train teachers belonging to my grade level, but I would feel overwhelmed if I were asked to train teachers from all grade levels as is the norm on Staff Development Day.

Sumra was more articulate in expressing her reservations about becoming a Master Trainer. She informed that when the principal asked about her concurrence to attend the TOT program, she declined because her parents would not have permitted her "to travel so far away and stay out of the city" for nearly two weeks, explaining:

> Maybe, if I try to convince my family, they might agree to let me go but I have never attempted to do so due to my preoccupation with my teaching responsibilities and my studies. To be honest, I myself do not want to become a Master Trainer because it involves a lot of responsibility. I am reluctant to shoulder leadership responsibilities because I am occasionally careless, and fear that I might mess up things, but if a decision-making task is assigned to me, I do try to accomplish it to the best of my ability.

Curricular Decision-Making

The second broad theme emerging from teachers' survey and interview responses about shared decision-making practices was curricular decision-making. This included practices such as curriculum planning and development and providing feedback about prescribed textbooks.

Curriculum planning and development. A prominent theme reflected through teachers' survey and interview responses was the degree of their participation in curriculum development. Table 27 demonstrated the role and degree of teachers' involvement in the areas of curriculum planning, development, implementation and assessment. Survey responses to Question 13 were mixed as 53% of the teachers indicated that they had no role in designing the curriculum or choosing the course textbooks for the subject they taught. Forty seven percent of the survey respondents agreed that they participated in curriculum planning and development.

Table 27

Curriculum Planning and Development

Curriculum planning and development	Frequency	Percent
No	18	52.9
Yes	16	47.1
Total	34	100.0

To follow up on teachers' survey responses pertaining to participation in curriculum planning and development, the 22 interview participants were asked to describe their roles in designing the curriculum and selecting textbooks (Interview Questions 7, see Appendix D). Teachers' interview responses about their role in designing the curriculum were found to be inconsistent with their survey responses. During the interview, all 22 teachers revealed that they had no role in curricular decision-

making domain because the school was registered with the Board of Secondary Education and all Board classes (Grades 5, 8, 9 and 10) followed the curricula prescribed by the provincial Textbook Board. Additionally, non-Board classes (Grades KG to 4 and Grade 6 to 7) followed the curricula and textbooks designed and prescribed by the NGO Spread the Light's (STL) curriculum wing. Teachers also shared that the STL academic team had developed detailed Teachers Guides across subjects to support and strengthen their pedagogy as well as the syllabus break up to determine the term-wise coverage of syllabus. Shama emphasized that teachers played no part in developing the curriculum, noting:

> The curriculum is pre-designed and we are told that this is the curriculum, these are your targets and you have to progress accordingly.

To address the discrepancy between participants' survey and interview responses, 12 of 22 interviewees were asked to explain why they had indicated in their survey responses that they participated in curriculum planning and design when the curriculum was developed by either the provincial Board of Education or STL curriculum wing. Teachers responded that even though the curriculum and textbooks were prescribed, they did play a role in adapting the Teacher Guide and the syllabus break up to suit their peculiar teaching requirements to some extent. Zara, a secondary teacher explained that although the textbooks were predesigned by the provincial Textbooks Board, secondary teachers had the "freedom to make adjustments in the syllabus break up," deciding in what "order it would be practical" to cover the given topics considering the time needed for coverage of each topic and the learning abilities of the students. She elaborated:

Secondary teachers have more autonomy to effect changes in the syllabus break and the Teacher Guide without seeking prior permission of the principal. The only requirement being, that we should ensure, the coverage of all topics prescribed in the curricula so that students do not face any problems in their examinations.

Additionally, Amina observed that even though she did not design the curriculum; she did "plan the monthly breakup of the syllabus for her subject" so that she could "remain on track every month" to meet the curriculum goals she had set for the year. She further stated that she incorporated activities in the Teacher Guide or simplified existing ones according to her students' learning capacity. In a similar light, Parveen affirmed that she made "slight adjustments to the syllabus break up" by dividing the textbook chapters in a "sequence according to the estimated time" it took to cover them. On the other hand, Noreen, a primary grade teacher disagreed, pointing out that teachers were required to follow the STL designed Teacher Guide as it was for a year or two and could only revise it after approval from the management.

Providing feedback about prescribed textbooks. Additionally, nine of 22 interviewees who followed the curriculum prescribed by the NGO, pointed out that the management solicited teachers' verbal and written feedback about the quality of the STL designed textbooks within a year of their introduction. The suggestions were then forwarded to the senior NGO management, which in turn "processed these suggestions" for necessary incorporation in the books. Humaira noted that she responded positively in the survey about her role in curriculum planning and design because:

A year after the textbooks were adopted, the management sought our feedback about whether we found the books designed by them suitable in all respects, or were there any areas in these books that required modification. The individual views expressed by the teachers were then consolidated by the Academic Coordinator and duly submitted to the NGO curriculum wing for the needful.

In the same way, Shama was "happy" that the management asked for teachers' views regarding the positive aspects and the gaps in the prescribed STL textbooks. She noted that teachers were asked to identify topics students found stimulating or uninteresting and also to specify topics teachers felt were difficult to impart to their students. Following this further, Maliha acknowledged that the management had requested all relevant subject teachers to provide input about the Science, Social Studies, Islamiat and Mathematics books designed by the NGO curriculum wing. She also recalled an incident four years back, when the management introduced activity worksheets for the first graders, elaborating:

> I noticed that children would fill out those worksheets very easily, so all first grade teachers advised the management to design more challenging worksheets to stimulate students' critical thinking. The curriculum wing acted upon our advice and introduced more complex worksheets the following year. You see change does come gradually, and our opinions as teachers are duly regarded.

A majority of interviewees acknowledged that the STL curriculum wing had designed quality textbooks that catered to the learning needs of a diverse group of

students. Nevertheless, 15 of 22 teachers suggested that teachers should be included in decisions pertaining to curriculum development. Tehreem averred:

Even though the NGO designed text books are satisfactory and match students' learning abilities, I still feel that subject teachers' input should be sought before developing the syllabus. Instead of asking us for feedback a year after introducing these books, the management should form a representative panel of subject teachers and solicit their views about suitable topics to include in the textbooks.

Huma observed that teachers had "a lot of experience in the classroom," hence, it was imperative to solicit their input in planning and developing the syllabus, in choosing relevant topics to include in the syllabus and in working out the term-wise syllabus break up. Supporting this view, Zara underlined that teachers should be allowed to "use their discretion" in the breakup of syllabus according to students' learning needs. In addition, Komal expressed similar thoughts advocating the need for teachers to be given a central role in curriculum development. According to her:

We have to teach and we know the problems we face in the classroom so the curriculum should be more specific to our needs.

Moreover, Shama strongly felt that the textbooks prescribed by the NGO were "quite good," yet it would be more beneficial if the management checked with teachers regarding the contents before preparing the textbooks, contrary to its current practice of seeking feedback a year after introducing the books. She noted:

Teachers should be asked about suitable topics to include in the syllabus as per students' mental level because teachers deal with students of diverse learning

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abilities and they can better guide the management about which topics students would commonly find more interesting.

The interview excerpts presented above reflected teachers' perceptions of a possible route for meaningfully engaging teachers in the practice of curriculum planning and development. Teachers largely recommended that a representative group of prominent subject teachers should be associated with the process of revision and selection of textbooks prior to their introduction in the school so that they could give their expert opinion and feedback to facilitate this exercise.

Managerial Decision-Making

Eight sub themes were categorized under the broader theme of managerial decision-making practices. These included: providing feedback to parents, mobilizing school community to enhance enrollment, performing discipline duties, organizing and participating in school events, collecting student fees and filling scholarship forms, preparing daily duty schedules, teacher hiring and budget.

Providing feedback to parents. Besides knowledge sharing and collaboration, teachers' engagement with parents emerged as a significant theme from the survey and interview data on teachers' participation in shared decision-making activities. As Table 28 showed, 30 of 34 survey participants (88%) regularly interacted with parents about learning expectations and provided them feedback about their children's progress. The four participants who indicated that they did not communicate with parents were all new teachers, three of whom had barely joined the school a month back. These findings revealed that a majority of teachers at ZSS believed that engaging with parents and

community members and enlisting their support in improving students' academic outcomes was a key component of shared decision-making.

Table 28

Providing Feedback to Parents

Providing feedback to parents	Frequency	Percent
No	4	11.8
Yes	30	88.2
Total	34	100.0

Researchers have described shared decision-making as an inclusive process involving all education stakeholders including teachers, parents, community leaders, school board representatives and government officials in essential school based decisions (Correa & Bauch, 1999; Lashway, 1997; Stewart, 2007). Schools that actively engage in shared decision-making involved parents in formal Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) invited them to volunteer in management committees related to instruction, student management, personnel, community resource, or facility/budget management (Stewart, 2007). At Zafar Secondary School, there was neither a Parent Teacher Association, nor any formal leadership/management councils to facilitate parents' involvement in school-wide decision-making. Yet, despite the absence of a PTA or other platforms for parents' inclusion in shared decision-making, all teachers indicated that parents were integral to

the decision-making process because parents can play a primary role in their children's literacy development, learning and achievement.

To gain deeper insight into teachers' survey responses pertaining to interaction with parents, the 22 interview participants were asked follow up questions in this regard. In Interview Question 15, teachers were required to discuss the ways in which they involved parents in their children's learning and encouraged them to participate in school activities. The responses were once again unanimous, with teachers explaining that there was "no Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in the school to engage parents in decision-making about the education services" their children received. However, regular Parent Teacher meetings (PTMs) were scheduled twice a year to keep parents informed about their children's performance and progress in class. Teachers believed that notwithstanding the fact that a majority of the community parents were unschooled, it was important to forge home and school partnerships because "parental attention towards their children's studies at home" and "cooperation and engagement in school" could lead to better academic outcomes for students. They asserted that despite all odds, they tried to reach out to parents beyond the four walls of the school, encouraging them to cooperate with teachers by regularly sending their children to school, organizing and monitoring their children's study time at home, helping out with homework as much as possible, potentially reading out to younger children and being read to by them and lastly, discussing school matters with their children to give them the impression that they ascribed priority to their education. Teachers revealed that they regularly held meetings with parents to keep them informed about their children's progress and motivated them to

attend school events such as Results Day, Parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs) and the final prize giving ceremony at the culmination of Student Week. Fatima, one of the longest serving community teachers reflected this view in the following excerpt:

Basically, we hold two meetings with parents in a year. Besides these, if we feel the need, we call the concerned parents to school to discuss problems related to their children's studies or discipline. We have to make concerted efforts to encourage these parents to take interest in their children's education because a lot of them are not even aware of what their children are doing in school. For instance if a student routinely comes to school in an untidy and disheveled state, we call the parents and request them to be particular about their hygiene and ensure that their child is properly dressed for school.

Another local teacher, Ayesha echoed Fatima's views, reiterating that she usually met parents during PTMs and that some parents visited her at home to seek her guidance about school related problems, adding:

I do not know about other community teachers, but these parents give me a lot of respect and follow my advice. I am a local teacher and the advantage of belonging to the community is that the community members know me well and pay attention to my advice. My colleagues often request me to counsel some of their students' parents who are not cooperative. So I discuss the matter with the parents and thankfully, they listen to me and almost always give me a positive response.

Ayesha discussed in detail various occasions on which she took initiatives to interact with parents and gave them feedback about their children's learning abilities and

behavioral issues. Besides Parent Teacher Meetings that were held twice a year, she made it a point to call parents of irregular children to school and asked them why their children were "irregular, inactive or lethargic." She elaborated that there were some children in her class who became "agitated over petty matters and picked up fights with other children" for no rhyme or reason. In such cases, she would call their parents and ask them the reason for their child's aggressive behaviour and whether it was because of some problem at home. Ayesha further stated:

> Occasionally, children disclose to me that they did not have breakfast that day because of a fight between their parents. So I meet their parents and counsel them not to vent out their anger and frustrations on their children. At times, when I ask children why they haven't brought their monthly fee, they quote their mother as saying that she did not have money to pay their fee. Hence I advise their parents not to say such things in front of their children because it would lower their confidence and adversely affect their self-esteem.

Both Parveen and Sarah asserted that they tried to convince parents, particularly mothers, to pay attention to their children's studies and guide them as best as they could. Sarah, a local teacher tried to get parents of underperforming students to meet her at least twice a month. During those meetings, she informed them about the subject areas in which their children were struggling, and encouraged them to support her in closing the gap by helping their children at home in those areas. While she asked parents to assist their children with school work, she did realize that most of the community parents

probably lacked the knowledge and expertise to do so. So she suggested that if they were unable to, they could send their children to her in the evenings for extra coaching.

Findings suggest that Pakistani community teachers' perceptions of engaging parents in shared decision-making were limited to regularly communicating the academic needs and progress of their students to parents and involving them as active and responsible partners in supporting their children's academic development because parents were experts about their children. This conception was influenced by contextual factors such as the socio-economic status and demographics of parents and the community that prevented the school from engaging parents in school-wide decision-making in more involved ways. Many teachers believed that it was "difficult to ascribe a larger role to parents in school-wide decision-making" because: first, a majority of the parents were uneducated and often aggressive and quarrelsome, and second, parents could not commit a lot of time in volunteering for school wide activities because they were mostly daily wage earners employed as laborers or domestic helpers. Maliha, a long serving teacher, alluded to the impediments of involving community parents in school-wide decision-making to a large extent. She recounted that when the school was established, parents rarely participated in parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs) or other school events. However, due to consistent guidance and motivation by teachers, there had been a "slow but steady change in parents' attitude" and interest towards their children's learning. She reported that in in the past four years, there had been "100% attendance of her students' parents at PTMs." Hence, she believed that the degree of interest parents took in their children's education was not only dependent on parents' own mindset but also subject to the

"teachers' ability in motivating parents to become more involved in their child's academic development."

Noreen too underlined the challenges of dealing with parents from this particular community and delegating a wider role in school-wide decision-making to them. She narrated that some parents got "upset even if their child's monthly fee was raised by merely ten Pakistan Rupees" (equivalent to US 10 cents) or if they were requested to contribute towards school supplies and they immediately threatened to "withdraw their children from school." To prevent parents from taking away their children, some teachers volunteered to "pay the extra fees from their own pockets," adding that it was "very difficult" to make such parents understand the school requirements and dealing with them became "frustrating" for teachers.

Finally, Bismah disclosed that teachers often had to "assume the role of counsellors" in enlisting parents' cooperation in enhancing their children's academic outcomes. They first tried to "gain an understanding of parents' psyche" and then motivated them accordingly. Bismah "encouraged parents to give priority to their children's education, assuring them that if their children studied even up to high school, they would be in a better position to earn their own livelihood and pay their way through college, besides rendering some help to their parents in meeting the day to day expenditures.

Involving parents inside the classroom and in school-wide activities. During interviews, teachers were asked if they generally tried to involve parents in pedagogical shared decision-making activities inside the classroom either by inviting parents to read

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out to students in class or to share practical life experiences related to any topic being studied by them. Teachers were also asked whether they encouraged parents to volunteer as classroom aides or to participate in school events. All of the 22 teachers responded in the negative, confirming that they had never taken such initiatives either because "such a thought had never crossed their mind" or because "a majority of the parents were uneducated" and lacked the capacity to meaningfully contribute to the classroom learning environment. Amina expressed the following views:

No we have not so far requested parents to volunteer for school activities but it is a good suggestion and I intend to propose that parents be involved in events like races or tug of war during the next sports day. That way they will feel more engaged in school activities.

For Ayesha, the idea of involving parents in school activities was a novel one as she stated:

No I have never invited parents to the classroom to share their experiences or to read out to children because the idea never occurred to me before, but I will definitely think on those lines now.

Farah identified a few ground realities that made it difficult for teachers to actively engage parents in school-wide decision-making activities. Among these was the fact that "ninety percent of community parents were uneducated," many of whom "could not even sign their names" or read basic texts. Additionally, she identified parents' traditional mindset as another impediment to involving them in pedagogical shared decision-making practices inside the classroom. Parents mostly belonged to low socio-

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economic status (SES) and ascribed "little priority to their children's education," instead preferring that their children earn a livelihood and "contribute to the household earnings." Meanwhile, Komal cited "time constraint" as an obstacle to parents' participation in school activities. She mentioned that mothers usually served as "maids at people's houses where as fathers were earning a livelihood as laborers" that required them to be at work during the day. She therefore felt it was "not always easy for working parents to find time" to attend school events or partner with teachers to engage students in classroom activities. On the contrary, Farah was of the view that teachers too faced time constraints and would "have to especially build in additional time within their lesson to accommodate parents' participation" in students' learning experiences in the classroom.

Moreover, Parveen shared that although she had never directly involved parents in classroom activities, she had once assigned students a home activity, requiring them to ask their parents and/or grandparents about what the cosmopolitan Pakistani city of Karachi looked like pre-partition compared to what it presently looked like. Parveen emphasized that parents actively participated in the activity and guided their children really well. She also recalled the occasion when she "invited a school maid from the local community" to facilitate a class discussion on what "the local community had been like four years back" and how had it evolved over the years. In the same way, Huma revealed that she had never engaged parents in classroom activities; however, as part of a Social Studies activity, she had assigned students the task of "interviewing community members from various walks of life," such as the local barber or the tailor and to ask them about their profession.

Finally Humaira informed that although she had not directly invited a parent to her classroom to contribute to students' learning, she had worked with parents to groom the personality of her students. She remembered one of her students who used to "get very emotional and anxious" in class. Humaira called the mother of the student to school to find out the reasons for her students' unpredictable behaviour. The mother informed her that she would often scold her daughter and beat her up for being disobedient. Subsequently, Humaira advised the mother to change her attitude towards her daughter and to treat her gently. She observed:

> Initially I found it difficult to deal with this student, but once I understood her nature, I tried to appreciate and encourage her to a greater extent. Through combined efforts of her mother and myself, we were able to bring a positive and significant change in her behavior.

Mobilizing community to enhance school enrollment. Teacher participants were asked if they engaged in the shared decision-making practice of mobilizing community support to enhance student enrollments. Responses to Survey Question 13, as illustrated through Table 29, indicated that less than half (44%) of the school teachers engaged with parents and the local community to mobilize support for increased student enrollments. Of the 15 teachers who indicated that they played a role in enhancing school enrollments, 13 belonged to the local community; hence, they had more opportunities to meet community members during social events and encourage them to send their children to ZSS.

Table 29

Engaging With Parents and Community for Increased Enrollments

Engaging with community for increased enrollments	Frequency	Percent
No	19	55.9
Yes	15	44.1
Total	34	100.0

As a follow up to participants' responses to Survey Question 13, interviewees were requested to discuss whether they played any role in mobilizing the community to increase student enrollment. Ayesha, a local teacher, was one of the 15 interviewees who made efforts to increase school enrollment. She explained:

> We meet parents in the community to tell them that our school offers good quality education and the fee is quite reasonable. Some community children cannot afford to send their children to school and instead, send them to me for home tuitions. I try to persuade them that I would try to get them considerable fee concession if they enroll at Zafar Secondary School.

In the same way Farah observed that when parents came to her at the end of the year to inquire about their children's academic progress, she encouraged them to share positive feedback about the school with acquaintances if they themselves were satisfied with their children's schooling. Farah also highlighted the "satisfactory standard of education and safe and supportive learning environment" at Zafar Secondary School to "people in her neighborhood," to convince parents to enroll their children there.

Moreover, Eshal noted that because a large number of teachers belonged to the community with "strong links" with the local population, the school strength largely comprised students from the community which was mainly on account of these local teachers' persuasion and enrollment efforts. Being a local teacher, Eshal disclosed that she indirectly increased enrollments by "voluntarily spreading awareness about the positive attributes of the school during social gatherings," such as weddings and/or religious events. She especially informed community members that students were treated affectionately and deserving high school students were encouraged to pursue further studies through the award of education scholarships.

Another community teacher, Farhana revealed that she privately tutored the community children in the evenings, some of whom were studying in other local schools. These children were academically weaker than her students from ZSS so she encouraged their "parents to shift them to ZSS" which offered better qualified teachers, a higher standard of education, lower fee and a more stimulating learning environment. Farhana took pride in the fact that she had been able to "motivate nearly 15 to 20 children to seek admission at ZSS." Similarly, Huma reported that she played an active role in convincing parents to send their children to her school. Like Farhana, she also home tutored a number of community children studying either at ZSS or at other local schools. When parents of children studying at other schools noticed that ZSS students performed relatively better than their own children, they sought her advice on "whether to switch their children to ZSS," a proposition that she fully endorsed. Farhana believed that a large number of student admissions at ZSS were due to the presence and influence of a sizeable

number of community teachers and the high level of trust and confidence reposed in them by the community members.

On the other hand, interview responses also showed that not all community teachers actively participated in increasing school enrollments. Sumra admitted that despite being a local teacher, she "did not interact much" with community members due to lack of confidence, adding:

So, apart from facilitating one or two student enrollment cases, I have not been able to play a significant role in mobilizing the community to enhance student enrollment. Actually I speak less and do not like to interact much with people. After joining ZSS, my confidence level has improved and I do make an effort to interact with my colleagues but not with community members.

Fatima, another community teacher revealed that owing to "cultural compulsions and family restrictions," she was "less inclined towards venturing outdoors" to attend social events. Hence, she got "little opportunity to meet and interact with community members" outside school and to play an active role in boosting student enrollments. Nonetheless, she emphasized that if any of her acquaintances asked her for advice regarding a suitable school for their children, she invariably asked them to enroll their children at ZSS. She cited the following reasons for her suggestion:

I feel that no other school in the area puts in half the time and effort into grooming children as teachers at ZSS do. Teachers here are not only responsible for imparting education to students but also for inculcating in them moral and social values, teaching them about hygiene and building their character.

Amina, a non-local teacher observed she found it difficult to mobilize community support for increased student enrollments because she did not reside in the locality. However, she emphasized that the both the Academic Coordinator and the primary school teachers, many of whom belonged to the community, were playing a crucial role in motivating parents to enroll their children in ZSS. Finally, Noreen clarified that she did not play a significant role in enhancing student enrollments because she did not belong to the community. Although she shared information about the positive characteristics of the school with underprivileged people in her own locality, they found it "difficult to access the school due to the distance involved and lack of transport facilities." On the whole, participants' interview responses were consistent with their survey responses, indicating that community teachers found it easier to work with the locals for enhancing student enrollments. This was mainly due to their familiarity with and access to the local community as compared to their colleagues who were outsiders.

Performing discipline duties. During interviews, all 22 participants asserted that they performed school discipline tasks such as morning, break and off-time duties, conducting the morning assembly, checking students' uniforms and late comers and substituting for their absent colleagues. Komal pointed out that "all school teachers were assigned discipline related duties" but these duties were "assigned equitably" keeping in view teachers' teaching schedules. This was done in order to avoid placing the entire burden on the shoulders of a few teachers. Amina described the nature of the duties, explaining that teachers had to ensure that students "walked quietly in an orderly line to and from their classrooms" instead of racing down the school hallways and causing

disruptions. Moreover, teachers maintained discipline by "preventing students from engaging in verbal abuse or physical aggression, "breaking up campus school fights," ensuring that no one got hurt and "safeguarding school facilities against vandalism." Amina added that teachers were also responsible for monitoring students' personal hygiene and ensuring that they followed school rules and kept the classroom and school premises clean at all times. Humaira also described her discipline related responsibilities:

> We have to come earlier than the rest of the teachers and the students to perform the morning duty. We ensure that students are disciplined; they are sitting properly and are not hurt during any scuffles with their peers. To maintain discipline, we try our best to prevent any student fights from occurring on the school premises.

There were mixed responses as to whether teachers' willingness was ascertained before assigning discipline duties. Some teachers including Eshal, Huma and Sarah responded in the affirmative stating that the management asked teachers whether or not they were comfortable in performing the assigned task and "exercised flexibility in cases where any teacher professed health problems." Sarah added:

> Sometimes, the management asks teachers about their willingness to perform a task and assigns duties through mutual consultation whereby teachers themselves volunteer for certain tasks. At other times, the management does not solicit teachers' views but itself assigns them duties based on their observations, prior knowledge and assessment of teachers' capabilities.

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Maliha explained that the academic coordinator prepared the timetable at the primary level and allocated discipline duties to teachers in their free periods, hence she felt there was no need to ask teachers when they would like to perform the assigned task. Zarish shared this perspective, underlining that teachers "had no issues" in performing the assigned duties because the management "scheduled them at convenient times" during their free periods.

On the other hand, other teachers such as Tehreem, Bismah, Ayesha, and Farheen disagreed with this view, emphasizing that the management allocated discipline duties to teachers "without first soliciting their views" and teachers were required to perform those tasks whether it suited them or not. Tehreem informed that the management did not ask for their preferences while assigning school duties, recommending:

> They should make us all sit together and ask whether we would like to perform morning, break or off time duties. We all come to school to work and will not shirk from our responsibilities, but if the process of assigning duties is made more collaborative and consolatory, teachers will show greater commitment towards their responsibilities.

Organizing and participating in school events. Another overlapping theme for participants' generic outlook on their roles in shared decision-making was teachers' organization of and participation in school events such as Student Week, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Pakistan Independence Day, etc. This theme exclusively surfaced in the interview data, highlighting the opportunities teachers got to discover, explore, and hone their leadership qualities by organizing different school events. Nearly all interview

participants, with the exception of the newly inducted teachers, confirmed their participation in decision-making activities during Student Week, in one capacity or the other. Based on their expertise and willingness, they were assigned any one of the following responsibilities: either a Student House In-Charge, or assisting the Student House In-charge in preparing students for the week long competitions, or overseeing students' discipline during the competitions, or attending to parents during the final day awards ceremony, or judging student competitions, or decorating the stage, or acting as the stage secretary.

Amina noted that teachers were assigned leadership and decision-making responsibilities based upon their willingness to participate and the management's own evaluation of teachers' capacity and suitability" in effectively carrying out the assigned task.

> Last year, right before student week, the management asked us if we would like to lead one of the four Student Houses during the competitions. I immediately raised my hand and got selected. My responsibilities as a Student House In-Charge involved reviewing and improving my House students' performance in various competitions such as tableaus, psalm recitation and singing competitions. On the last day of Student Week, an award ceremony was held to celebrate the achievements of teachers and students of the winning Student House.

Furthermore, Ayesha asserted that the management sought her concurrence before delegating her responsibility as In-Charge of a Student House in the previous year. She believed that the management considered her a suitable candidate for the position of

Student House In-Charge, owing to her ability to maintain discipline. Ayesha explained that during Student Week, teacher helpers were assigned to a Student House to collaborate with the Student House In-Charge in selecting and preparing students for various competitions between the four Student Houses, and in designing innovative activities under the Student Week themes specified by the management.

Huma clarified that the management allocated decision-making tasks to teachers in view of their strengths and capabilities. She cited her own example, observing that because she was known to be a strict disciplinarian, she was always given discipline related duties during school events. However, she sometimes desired that a more diversified range of duties were offered to her, noting:

> I do wish that the duty assigned to me during the next Student Week should be of a different nature, such as compering or acting as a stage secretary. I have expressed this wish to the school management with regard to the coming Student Week, hoping that they would accede to my request.

Collecting fees and filling scholarship forms. Yet another theme common to interview participants' general perspectives of shared decision-making practices included their roles in collecting the monthly student fees and overseeing the student scholarship process. More than half the teachers interviewed (14 of 22) believed that fee collection was a "shared workload of a clerical nature" that was thrust upon them and recommended that it be assigned to the school accountant instead. They explained that "due to funding constraints, the school could not afford to hire more than one Accounts Assistant."

Hence, class teachers were required to collect the monthly fee from their students and submit it to the Accounts office.

Amina felt that "fee collection was an extra-curricular task that required immense responsibility." While she maintained that teachers "should play an important role in school management," nonetheless, she believed that "fee collection was the responsibility of the school accountant" and should not be entrusted to teachers as it "interfered with their instructional responsibilities." Additionally, Fatima asserted that she had not volunteered to collect student fee, rather it had been "assigned" to her and other teachers by the "school management." Sharing her views about fee collection responsibilities, Fatima noted:

> Collecting students' monthly fees is time consuming as it reduces our teaching time. The only advantage I see in it is that teachers manage to get the job done quicker. As there is only one office accounts assistant, it is beyond his capacity to deal with 700 students or to pursue them for monthly fee so that they pay up.

Fatima's above response reflected a degree of resignation vis-à-vis managements' compulsion for assigning them a task for which they were not willing. Farah agreed with her colleagues that fee collection adversely impacted the lessons teachers planned for a forty minute class, as the first fifteen minutes were spent on fee collection, leaving insufficient time for the lesson and unnecessarily burdening the teachers.

While Sumra described fee collection as a "waste of teachers' time," Farheen noted that she would "much rather be involved in managerial tasks such as "preparing monthly student performance reports" or account letters that the school management

submitted to the senior NGO management than be asked to collect the monthly school fee. Moreover, Tehreem was vocal about her views pertaining to teachers' roles in collecting students' monthly fees, asserting:

Some teachers feel that fee collection is not their responsibility but the job of the office clerk or accountant. Sometimes, mothers barge into our classrooms while we are teaching and start arguing with us about fee related issues. It distracts our focus from our teaching responsibilities but we still try to accommodate them as best as we can.

Farhana perceived fee collection as both "beneficial and problematic." Benefits included closer interaction with parents which enhanced teachers' awareness of students' socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, they "understood better than the accountant why a student was unable to pay" the entire fee in a given month and could help him/her out in this regard. She further added that teachers would be saved from the trouble of offering repeated explanations to the clerical office as to why students were behind in their payments. At the same time, Farhana highlighted the challenges associated with collecting students' monthly fees, explaining:

You have seen the community and you know what kind of people live here. Despite reminders, parents do not come at the specified time to submit the fee and we often have to leave our class to collect it from them. At times we pay the fees of some students ourselves because parents have been delayed in submitting it on the due date.

In contrast, interview participants were more enthusiastic about fulfilling scholarship related responsibilities. Fifteen of 22 interviewees believed that filling scholarship forms was relevant to teachers' pedagogical responsibilities, as it enhanced teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students' family background. Farah explained that the scholarship form process entailed deriving information about students' SES, including the "fathers' occupation, family income, family size, number of school going siblings and their school fee" and then entering this data in the scholarship forms. Expressing positive perceptions about this extra-curricular duty, Farah noted:

> I do not consider this task a burden. Rather it gives me deeper insight into and greater empathy for the socio-economic problems faced by the school community and the varied domestic challenges my students encounter on a day to day basis.

Farah maintained that this information was relevant to the act of teaching in this particular milieu. She noted that when students did not complete their assignments for the simple reason that "their notebooks had been used up or that the ink in their pens had dried out" and they could not afford to replenish these supplies, it was then that she was able to connect this situation with her prior knowledge of their financial background. She stated that the management and the teachers tried to help out needy children by offering them free school supplies to ensure that "such impediments would not adversely impact their educational achievement."

Preparing daily duty schedules. Teachers' responses in Survey Question 13 indicated that only eight of 34 teachers (see Table 30) believed they were involved in decision-making tasks pertaining to scheduling of timetables, recess schedules and staff

meetings. Of these eight teachers, five taught at the pre-primary level whereas, the

remaining three taught at the secondary level. In contrast, nearly 77% of the survey

participants across the primary, middle, and secondary grade levels indicated that they

were not involved in decisions pertaining to scheduling timetables and staff meetings.

Table 30

Daily Duty Schedules

Daily duty schedules	Frequency	Percent
No	26	76.5
Yes	8	23.5
Total	34	100.0

Fatima explained that she, along with her pre-primary colleagues, designed their

own class timetables while the management prepared the timetables for primary and

secondary grade levels. She believed that it was beneficial for teachers to design their

own timetables because "teachers had a better idea about determining which subject to

schedule in the mornings and which subjects to schedule later in the day." Both Huma

and Shama upheld this view. Huma explained that the management set the teachers'

timetable, whereas the pre-primary teachers prepared the class timetable. Clarifying the

difference between the two, she noted:

> The management has decided that pre-primary teachers' daily workload should be
>
> at least five periods. However, class teachers have the autonomy to decide how

best to utilize these periods and which subjects to teach in which periods. For instance, if Grade two is divided into three separate sections, the class teacher of each section may schedule the English period at a different time, hence the class timetables of all three sections will vary.

Shama echoed the thoughts of her colleagues, reiterating that pre-primary teachers had the freedom to design their own class timetables and take critical decisions about which subject to teach in which time slot. She felt it was important for teachers to have autonomy in designing the timetable because:

> A teacher is more aware of her students' disposition and learning abilities than the management. She knows when would be a good time for students to grasp a subject quicker. That is why I schedule tougher subjects such as Mathematics, English or Urdu in the mornings when students are fresh and alert, with relatively easier subjects involving more oral work scheduled after break when students are tired and their interest is in the wane.

On the other hand, Amina, a secondary teacher, observed that the timetable was designed by the Academic Coordinator and the Senior Teacher, however, "it was prepared after due consultation with the teachers." She added that the Senior Teacher sought secondary teachers' input about the number of periods per week they considered sufficient for the subject they taught. Bismah agreed with this perspective, noting that even though the management prepared the timetable, they showed flexibility in revising it if there was a clash of periods or if teachers had any issue with it. Additionally, Umber and Sarah observed that the timetable for primary and secondary grades was set by the

management and recommended that teachers' input about their preferences should be sought to some degree before finalizing the timetable. Komal, a secondary grade teacher acknowledged that the management designed the timetable but made an interesting observation when asked whether she thought teachers should have some role in designing timetables. She remarked:

> Practically speaking, I feel the management does not really need teachers' input while designing the timetable since they already prepare it in accordance with the subject requirements. Were they to solicit the opinions of each teacher, it would become impossible to design the timetables or duty schedules.

Teacher hiring. Cotton (1996) pointed out that in "times of greater centralized authority, districts and school boards have maintained control over decisions of education policy, hiring, budget and operations (cited in Rauls, 2003, p. 1). Education researchers and scholars have underlined the need to include many voices rather than the sole voice of the administrator in decisions pertaining to hiring personnel, planning, and developing curriculum and budget in order to change traditional views and practices in school-wide decision-making.

Teachers' lack of participation in the process of teacher selection was a theme that recurred both in participants' survey and interview responses. Table 31 depicted teachers' response to Survey Question 13, indicating that no teacher had participated in the teacher selection process at Zafar Secondary School.

Table 31

Hiring of Personnel

Hiring of personnel	Frequency	Percent
No	34	100.0

To verify this outcome, the 22 interview participants were asked to discuss whether or not they played a role in teacher hiring. Interview responses were fairly consistent with survey responses. An overwhelming majority of teachers indicated that the management did not involve teachers in selecting or hiring teaching staff at their school site. Rather, the teacher hiring process was largely overseen by the NGO and school management. Only two teachers indicated that they had been asked to observe a teacher candidate's demo and give feedback to the management but they confirmed that they had not been included in the interview process. Additionally, Teachers explained that not a single regular teacher was present on the interview panel during their own hiring process and only the "principal and the NGO Education Manager" were part of the interview panel.

However, a few primary and secondary teachers noted that when they had joined the school, regular teachers were not involved in the hiring process, however, more recently, a subject specialist was sometimes asked to participate in a teacher demo along with the principal, the Academic Coordinator and the Senior Teacher. Komal, a secondary teacher, quoted her own example in this regard:

I observed the subject candidates' teaching demo with the principal and the Senior Teacher. After the demo, the principal and the Senior Teacher asked me what I thought of the demo and whether I felt that the teacher candidate would be able to teach competently. I gave positive views about her demo but the final decision also rested on her performance on a written content knowledge test that the teacher candidate had to take.

Sixteen of the 22 interview participants believed that it was important for subject specialists to participate in the teacher selection process because "only an expert teacher could understand and more accurately assess the degree to which an aspiring teacher had command over her subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and classroom management." Hence, s/he could, in turn, give informed and meaningful feedback to the management about the applicant. Amina advocated the inclusion of subject specialists in teacher demos and interviews because she believed that expert teachers were well aware of the intricacies of teaching and had a much stronger grasp over content knowledge and pedagogical strategies than a new teacher. She noted:

It is possible that the new teacher candidate may not have received any prior training or may be unfamiliar with the activity based strategies that we are required to use in this school. If expert teachers are invited to observe new teachers' demos or attend the interview, they can better judge how the new teacher is teaching and how is she dealing with a wide range of students. In light of her pedagogical expertise, she can provide sound feedback to the management about the capabilities and competency of the aspiring teacher.

Shama also agreed with Amina's views, powerfully articulating this perception in the following excerpt:

The principal does not teach; it is teachers who teach, so they are more aware of the challenges a teacher faces in the classroom and how she can manage the classroom and resolve all pedagogical and disciplinary issues.

There were some divergent views of course, with six teachers indicating their lack of enthusiasm in participating in decision-making pertaining to teacher hiring owing to workload and an ingrained belief that a teachers' sole responsibility was to teach. Among them was Fatima who admitted that she was "not too keen on participating in the hiring process because she did not want to miss her classes, emphasizing that she would only be willing to participate in this activity in her spare time. Both Ayesha and Sumra argued for a more limited role for teachers in the induction process. They emphasized that they would only be open to attending aspiring teachers' demos as observers but were not prepared to sit on interview panels during the selection process. Ayesha expanded upon her feelings, pointing out that she believed that a teachers' primary responsibility was to teach and not oversee the teacher hiring process. Farheen was also convinced that the teacher selection process was the exclusive responsibility of the management. She felt that if "four to five persons" including the principal, Academic Coordinator, Senior Teacher and subject specialists, turned up to observe an aspiring teachers' demo, she might "become self-conscious and nervous" even if she was otherwise competent.

Budget. A final theme that arose in teachers' perceptions of their participation in decision-making both across the survey and interviews related to budgetary allocation and expenditures. Research indicates that, traditionally, decision-making authority pertaining to budget, curriculum, staffing, policy, and procedure was the singular responsibility of the school management and/or the school district office (Rauls, 2003). Survey participants were asked what aspects of shared decision-making did they participate in (Survey Question 13). As shown in Table 32, 33 of the 34 survey respondents (97%) did not participate in decision-making pertaining to budget allocation.

Table 32

Budget

Budget	Frequency	Percent
No	33	97.1
Yes	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

To further clarify teachers' perceptions, they were asked to discuss in detail if the management sought their input about budgetary issues. The interview results were consistent with the survey results as all 22 teachers noted that they played no role in budgetary matters, emphasizing that budget was exclusively overseen by the NGO and school management. With the exception of one teacher, all 21 teachers expressed satisfaction over the fact that the school management determined policies and practices related to budgeting. Shama affirmed:

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Teachers should have no role in budget allocation and I feel that the management should continue to oversee budgetary matters.

Zara agreed that the management should "oversee all budgetary affairs itself." Additionally, Sumra explained that while the management did not consult teachers about budgetary allocation and expenditures, it did however provide them with whatever teaching aids they required. Thus, she supported the idea of budgeting being managed entirely by the management. Tehreem seconded this view asserting that although teachers were not involved in budgetary issues, nevertheless, the management ensured the provision of any teaching aids or learning materials they required. She therefore had "no issues" with the management enjoying sole authority over budgetary decisions.

Maliha stated that budgetary matters were mostly handled by the Academic Coordinator and the principal, adding that owing to budgetary constraints, teachers tried to arrange props for school events themselves or requested students to bring them from home. Farheen too confirmed that the school budget was predetermined by the NGO Head Office. She explained that during school events, the stage arrangements were made by the school management; however, teachers and students provided costumes and props for tableaus. She stated that although the "school tried its best to meet teachers' needs for school supplies and teaching/learning aids," teachers were also requested to "develop cost effective instructional materials through raw materials" such as stones, glass, metal etc.

Nevertheless, while all interview participants believed that the management should continue to manage issues related to budgeting, 9 of 22 teachers felt that it should involve teachers in shared decision-making in the area of resource allocation to a limited

extent. Amina explained the nature of this involvement in greater detail. She felt that teachers' input should be sought in decisions about allocation of funds for essential teaching aids such as lab material for physics, Chemistry, Biology and Computer Sciences. She bemoaned the fact that the budget was already set prior to seeking teachers' views about their requirements. As a result, teachers were "cautioned against making demands that exceeded the budget." She emphasized that the budget should be prepared in keeping with teachers' input:

> The senior teacher asks us what school supplies we require for class décor or other purposes, and she prepares a list based on our feedback. However, we do not always receive all the school supplies we requested and have to manage on our own. I feel that teachers should be asked to identify items that are in short supply and to provide a list of teaching aids and school supplies they require before allocating the budget for school supplies.

Moreover, both Ayesha and Farah acknowledged that the school was a low-cost one and teachers mostly tried to use authentic materials as teaching aids. Yet, they felt it would be beneficial if some amount of the school budget was set aside for the purchase of good quality learning aids such as flash cards or props required for preparing tableaus or organizing events. Finally, Sobia was the only teacher who proposed a more involved role of teachers with regard to budget management. She recommended that teachers' opinions should be sought in critical decisions pertaining to resource allocation. Furthermore, she believed that teachers should be given basic training in budget planning and management because this knowledge would "facilitate more frugal and careful

utilization of school resources" besides helping teachers in more "efficiently managing their household budget."

Summary

To summarize, Research Question One pertained to teachers' perceptions of their roles in shared decision-making practices at ZSS. Combined results from the survey as presented in the tables, and interview findings reflected through teachers' excerpts, indicated that teachers' responses varied in their willingness, levels of autonomy, ability and degree of participation in different areas of decision-making. Survey and interview findings identified 14 decision-making practices that fell into three broad domains, namely pedagogical, curricular and managerial. Pedagogical decision-making practices included: knowledge sharing and collaboration, planning and providing staff development, setting standards, co-teaching and consulting additional instructional/learning materials. Curricular decision-making practices included: curriculum planning and development with sub themes such as effecting modifications in the syllabus break-up and Teacher Guides and providing feedback about prescribed books. Managerial decision-making practices included: providing feedback to parents, mobilizing school community to enhance enrollment, performing discipline duties, organizing and participating in school events, collecting student fees and filling scholarship forms, preparing daily duty schedules, teacher hiring and budget.

Findings revealed that majority of the teachers (70% to 100%) participated in decision-making practices such as knowledge sharing and professional collaboration, giving feedback to parents, collecting monthly student fees and filling scholarship forms,

performing school discipline duties, and organizing and participating in school events. Additionally, decision-making domains in which 20% to 60% teachers participated included consulting additional instructional/learning materials, setting standards for their own and their students' performance, planning and providing staff development, increasing student enrollments through community mobilization and preparing daily duty schedules. Finally, decision-making domains in which teachers showed little or no participation (1% to 10%) were budget, teacher hiring, co-teaching, planning and developing the curriculum, prescribing text-books, involving parents in classroom activities and formulating staff improvement plans such as salary benefits and leaves. It was found that amongst the different shared decision-making responsibilities in which teachers participated, knowledge sharing and collaboration were the most common.

Results indicated that teachers viewed knowledge sharing, collaboration, reflection, coaching and co-teaching as essential components of shared decision-making that enabled teachers to mutually reexamine their pedagogical beliefs and plan innovative strategies with a view to improving their practice and assuming instructional leadership in their professional milieu. Teachers' survey and interview responses revealed that they actively engaged in knowledge sharing and professional collaboration with their peers during 'Teacher Time', Staff Development Day, In-service training, School Improvement Plan meetings and faculty meetings. Teachers also reported engaging in meaningful collaborative experiences through shared planning time during break or free periods. However, a few teachers felt that these collegial interactions seldom extended across grade levels and other subject areas. Significantly, decision-making authority for

budgetary policy and procedures, curriculum development and hiring continued to be exercised by the NGO and school management. This was consistent with earlier research findings indicating that continued control over hard-core managerial domains such as budget, staffing and curriculum by the school boards was a manifestation of centralized authority (Cotton, 1996; Leech, 1999; Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995; Rauls, 2003).

Research Question Two: In What Ways Do These Teachers Feel Prepared to Assume Decision-Making Roles Within and Outside their Classrooms?

Research Question Two explored ways in which Pakistani community school teachers felt prepared to assume leadership and decision-making roles within and outside their classrooms. Prior research indicated that teachers' willingness to participate in shared decision-making practices was contingent upon various types of support, one of which was training teachers on the process of shared decision-making (Leech, 1999; Rauls, 2003). The rationale behind this thinking was that if teachers were trained in decision-making pertaining to management, curriculum and instruction, they would be empowered to access relevant information to inform such decisions and feel more prepared to work in collaborative environments (Stewart, 2007).

Teachers' Perceptions on Training Received for School-Wide Decision-making

To assess whether teachers believed they had the skills and knowledge required to effectively participate in leadership and decision-making responsibilities, teachers were first asked to respond to Survey Questions 10, 11 and 33 (see Appendix B) and then to respond to Interview Questions 10 and 11 (see Appendix D). Survey Question 10 asked teachers to indicate whether they had received any focused pre-service or in-service

training in the area of school-wide decision-making. As shown in Table 33, 82% of

teachers agreed that they had undergone some form of training in decision-making at

Zafar Secondary School.

Table 33

Training Received for School-Wide Decision-Making

Training received for decision-making	Frequency	Percent
No	6	17.6
Yes	28	82.4
Total	34	100.0

To gain a clearer understanding of the kind of professional development teachers

received in the area of shared decision-making, the 34 survey participants were asked to

describe concepts that were covered during the training through an open ended question

(see Survey Question 11). Overall, participants identified teamwork, knowledge sharing

and collaboration with colleagues, effective ways to interact with parents, school

improvement initiatives, class management and discipline maintenance as decision-

making topics covered during formal and formal training sessions in school. As one

participant observed:

In 2013, we received training on the topic 'team work. During the training, we

were taught how to work closely with our colleagues and how to interact with and

engage parents. We also learnt the importance of respecting our colleague's opinions, cooperating with them and helping them.

To acquire deeper insight into the nature of decision-making specific teacher education imparted to teachers, the 22 interviewees were asked to specify if they had ever been provided requisite training on school-wide decision-making, and if they had, then to describe the concepts discussed during the training (see Appendix D, Interview Question 11). Data derived through survey responses were fairly consistent with participants' responses during interviews. Findings revealed that the themes on which the views of all 22 teachers converged included teambuilding, interaction with colleagues, engaging with parents and fee collection and filling scholarship forms. A few teachers also mentioned receiving training on stress management, classroom management and discipline. Only two participants, Sobia and Farheen informed that they had received training on administrative skills such as budgeting in the previous schools where they worked. Sobia revealed that she had received informal guidance on budget management and designing discipline related rules and policies, whereas Farheen, a former school leader noted that she had undergone a month long training on management skills such as creating bank accounts, dispensing staff salaries, and maintaining school records.

Teambuilding and interaction with colleagues. With the exception of three teachers, 19 interviewees reported that they had attended one training workshop on teamwork during which they learnt about the qualities of a successful team leader, the benefits of working in a team, strategies for involving all team members in decision-making, and guidelines on how to apply this knowledge in the classroom. Additionally

teachers disclosed that although they had not undergone any formal training on developing interpersonal skills or on effectively interacting with colleagues, the management regularly guided them on ways to maintain friendly and cooperative working relations with their peers. Eshal provided details about the session on teamwork:

> In the very first INSET I attended, there was a brief session on teamwork. We were taught that there was no concept of 'I' in teamwork, only that of 'us'. So one person alone is not working but everyone is participating as a team. Hence the decisions taken must incorporate the views and suggestions of the entire team.

Farhana explained that through relevant pair work and group work activities, teachers learned how to define teamwork and became aware of the benefits and challenges of working in a team, as well as the aspects to consider when forming a team. She elaborated:

> To help us fully grasp the concept of teamwork, the trainers related teamwork to the metaphorical image of a string of beads in a rosary. Subsequently, we were asked to apply this knowledge of teamwork in our classrooms by involving students into pair work and group work activities to a greater extent.

Amina recounted that the principal used authentic examples to reinforce the concept of teamwork, observing:

> We were given the example of a man who is constructing a house on his own and then a contrasting example of a team of laborers constructing a house together indicating that the team of laborers succeeded in completing the construction much sooner than the single man.

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On the other hand, teachers noted that they had not received any staff development on how to develop interpersonal skills to enable them to effectively interact, collaborate and negotiate with their colleagues. However, they had received routine guidance from the management about maintaining cordial relations with their peers, and offering support to each other in areas such as improving students' academic outcomes and cooperating with each other in checking and rechecking copies and examination papers. Farheen underlined this point of view noting that during the session on teamwork, the principal advised teachers to "support their colleagues especially new teachers" by listening to their problems and providing guidance in areas such as lesson planning and delivery, class management and/or school discipline. Additionally, Sumra communicated that during the session on teamwork, the principal encouraged teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues from the same subject area by sharing mutual problems and devising strategies to improve their own practice and students' learning outcomes. She added that the session was beneficial in helping teachers connect theory with practice as it involved an activity whereby teachers were required to sit in groups according to their subject areas and mutually work towards pedagogical solutions.

Engaging with parents. Engagement with parents was another topic that repeatedly surfaced in teachers' conversations about the areas of decision-making they received training in. Interview participants unanimously observed that teachers had not undergone any formal and focused training on this topic; rather, they had regularly received informal guidance on ways to deal with parents and community members during in-service trainings, Staff Development Day, staff meetings, 'Teacher Time' and before

every Parent Teacher Meeting. Amina described in detail the strategies teachers learnt for effectively engaging with parents, noting that the principal counselled teachers to adopt a "polite and respectful tone" while communicating with parents. She recalled that during one INSET, the principal had used the 'sandwich' approach to teach them how to give effective feedback to parents about their children's performance. Amina explained:

> Teachers were instructed to first share students' positive points pertaining to their academic performance and discipline with their parents and then move to areas of average performance and eventually discuss their weakest areas so that "parents did not feel their children were being unduly targeted.

Moreover, Eshal acknowledged that when she joined school, she was prone to "losing patience with difficult parents and speaking harshly" to them. Subsequently, the principal guided her to deal with parents gently even if the child was at fault and to present students' weaknesses in such a way that parents "did not feel offended and belittled." Besides, Bismah explained that the management repeatedly advised teachers to engage in "constructive and low-key criticism" when interacting with parents because parents were mostly uneducated and could not handle negative criticism" so they had to be dealt with diplomatically. Sarah too reiterated that as per school policy, teachers were not allowed to behave harshly with students no matter what the reason. Pointing out that some mothers were too lenient with their children, the management guided teachers to invite fathers of underperforming students to school because fathers tended to be more responsible and firm with their children. Meanwhile Farah stated that parents in the community were not concise while discussing issues with teachers.

Teachers, on the other hand, had limited time at hand; hence, the management guided teachers in faculty meetings and on SDD about ways to effectively discuss important issues with parents in a brief manner without losing out their teaching time. Finally, Sobia and Farhana noted that the management guided teachers to avoid arguing with parents even if the latter became aggressive. Instead, they were asked to immediately bring the matter to the notice of the principal and she would in turn deal with them in her own way.

Fee collection and scholarship forms. Another theme that arose in teachers' perceptions of decision-making topics covered during teacher trainings was fee collection and scholarship forms. Survey and interview participants indicated that during faculty meetings and SDD, the management guided them on ways to derive scholarship related information from parents and fill it in the scholarship forms. They also revealed that they were taught to systematically maintain monthly fee collection registers to facilitate student fee collection. Amina emphasized that the Academic Coordinator gave teachers' a practical demonstration of how to maintain the fee collection register, and fill out the student scholarship Performa during Staff Development Day. Another teacher, Farah noted:

> In my first year in this school, I received training on how to collect students' monthly fees as well as filling out student scholarship forms because new teachers are unaware of these activities. So, the management particularly guides new teachers about gathering data on students' family background and socio-economic status and effectively entering that data in the scholarship forms.

Interview participants commonly observed that apart from one-time sessions on teambuilding and stress management and informal guidance pertaining to interaction with colleagues and engagement with parents, teachers had not been provided extensive training in various dimensions of leadership/decision-making such as the process of shared decision-making, negotiation skills, confidence and character building, interpersonal skills, teacher hiring and budget. However, they acknowledged that their training sessions on both subject specific and general topics were very interactive, involving pair and group work activities, hence indirectly boosting teachers' level of confidence and nurturing their interpersonal skills and abilities to negotiate with peers.

Teachers' Perceptions on Level of Preparedness for Assuming Leadership Roles

In order to gauge whether teachers at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS) felt adequately prepared to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities, teachers were asked to respond to Survey Question 33 and a follow up Interview Question 10 (see Appendices B and D). Survey Question 33 required participants to indicate whether they believed they were sufficiently trained to take on leadership responsibilities. Nearly 68% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt adequately prepared to assume leadership roles and engage in shared decision-making (see Table 34). Nearly 15% of the respondents were undecided, whereas 18% of teachers did not believe they were adequately trained to perform decision-making responsibilities.

Table 34

I Feel Adequately Trained to Assume Leadership Responsibilities

Age groups	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Less than 20 years	0	1	1	0	2
20 to 29 years	6	4	10	2	22
30 to 39 years	0	0	9	1	10
Total	6	5	20	3	34

Cross tabulation as per respondents' age group was carried out for this question. Cross tabulation results indicated that teachers' perceptions about whether or not they were adequately trained to undertake leadership roles were linked with demographic characteristics such as the age group teachers belonged to and the number of years taught in this school, besides other intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Table 34 illustrated that all six teachers who felt inadequately trained to shoulder leadership responsibilities belonged to the 20-29 years age category. Additionally, four of five teachers who were undecided about assuming leadership responsibilities also fell in the 20 to 29 years age category, with the fifth teacher belonging to the less than 20 years age group. Moreover, five of these teachers had taught at ZSS for less than a year, four out these eleven teachers had taught at this school for one to three years whereas only two teachers had taught at ZSS for four to six years.

These findings demonstrate that the 11 teachers who either felt totally unprepared to assume leadership responsibilities at ZSS or were uncertain about their ability to undertake decision-making responsibilities were part of a younger and relatively less

experienced group. With the exception of the two experienced teachers (4-6 years), most of these teachers had joined ZSS less than three years ago. Thus, it may be presumed that besides other intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as discussed later, both age and limited teaching experience in this school also contributed to enhancing these teachers' feelings of inadequacy in assuming leadership responsibilities.

To explore in greater depth teachers' perceptions of their levels of preparedness in taking on leadership responsibilities, the 22 interview participants were asked to explain whether or not they felt prepared to assume leadership responsibilities and to give reasons for their responses (Interview Question 10, see Appendix D). Interview responses were consistent with survey responses, whereby 16 of 22 teachers (73%) stated that they felt prepared to assume leadership responsibilities, four of the interviewees noted that they did not feel prepared to shoulder decision-making responsibilities, and two of the interviewees were undecided.

An analysis of the 16 participants' interview responses was conducted to understand more about why these teachers believed they were prepared to assume leadership responsibilities. Findings revealed that even though 14 of these 16 teachers acknowledged that they had not undergone formal training on requisite leadership, management and decision-making skills, they believed that intrinsic factors such as confidence and an inner drive motivated them to readily assume leadership responsibilities. Additionally, six of these 14 teachers also cited extrinsic factors including encouragement from the management and colleagues that helped them feel adequately prepared to perform leadership responsibilities.

Intrinsic factors for teacher participation in leadership roles. Most of the interviewees believed that they were self-driven and motivated to assume decision-making responsibilities even though they lacked intensive training in the area of leadership and decision-making. Teachers observed that although they did not receive intensive training in shared decision-making, they felt energized and determined to accomplish almost any decision-making responsibility assigned to them, explaining that their "level of motivation depended upon the "nature of the task." Teachers noted that there were some occasions, when they "felt uncertain about their ability to perform a task" in the beginning but once they began working on it, they realized that they could effectively carry it out it. Amina exemplified this perception in the following quote:

> Many times one feels that one is not fully prepared to assume leadership responsibilities but whenever I am given such a responsibility, I take it up as a challenge that I will try my best to accomplish it.

> Both Sarah and Farah asserted that they were "self-motivated" to shoulder shared decision-making responsibilities. Sarah had a firm belief that her "responsibility was not just to teach" but also to ensure that the "overall school environment remained positive." Hence, she took it in her stride to "maintain discipline" not just inside her classroom, but also in the entire school. Meanwhile, Farah reiterated that even though she had not received focused training on shared decision-making, she had "developed leadership qualities" in her capacity as a teacher.

> There is an inner drive that motivates me to confidently assume leadership responsibilities and fulfill them to the best of my abilities.

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Farah recounted when the principal suddenly handed her a training manual on 'improving handwriting skills' and asked her to impart training on the topic two days before Staff Development Day (SDD). She did not feel ready to impart the training session because she had been given little time to prepare for it, despite being familiar with the topic to some extent. However, she "took it up as a challenge" because she realized that the "principal had entrusted her with this responsibility after seeing certain leadership qualities in her." Farah noted that this experience instilled confidence in her and she felt she "would be more open" to imparting training on other topics during SDD in the likely future.

Like Farah, Parveen agreed that she was prepared to take on leadership responsibilities because she had "confidence in her own ability" to effectively perform such tasks. She noted:

> I first try to carry it out as best as I can and if I face any problems in executing the task, I do not feel any hesitation in seeking help from my colleagues or the management. I am not afraid about what people may think about me if I ask for help because I am here to learn from others and at the same time, to teach others. However, I also feel that I require focused professional development to hone my decision-making and leadership abilities.

Finally, Huma noted that even though she felt adequately trained to assume leadership responsibilities, she strongly believed that "learning was an ongoing process" and teachers needed to remain abreast of new developments. Hence, she underscored the need for more comprehensive training on varied dimensions of decision-making.

Extrinsic factors for teacher participation in leadership roles. As mentioned earlier, six of the 16 interviewees stated that they were prepared to undertake leadership roles due to the encouragement and support they received from the management, and their peers. These teachers elaborated that they felt more confident about performing leadership tasks because the principal constantly motivated and reassured them that if they encountered any problems, they could freely seek assistance from her or any of their colleagues. Farhana agreed with this point of view, observing that when she was first assigned the task of heading a Student House during Student Week, she was "hesitant to shoulder" this responsibility. However, through the support and guidance of the Academic Coordinator and her relatively more experienced peers, her confidence level gradually grew. She added: "Now if I am asked to head a student house again, I will have no hesitation in doing so."

Farhana however admitted that she felt prepared to take on leadership responsibilities only to a certain extent. This was because she believed teachers' needed more exposure to relevant and intensive professional development on shared decision-making to nurture their leadership skills and discover their potential to make sound decisions. Furthermore, Fatima, an experienced teacher revealed that she was "confident by nature" and fulfilled all her pedagogical tasks with a great sense of responsibility, asserting:

> I feel that I am prepared to assume leadership responsibilities. On occasions when I'm not clear about something, I immediately seek guidance from my

management and colleagues and get the work done. The management's doors are always open.

In the same way, Shama agreed that whenever the principal assigned her a leadership responsibility, she felt confident about undertaking the task due to support from the management and her colleagues. She shared that she was recently assigned responsibility as head of a Student House during Student Week and she managed to lead her House to victory.

Two of these teachers believed that even though teachers had not undergone formal, intensive training on decision-making, they had received training in some areas of decision-making such as fee collection, filling out scholarship forms, conducting student admissions, dealing with parents, and effective lesson planning and delivery that equipped them to assume shared decision-making responsibilities to some extent. Bismah echoed this point of view, noting that even though teachers had not undergone formal training on leadership, management and decision-making skills, the management "briefed and guided them" about the assigned leadership task. She further observed that she not only received support from the management, but was also self-driven in successfully accomplishing leadership responsibilities:

> When I was delegated the duty of In-Charge of a Student House, I was initially quite nervous, but I did satisfactorily complete the assignment through team effort. I am driven by the thought that I could always imbibe something meaningful from each new leadership role assigned to me.

On the other hand, two of these 16 teachers felt they had adequate knowledge and expertise to assume decision-making responsibilities owing to previous management related training. In this regard, Farheen, a former school leader noted:

I have prior managerial experience and had have undergone comprehensive training after my appointment as a school leader. Hence, I feel adequately prepared to assume any kind of leadership responsibility.

Similarly, Zara shared that although she had not received focused leadership specific training in this school, however she had received management related on the job training at another school she worked at in the evening. Therefore, she believed she was adequately trained to undertake leadership roles.

Feelings of inadequacy in assuming leadership responsibilities. In contrast, six of the 22 interviewees acknowledged that they did not feel confident enough or sufficiently trained to take on decision-making duties. Whereas Komal believed that decision-making was a "huge responsibility" she was unprepared to shoulder, Sumra admitted she "lacked self-confidence" to effectively assume leadership responsibilities, elaborating:

When I am assigned any leadership responsibility, I immediately feel nervous and reluctant; but I eventually manage to perform the task by seeking guidance from my colleagues and the management. If I mentally prepare and convince myself that I can accomplish the task, then I am able to do it. I am trying to change myself and I have gained confidence after joining this school.

Zarish too cited lack of confidence as a major reason for feeling unprepared to assume leadership responsibilities. She observed that she felt "self-conscious about sharing ideas for school improvement in a group" although she could comfortably discuss those views individually. The following excerpt reflects her thoughts:

I lack confidence to openly share my views with everyone because I am still relatively new in this school and feel that my suggestions will not be valued as much as those of my senior colleagues'. There are still some inadequacies within me which can be addressed through focused training in decision-making. Leadership responsibilities make me nervous because I worry that I might not be able to effectively perform the delegated task. So if such a responsibility is offered to me, I would actually wish to refuse it but in reality would not have the courage to do so, and so will end up performing the task as best as I can.

Both Umber and Tehreem stated that they felt unprepared for leadership roles because the training sessions they had so far attended on decision-making, had been too few to learn much about the concept of leadership and how to make sound decisions inside and outside the classroom. Tehreem noted that "no one was perfect" and there was always room for improvement. She therefore suggested that extensive professional development be conducted on topics such as confidence building and leadership to help teachers realize their potential as teacher leaders.

Teachers' Suggestions on Ways to Strengthen Decision-Making

During the interview, teachers were asked to share views on how the process of shared decision-making could be made more effective at their school. Amongst other valuable suggestions, 18 of the 22 interviewees (82%) advocated for comprehensive and focused training on different dimensions of shared decision-making to enhance the effectiveness of shared decision-making at their school site. Teachers generally observed that the term and concept of shared decision-making had seldom been discussed in school and teachers were "not entirely familiar with its various dimensions". Hence, they underlined the need for conducting comprehensive training workshops on decision-making and leadership skills during the annual in-service training (INSET) but and the monthly Staff Development Day (SDD). Six of the 22 teachers emphasized in their comments the benefits of focused training in the area of shared decision-making for teachers who suffered from low confidence. They observed that while some teachers were eloquent in front of their students, they lacked confidence in voicing their opinions to the senior management. Others tended to become confused while delivering their lessons during classroom observations hence earning an unfavorable report from the management. Consequently, these teachers called for intensive workshops on strategies of effective decision-making, character and confidence building, leadership and interpersonal skills. They believed that such focused trainings would particularly benefit teachers who were "shy" in seeking guidance from colleagues about pedagogy and would make them more informed about ways to inculcate confidence in themselves and to effectively interact with colleagues, parents, students and the management.

A novice teacher, Zarish admitted that low confidence and an inability to effectively articulate her views prevented her from openly expressing her thoughts and actively participating in the shared decision-making process. She exemplified this specific view in the following quote:

> During INSET or faculty meetings, all my colleagues are participating and sharing ideas except for me. I have knowledge about almost every topic that is being discussed during in-service and want to share my ideas with my colleagues but somehow I am unable to do so due to my inability to speak up. So we need some professional development on confidence boosting techniques, to teach us how best to interact with different types of people.

Furthermore, Farhana commented that every teacher had some leadership qualities which needed to be groomed to ensure she could fulfill that potential. She proposed that the management should give teachers "a free hand" and provide training in areas such as "character and confidence building" to enable teachers to confidently express their views. Moreover, Farhana suggested that teachers should receive training on interpersonal skills, the art of negotiation and ways to collaborate so that they could learn to be more receptive to diverse viewpoints and build friendly and supportive professional relationships with their colleagues in their collective pursuit to enhance student learning.

Other teachers, such as Komal, observed that teachers had to date, only received informal guidance on ways to deal with parents. She therefore suggested that formal training should be imparted to teachers on topics such as effective ways to interact with parents and engage with the community members, as well as the role of expert teachers in

teacher hiring. Noreen seconded Komal's views maintaining that in case teachers were to be "involved in the process of teacher hiring," they needed to be "taught the technique of asking relevant questions. Tehreem on the other hand underlined the necessity to impart time management skills to teachers to help them "successfully juggle" varied leadership and decision-making responsibilities both inside and outside the classroom. Meanwhile, Fatima believed that teacher training on shared-decision-making was particularly essential for "newly inducted teachers" so that they did not consider extra-curricular duties a burden, as well as for a "few veteran teachers who were shirkers" and avoided additional responsibilities.

Finally, it was noted that there were mixed responses to the general area for decision-making pertaining to budget. Whereas, a majority of the interviewees did not seem favorably inclined to receiving training on budgetary allocation, Parveen and Sobia were the only teachers who recommended that teachers be imparted "basic training in resource and budget management" so that they could learn to more prudently utilize school resources and spend efficiently without exceeding the allocated budget. Sobia captured this perception in the following excerpt:

Teachers' opinions should be sought in critical decisions and they should be given basic training in budget planning and management because this knowledge will facilitate more frugal and careful utilization of school resources besides helping them in more efficiently managing their household budget.

Summary

To sum up, Research Question Two pertained to teachers' perceptions of whether or not they felt prepared to assume leadership roles and responsibilities in school. Results indicated that 68% of the survey respondents and 73% of the interview participants agreed that they felt adequately prepared to assume leadership roles and responsibilities. Even though 82% of the survey participants indicated that they had undergone some form of training in shared decision-making, nearly 91% of the interviewees acknowledged that they had not received intensive staff development pertaining to shared decision-making but only one-time training sessions on teamwork, and stress management, training in class management and microteaching, besides informal guidance on fee-collection, filling scholarship forms, interacting with colleagues and engaging with parents. Fourteen of 16 teachers cited intrinsic factors such as self-motivation, inner drive and confidence and extrinsic factors such as support from management and colleagues that helped them feel sufficiently prepared to take on leadership responsibilities. On the other hand, six of 22 teachers indicated that they did not feel prepared to assume leadership responsibilities owing to low confidence and/or lack of exposure to focused, comprehensive staff development on various dimensions of shared decision-making. Participants' interview responses indicated that majority of the teachers at ZSS believed that the process of shared decision-making could be strengthened if teachers were provided intensive staff development in the areas of confidence and character building, interpersonal skills, process of shared-decision-making, strategies of effective decision-making, effective ways to engage with parents and community members, time management and the role of

expert teachers in teacher hiring. Only two teachers advocated for staff development in budget and efficient resource utilization.

Research Question Three: How Does the School Environment Influence these Teachers' Decision-Making Abilities?

Research Question Three examined how the school environment at Zafar Secondary School (ZSS) influenced Pakistani community teachers' decision-making abilities. To address this question, the 22 interview participants were asked to respond to Interview Question 16 (see Appendix D), requiring them to identify factors within the school environment that either helped them to participate or hindered their participation in decision-making roles. During interviews, two common themes emerged through teachers' responses about factors that encouraged them to participate in shared decision-making. These included a supportive school environment and self-motivation. On the other hand, teachers identified four themes pertaining to factors that impeded their participation in school-wide decision-making. These themes focused on time constraints, lack of inclination to participate, lack of support from management and negative attitude of colleagues.

Factors within School that Encouraged Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making

As mentioned earlier, teachers identified two encouraging factors that facilitated teachers' participation in decision-making, namely a supportive school environment and self-motivation.

Supportive school environment. Sixteen of the 22 interviewees indicated that the positive school environment, as characterized by supportive attitudes of the

management and colleagues, encouraged them to participate in school-wide shared decision-making. They believed that the management and teachers worked as a "well-oiled team" to ensure the smooth running of the school and teachers were appreciated for participating in shared decision-making beyond the classroom. Deliberating upon the management's cooperative attitude, many teachers observed that the management made concerted efforts to resolve their problems to the best of their ability, even apologizing and suggesting alternative solutions when they were unable to do so due to NGO policies and lack of authority. They also described the school environment as "friendly" where teachers "freely cooperated and collaborated with their peers."

This perception was effectively articulated by Eshal:

> Only two factors have kept me going in this school. First, is the friendly school environment and second, is the management's cooperative behaviour towards teachers. Here, every teacher is treated equally and evaluated according to the same criteria. There is no difference between a senior teacher, a preprimary teacher, an ELT teacher, a Science teacher, and an Urdu teacher. What I mean to say is that every teacher's opinion is respected and their performance is judged on the same criteria.

Eshal elaborated that she was particularly inspired by her colleagues' cooperative attitude because successful completion of any task entailed teamwork and support from colleagues. She also felt "happy" when the management openly applauded her efforts during faculty meetings, noting:

This kind of applause keeps me motivated and instills in me a new energy and determination to do something more challenging next time.

Amina agreed with Eshal that the cooperative behaviours of the principal, Academic Coordinator and the Senior Teacher encouraged her to participate in decision-making activities. She pointed out that the principal's "leadership style closely matched her own perception of an ideal school leader," adding that whenever she faced any problems pertaining to students or discipline, she "went straight to the principal who in turn tried to resolve her problems as best as she could."

In the same light, Humaira pointed out that constant motivation by the principal and positive attitude of her colleagues encouraged her to participate in decision-making activities. She described the relationship between the management and the teachers as a "two way street" due to their mutual efforts to resolve school issues and enhance student achievement. Like some of her colleagues, Humaira displayed understanding for the school management's compulsions noting that "there were times when the principal asked them to "follow certain policies without question," while at other times, the management solicited their views, and acted upon their suggestions. She elaborated that policies in which teachers' opinions were not sought had been designed by the "NGO management after a great deal of research" of best practices; hence teachers were required to follow those policies as they were.

Finally, Maliha found it "quite encouraging" the way the principal gave teachers a "free hand" in their pedagogical and decision-making responsibilities, always soliciting their views before taking any initiatives. She observed:

If teachers are not provided opportunities to participate in various decision-making, they will feel disheartened. Eventually the management does accept our suggestions and if they cannot in certain cases, then we understand that there must be some compulsion on the part of the principal and we decide not to press our point.

Self-motivation. Seven of the 22 interviewees emphasized that their own self-confidence and high degree of motivation encouraged them to participate in school-wide decision-making. Although Sarah felt that the school management was very helpful in involving teachers in decisions pertaining to student learning and school discipline, rules and policies, but she emphasized that she herself was "self-motivated" and confident in her ability to enhance her own and her colleagues' competence in order to facilitate school improvement. Furthermore, Ayesha believed that participation in decision-making responsibilities was "instrumental in enhancing teachers' level of confidence." She cited self-motivation and management's support as factors that encouraged her to participate in decision-making responsibilities other than teaching. In her words:

Usually the principal only has to ask me once if I would be willing to assume some leadership responsibility and I immediately agree. Even if am initially reluctant to perform a decision-making role, the principal encourages me by insisting that I have the capacity for the said role. Instead of pushing me to perform the task immediately, she reassures me that I can perform it the next day whenever I am ready.

Five of these seven teachers commented that they were inspired by the thought of bringing meaningful change in the lives of underprivileged children by nurturing them into good human beings and responsible citizens of society. Farhana felt "invigorated by the vision and mission of the school" she served. She saw herself as an integral part of a social movement striving to remove barriers of class and privilege by creating quality educational opportunities for the marginalized segments of society. She noted:

Let me say that Spread the Light (STL) is an organization where one is automatically motivated to work and give one's best. On the one hand, the teaching style that we are encouraged to adopt is very creative and activity based and on the other hand, it gives us a good feeling that we are educating children who are underprivileged, and whether or not we get good salaries, we continue to remain motivated owing to this noble mission.

In a similar way, Fatima, a community teacher noted that her primary motivation in participating in school-wide decision-making was to "create a conducive learning environment for underprivileged children" from her community, asserting:

I want them to attain quality education so that when they graduate and pursue higher studies or careers, people should say that these children received good schooling.

Umber noted that she was driven by the desire to enhance the learning capacity of these underprivileged children through quality learning opportunities so that they could progress in life and "carve out a more promising future" for themselves than their parents could. Bismah's and Zara's views reflected Umber's, underlining that they participated in

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school-wide decision-making because they wanted to create an "enriching learning environment" for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and empower them to utilize their education in improving their future prospects.

Factors within School that Discouraged Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making

Interview participants identified four issues within the school environment that discouraged them from participating in school-wide decision-making. The most common constraining factor indicated by more than half the teachers was time constraint. This was followed by three other constraining factors including lack of inclination to participate, lack of support from the management and negative attitudes of colleagues.

Time constraints. Nearly 55% of the interview participants (12 of 22 teachers) believed that successful implementation of shared decision-making in their school would require significant time investments on the part of teachers beyond their teaching commitments. These teachers identified time as a significant barrier in their active and more meaningful involvement in school-wide decision-making. They believed that a huge workload pertaining to their pedagogical responsibilities and the additional task of collecting students' monthly fees and filling scholarship forms considerably disturbed their lesson planning. Hence, they found themselves lagging behind in copy checking and in covering the syllabus. Many interviewees noted that due to an inflexible timetable, "break and 'Teacher Time'" were the only occasions during which they could possibly get involved in shared decision-making. Others pointed out that they wished to participate in decision-making beyond the classroom but time was short and they were sometimes "required to substitute" for teachers who were absent, hence "leaving little

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time to collaborate" with their colleagues in their free periods. As a result, they recommended that the management provide them "another free period" to facilitate their active engagement in school-wide decision-making activities. Farah reflected this point of view in the following excerpt:

We have limited time to collaborate with each other. 'Teacher Time' only spans 30 minutes which is not sufficient for teachers to interact with teachers across grade levels. I believe there should be one additional period besides 'Teacher Time' and our free period so that teachers can easily participate in decision-making activities.

Komal agreed with Farah that there was insufficient time for teachers to participate in decision-making beyond their classrooms, explaining:

We have a lot of teaching responsibilities involving intensive lesson planning and copy checking which takes up all the time available to us in our only free period. However, I feel that 'Teacher Time'' is a good initiative for teachers to get together and collaborate with each other.

Another teacher, Fatima observed that insufficient time prevented her from participating in shared decision-making activities. She feared that if she participated in too many extra-curricular activities, it "might be at the expense" of her teaching duties and that her students might consequently suffer, noting "I do not wish to lag behind in lesson planning or coverage of the syllabus." Fatima also disclosed that she had served as Head of Pre-primary for three years. As Head of the Pre-primary section, she was involved in checking teachers' lesson plans, guiding and training new teachers about

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pedagogy and class management and maintaining and checking teachers' attendance registers. However, she found it difficult to juggle her dual responsibilities owing to time constraints, observing:

> I eventually left this position after three years because I used to get tired in balancing my pedagogical responsibilities with my supervisory role as Head of the Pre-primary section. Moreover, I felt that because of my dual responsibilities, I was giving less time and attention to my own class and the substitute teacher was not teaching the children as effectively as I myself would have.

Meanwhile, Ayesha affirmed that she was only willing to carry out decision-making tasks during regular school hours and "could not commit more time to these tasks by staying back after school owing to domestic obligations." Similarly, Tehreem noted that she had never engaged in collaborative activities such as co-teaching due an inflexible timetable and the pressing need to cover a voluminous syllabus. She stated;

> Unusually I guide teachers and seek help from them during break or 'Teacher Time'. We have to take six periods in a day, so we get only one free period and one 'Teacher Time' in which we are mostly checking copies and whatever time is left, we utilize it for seeking guidance from our colleagues on pedagogical issues.

On the other end of the spectrum were ten teachers who believed that the management provided teachers sufficient time through 'Teacher Time', SDD and INSET to mutually discuss pedagogical and discipline related problems and find solutions to various issues of concern. Maliha supported this perception, pointing out that she had sufficient time to engage in professional collaboration and shared decision-making:

Teachers, who can manage their time well, are able to complete all their tasks within the specified time frame and those who cannot, complain about lack of time instead of addressing their own inadequacies.

Moreover, Parveen noted that on occasions when the management and teachers were discussing an issue of concern during 'Teacher Time' and time ran out, the management would extend the time of the meeting to facilitate the dialogue. Lastly, Sumra reiterated that there was sufficient time for teachers to reflect upon their pedagogy and practice and collaborating with their peers during 'Teacher Time', Staff Development Day (SDD) and in-service training INSET.

Lack of support from management. Although a majority of teachers believed that the management was supportive in encouraging them to participate in school-wide decision-making, six interviewees (27%) felt that the management's unsupportive attitude discouraged them from assuming shared decision-making responsibilities. They cited the management's inflexible behaviour in incorporating their suggestions in the final decisions, preferential behavior towards favorite teachers and lack of a friendly work environment as impediments to their participation in shared decision-making activities. Describing the managements' leadership style as "rigid," this group of teachers felt that the management "neither shared anything of consequence with regular teachers, nor did they solicit teachers' views" regarding critical policies. Additionally, they noted that all authority in "essential areas of decision-making" rested with the school management and even though teachers offered suggestions on various issues to the management, the latter

"neither valued those suggestions, nor acted upon them." This belief was well articulated by Ayesha:

> The management encourages teachers to share ideas and suggestions about school improvement, however, many times, the final decision does not reflect teachers' views and so some teachers felt dejected and prefer to remain silent.

Furthermore, three of these six teachers viewed the managements' behaviour as "preferential" towards certain teachers, noting that managements' practice of favoritism "adversely affected the degree of their own motivation" to participate in school-wide decision-making. According to them, the management's "preferential treatment" directly impacted the distribution of workload responsibilities including the assignment of substitution duties; the delegation of authority to favorite teachers and allowing them relatively more relaxation in availing leave and enjoying other school benefits. In this regard, Huma and Noreen felt that the management sought greater input on school policies from their favorite teachers, giving more weight to their suggestions. They also tended to praise their performance more both with reference to teaching and participating in school decision-making as compared to that of less favored teachers. They advised the management to "avoid favoritism and treat all teachers equally" because favoritism could create alienation not only between the management and the unfavored faculty but also between the favored and unfavored teachers.

Three of these six teachers felt that the school management should be careful not to share any personal confidences of teachers with third person/persons. They urged the management to create a friendly work environment based upon mutual respect and trust

so that teachers felt motivated to willingly participate in shared decision-making practices. Farheen echoed these thoughts urging the management to "avoid insulting teachers directly or indirectly" because everyone had "their own self-respect." She noted:

> If there is a personal issue between the management and a certain teacher, the management should not allude to it even indirectly during faculty meetings because the concerned teacher might feel upset over the public mention of a personal issue even if her name has not been taken.

Zara agreed that there was lack of trust between the school management and some teachers including herself, because she felt that the management neither valued her suggestions or accepted her word as reliable. She believed that the school management needed to "improve their attitude towards teachers" and to learn to "observe and assess things for herself rather than believing in hearsay.

Finally, one teacher, Huma, noted that there were "very few factors within the school that encouraged her to participate in school-wide decision-making." She felt that "some leadership responsibilities were imposed upon teachers" and they were "obliged to perform them whether they liked to or not."

Negative attitude of colleagues. During interviews, five teachers (23%) identified the negative attitude of some of their colleagues as a constraining factor with regard to their participation in school-wide decision-making. They felt discouraged by the "mean-spirited attitude" of some of their peers who were "openly critical" of their views and "belittled" them in front of the management and the rest of their colleagues.

Besides this, two secondary teachers noted that sometimes, primary teachers "felt slighted if secondary teachers tried to advise them about ways to improve their pedagogy" and overcome their shortcomings. They further elaborated that a few "novice teachers also took offense" when senior teachers observed them in classrooms and tried to counsel them about their lesson planning or pedagogical practices. They believed that to improve the culture of professional consultation and collaboration, it was important to train teachers, particularly novice teachers to be more open to the constructive suggestions of experienced teachers. Sobia agreed with this perception, underlining the need to train teachers to perceive their roles in decision-making in "broader terms," involving not just classroom teaching but also assuming decision-making responsibilities outside the classroom. She noted:

> Usually teachers get upset when called upon either to substitute for absent teachers in the classroom or to recheck their examination papers. Other teachers regard preparing children for various competitions during the student week an utter waste of time. Such behaviour is often the result of fixed notions that the teacher's place is solely in the classroom; hence additional decision-making roles tend to unsettle such teachers.

Other teachers pointed out that conflict could arise in a school setting where teachers "were not prepared or trained to deal with differences of opinion." Teacher outlooks significantly differed from one another, so even if a teacher wanted to take an initiative for school improvement, s/he could not until s/he enlisted the support and cooperation of all teachers. These teachers believed that conflict between teachers due to

an inability to see eye to eye on an issue could stall the shared decision-making process of shared decision-making because teachers were not prepared to value each other's opinions to reach a mutual decision.

Finally, Ayesha highlighted an intriguing dimension of her colleagues' way of thinking. She observed that she tried to limit her participation in shared decision-making activities largely because she "wished to avoid the negative perceptions of some of her colleagues" that her interest in decision-making was aimed at being in the management's good books. She felt that a certain group of teachers "resented" that some of their colleagues tried to play a "more active role" in school-wide decision-making, hence gaining "prominence in the eyes of the management" and receiving greater recognition for their efforts. She noted that they "unfairly viewed" such teachers' as "management's pets," a label that she wanted to avoid at all costs.

Lack of inclination to participate. Four of the 22 interview participants (18%) cited lack of inclination and/or low confidence as factors impeding their participation in shared decision-making. Komal noted that although the management "always encouraged teachers to take new initiatives for school improvement," but sometimes, "teachers themselves did not feel like participating" in school-wide decision-making. Besides, Shama acknowledged that she was "shy by nature" and therefore disinclined to openly sharing her views with the management and colleagues across different grade levels. She asserted:

> If someone asks me a direct question, I definitely respond to it, but I typically avoid taking the initiative to freely share my views in a group. I fear that I may

say something irrelevant or impractical and others may not appreciate my views, so, I always wait for my colleagues to share their ideas first. There is some hesitation within me that holds me back.

In the same way, Zarish, a relatively new teacher, admitted that she often "struggled to voice her opinions during faculty meetings and participate in shared decision-making practices mainly due to lack of confidence and not because of any external factors within the school environment. She noted:

The school environment encourages us to participate in extra-curricular activities, but I am reluctant to give input because I feel to some extent that even if I express my views, the management may not give as much weightage to my suggestions as it would to the suggestions of senior teachers.

Zarish also acknowledged that she performed school discipline related duties and library duties because they were a part of school rules and regulations, however, if given a choice in the matter, she would never perform them out of her own free will.

Like Zarish, Sumra was open about her feelings regarding her lack of willingness to participate in school-wide decision-making to a great extent. The following excerpt reflects her views in this regard:

The management is very supportive and encourages us to get involved in school-wide decision-making but to be quite honest, I personally have little inclination to participate in extra-curricular activities beyond the classroom. Besides teaching, I am pursuing further studies and remain tense about doing well in my assignments and exams. Therefore I have little time to get involved in extra-curricular

activities. If I wasn't preoccupied with my studies, I would have eagerly and wholeheartedly participated in decision-making responsibilities other than teaching.

Moreover, Sumra clarified that she would be willing to participate in only a few areas of shared decision-making, asserting:

I do not wish to be involved in decision-making pertaining to teacher hiring or budgetary matters; however, I would be willing to participate in decisions related to school discipline. I feel that an expert teacher can observe aspiring teachers' classroom demos and provide feedback to the management about her content knowledge and pedagogy but it is important for her to be part of an interview panel for hiring teachers. The management can do a better job of interviewing teacher candidates for a likely position in school than teachers.

Summary

To summarize, Research Question Three solicited interview participants' perceptions about factors within the school environment that either encouraged them to participate or impeded their participation in school-wide decision-making. Findings derived from interview data revealed that teachers at Zafar Secondary School were encouraged to participate in school-wide decision-making due to two enabling factors: a positive and supportive school environment (73% of teachers), characterized by cooperative attitudes of the management and colleagues and participants' own self-confidence and high degree of motivation (32% of teachers). Additionally, data analysis of participants' interview responses indicated that teachers' participation in school-wide

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decision-making was hindered by four constraining factors: time constraints (55% of teachers), lack of inclination to participate in shared decision-making (18% of teachers), lack of support from management (27% of teachers) and negative attitude of colleagues (23% of teachers). It is to be noted that some teachers identified more than one enabling or constraining factors, resulting in totals greater than 100% in both categories. Many important sub-themes emerged from these six broad themes, including the assumption on the part of a few teachers that the management showed preferential treatment towards favorite teachers. Others included feelings of resentment on the part of certain teachers towards colleagues who actively participated in school-wide decision-making, labelling them as management's "pets" and the general perception that the management solicited teachers' ideas and suggestions about school improvement but final decisions rarely reflected those views.

Research Question Four: How Do Factors External to the School Environment Either Contribute to or Hinder These Teachers' Ability and Agency to Participate in Decision-Making Roles?

Research Question Four looked at Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions of factors external to the school environment that either contributed to or hindered their ability and agency to participate in decision-making roles. To effectively address this question, teachers were asked to respond to Interview Question 17 (see Appendix D), examining whether or not their family and/or the local school community influenced them to participate in school-wide decision-making. Comprehensive analysis of teachers' interview responses revealed six extrinsic factors that influenced teachers'

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agency to participate in decision-making activities at ZSS. These included: school funding, school policies determined by the NGO, attitude of parents, family constraints, community influence, and the physical structure of the school building.

School funding. Prevalent research emphasized the importance of providing practical support in the form of necessary training, additional resources, and time for teachers to effectively assume decision-making roles and responsibilities (Johnson & Pajares, 1996; Leech, 1999; Rauls, 2003; Weiss, 2008). Limited funding and lack of additional resources was an overlapping theme that surfaced in nearly all the interview participants' discussions about impediments to successful implementation of shared decision-making in their school. Although all teachers were cognizant of the fact that their school was low-cost, managed by a non-profit organization catering to needy students, yet, 10 of the 22 teachers (45%) underlined the need for additional funding to facilitate teachers' active and more meaningful involvement in school-wide decision-making.

A number of teachers highlighted the challenges they faced in pedagogical and school-wide decision-making within and beyond the classroom owing to funding restraints. Some teachers asserted that if teachers needed to "get extra learning material photocopied, they either had to do it out of our own pockets or had to request students to contribute" towards the total amount. Other teachers revealed that due to a limited budget, teachers "could not spend a sufficient amount on organizing school events" and preparing tableaus for students. If they required costumes or props for tableaus, they were constrained to request their students to arrange these items on their own and if the cost

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exceeded the allocated budget then sometimes, teachers offered to cover the additional cost from their own pockets. Komal reflected these thoughts during her interview:

> During school functions, we often ask children to bring costumes and props from home for tableaus because the school cannot provide them. Sometimes children do not themselves participate in school events because they cannot afford to bring costumes or props. We try to borrow costumes from different children and distribute them amongst children who are performing.

Additionally, Ayesha observed that financial constraints also impeded teachers' agency to introduce innovative learning activities for students. She cited her own example in the following excerpt:

> I wanted to show cartoon programs to my pre-primary graders because firstly, some of these children do not have televisions at home and would have found the experience enjoyable and secondly, I wanted to follow up the cartoon session with some relevant learning activities. Although, I once shared this idea with the senior NGO management and they liked it, I could not pursue my idea any further due to the non-availability of a television on the school premises.

Furthermore, interviewees informed that teaching aids, and school supplies were only provided to teachers at the start of the school year but this one-time supply was not sufficient in meeting teachers' needs all the year round. Hence, sometimes teachers were obliged to "purchase teaching aids themselves" due to limited school budget. Huma captures this perception in the following excerpt:

We require stationary items later in the year as well, but the management only asks us to provide a list of requisite items at the start of the year. When we request more stationary, they decline on grounds that there is insufficient budget. I feel that the management should ask teachers to specify the number of stationary items or teaching aids they require so that these items last them throughout the year.

Three teachers reported that due to lack of budgetary provisions, the school management could not facilitate students' educational trips" outside school. These teachers felt constrained because they wished to take their students to the nursery or to historical sites in order to forge a connection between students' theoretical and practical knowledge. Bismah regretted that her proposal to take her children on educational trips had been turned down by the management due to paucity of funds. She stated:

 If I am teaching my students about the zoo and want to take them to an actual zoo to help them make connections between their theoretical and practical knowledge, I cannot do so. In all the years that I have taught at this school, neither the teachers nor the students have ever gone on any educational or recreational trip.

Recognizing that the school had limited resources, a few teachers "did not think it was advisable to make demands for a special fund" to meet the expenditures incurred through teachers' participation in decision-making activities. Nonetheless, 10 of the 22 teachers believed that despite being a low-cost school, some portion of the school budget should be set aside for the purchase of good quality teaching/learning aids and props for tableaus. These interviewees also proposed that the management should seek input from

teachers more than once a year about any additional learning materials they may require. As Farhana observed:

> Teachers should be regularly consulted about learning/teaching aids that they require. Either they should be asked to prepare a list of items they need and hand over the list to the principal or they should be given a little petty cash to fulfill their instructional and extra-curricular needs.

NGO determined school policies. Thirteen of the 22 teachers perceived NGO determined school policies as an impediment to their active participation in shared decision-making. There was unanimity amongst teachers that all high level policy decisions were taken by the NGO and teachers were not empowered to initiate changes in those policies. They observed that while they were free to offer suggestions about school policies to the management, whether or not their suggestions were accepted, was the "privilege of the school and NGO management." Teachers believed that certain school policies proved to be a hindrance in teachers' ability to exercise autonomy in their work environment. These included policies pertaining to designing the Mid-term and Final-term papers without teachers' input, behaving cordially towards parents and students even if they were non cooperative and being required to collect students' monthly fees. She disclosed that the NGO had developed a centralized assessment system to ensure transparency of the examination process and accountability of teachers' performance based on student learning. Under this system, teachers were required to design the term-wise student assessment tests (T1 to T4) whereas the NGO's academic wing designed the Mid Term and Final Term examination papers in an academic year. While

acknowledging that she had "learnt a lot" from the papers designed by the NGO management, she felt that the level of "some of these papers was too advanced" and did not cater to the learning and comprehension ability of her students. Hence, she felt that the management "should solicit teachers' input" in this regard before designing the examination papers.

Five other teachers agreed with Eshal that the management should ascertain teachers' views while designing the Mid-term and End-term examination papers because "teachers were closest to their students" and knew well their level and capacity for learning. Noreen suggested that the management should hold separate meetings with relevant subject teachers before designing examination papers, and seek an update about "how much syllabus had been covered and what was the average learning ability" of their students. She felt that such an exchange would not only benefit the management, but would also help teachers "acquire better understanding of the management's expectations from them and their students" so that they could prepare their students accordingly for the examinations.

Both Humaira and Amina underlined that all high level policies and critical decisions were devised by the NGO Head Office, and teachers were obliged to comply with them. They noted that teachers were "bound by the school policy" to always behave politely and respectfully with parents and students but felt that certain students and parents took advantage of their politeness. In other cases, parents became quite "aggressive and quarrelsome" during interactions. Hence, they called upon the management to allow teachers to be "slightly tougher" with children who were non

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serious about their studies or with parents who were "rude, insulting and non-cooperative." Amina elaborated:

Our hands are also tied in situations where some children falsely accuse teachers of misplacing their notebooks even though they themselves have the notebooks and parents side with their children instead of reprimanding them. The school management should give us authority to penalize such children because they are not a good influence on their peers and encourage them to fabricate stories too.

Amina also brought to attention that some teachers felt unhappy about having to collect students' monthly tuition fee as per school policy. She noted that teachers' unhappiness stemmed from the fact that while "some parents immediately paid the fee, others dragged their feet" in making the payment. According to her:

We are obliged to constantly remind students to bring the fee since we have to submit it before the 10th of every month and this proves to be a very tedious process. I feel that the management should ask parents to submit the monthly school fee directly to the accountant on time. This would save a lot of unnecessary hassle both to the management and the teachers.

On the other hand, both Umber and Noreen believed that like teachers, "the principal's hands were also tied" and even if she wanted to give in to teachers' constructive suggestions, she could not because she too had to follow the school policies laid down by the NGO management.

Non-cooperative attitude of parents. Twelve of the 22 teachers identified parents' uncooperative attitude as a constraining factor that adversely impacted teachers' agency to participate in school-wide decision-making. Amina complained that students' parents could be quite "problematic and at times, difficult to handle." She explained:

Some parents cause a lot of disturbance by barging straight into the classroom while we are teaching to discuss something about their child. It is difficult to make them understand that they should not disrupt the class. We have to handle them tactfully and request them to sit in the waiting area and we will attend to their problem after the class.

Humaira observed that there were "always some parents in every class who did not show up at PTMs" either because they were busy at work or because they gave low priority to their children's education. She elaborated:

We try to motivate such parents by repeatedly inviting them to school, sending them notices to come and meet us and when they finally arrive, we update them about their child's performance and guide them about ways they can support us in addressing the academic, behavioral or disciplinary problems faced by their children.

Reflecting upon the challenges of dealing with parents from the community, Bismah noted that "some parents were "discourteous and uncooperative" and showed low priority towards their children's education. She bemoaned that they took their children to family events out of the city for prolonged periods thus disrupting their children's school routine. According to Bismah:

We try to convince such parents that it is not in their child's best interest to miss school for so long but they do not understand and pay little heed to my advice. This is all the more discouraging because I had planned to provide extra coaching to some of these children during the very period they absented themselves from the school.

Tehreem also shared an account of her unpleasant encounter with difficult parents. She informed that although she did not reside in the school community, but she and her colleague decided to visit the houses of parents who did not regularly send their children to school. She noted that the parents "misbehaved" with them and were noncooperative.

Finally, Maliha noted that there was a vast difference between the standard of children she had taught at a previous school and the standard of children at Zafar Secondary School. Underscoring the challenges involved in teaching this group of children and interacting with their parents, Maliha explained:

In my previous school, children were more cooperative and could work independently without much guidance from teachers. But here, children have to be guided at every step, so much so, that some of them even have to be told to wash their hands and faces. Some of these children lack discipline. There is also a difference in the two school communities. Many parents of children at ZSS were not particularly bothered about their children's education whereas, in my previous school, parents generally belonged to the middle class and gave greater priority to their children's education. However, during my seven years tenure in this school,

I have seen a slow but sure change in the academic progress and general

behaviour of the children and the attitude of parents.

Family constraints. Seven of the 22 teachers observed that their families were

very caring and supportive and it was their motivation that had enabled them to

participate in different areas of school-wide decision-making. Amina revealed that her

father always "encouraged her to avail new opportunities" to grow as an educator. She

felt that their constant support had 'inculcated a lot of confidence in her" and motivated

her to travel outstation to attend the Training of Trainers (TOT) program and become a

Master Trainer. Besides family support, she believed that the experience of stepping

outside the comfort of her home in pursuit of a career, making day to day decisions and

dealing with different types of people had "groomed her personality" and added to her

confidence. Similarly Humaira felt that her family was quite "supportive" and did not

impose any restrictions on her, even allowing her to attend the TOT in another city for

nearly two weeks. Moreover, Maliha asserted that her father had always played a very

important role in educating her and encouraging her to pursue a career of her choice.

Hence, she felt confident about embracing different opportunities that came her way,

emphasizing that "nothing" held her back.

On the other hand, 15 of the 22 teachers (68%) cited domestic compulsions and

family restrictions against travelling to the distant training venue for TOT as constraining

factors impeding their active involvement in shared decision-making. These teachers

disclosed that their families did not consider it safe for females to travel alone outside the

city and had the venue of the TOT been closer, they would have been able to attend the

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training. Tehreem was amongst these 15 teachers, who considered the distant location of the training site as an obstacle to participating in the TOT program, adding:

> I have not volunteered to travel outstation to attend TOT because it is not convenient for me to leave my young children behind and go out of the city for more than a week.

Fatima had a similar story to narrate, noting that on several occasions, the principal had offered to send her outstation to undergo TOT as a Master Trainer but she could not go owing to family restrictions. She stated:

> I tried to convince my husband but when he did not agree, I gave up. Now I no longer have the desire to go to a far off place for so many days.

Reflecting similar thoughts, Bismah considered the distant location of the training venue and her domestic compulsions as impediment in her desire to develop her skills as a Master Trainer. She elaborated that every year, the principal offers to send her to the TOT program but she could not accept her offer due to domestic compulsions.

> My family is otherwise supportive but after my mother passed away, the responsibility of looking after the household fell upon my shoulders. I cannot afford to leave home for two weeks and stay in another city. If the training was conducted locally, it would have been possible for me to attend the TOT. My family does not object to my staying back after school hours to take extra coaching classes for my secondary students but they will not allow me to stay away from home for two weeks.

In order to facilitate the students' scholarship program, Humaira noted that there were times when teachers were required to "conduct visits to students' homes and verify the information they had gathered from parents" about students' socio-economic status and family background. However, many teachers were "not able to conduct those home visits" because they did not have permission from their families. Hence, they were compelled to send the local school maid or the school watchman to students' homes to derive more data and verify existing information.

Lastly, Parveen revealed that all her life, she had struggled against conservative family attitudes and gender based discrimination in the pursuit of her education and career. She explained that her extended family had deep-seated notions that a woman's place was at home. Hence, her extended family did not consider it appropriate for girls to earn a living and so she faced a lot of opposition from her father's relatives against pursuing a teaching career. Parveen added:

> My father on the other hand thinks differently and feels that girls and boys are equal and if a girl has gained education, she should put it to good use. But a time came when even my father gave in to the immense family pressure and asked me to stop teaching However, my mother proved to be my biggest supporter and stood by me through thick and thin. It is because of her undying support and trust in my abilities that I have been able to come this far.

Community influence. Five interviewees (23%) cited the community as an extrinsic factor that influenced their ability to participate in school-wide decision-making. Whereas, Ayesha, a local teacher, believed that her close connections with the

community proved to be beneficial in helping her engage at a deeper level with parents, the other four teachers perceived the community's influence as more of a constraining factor.

Ayesha observed that the advantage of "belonging to the community" was that community members "respected her and valued her advice." Hence, some of her colleagues also requested her to meet and counsel problematic parents on their behalf, which she did and reported receiving a "positive response" from the parents. Eshal, another community teacher had a different story to tell. She noted that as a community teacher, she sometimes had to face undue pressures for favors from community members. Recalling that when she first joined school, she took "immediate notice of habitual latecomers penalizing them" by making them line up outside. In her words:

> One day an elderly lady from the community actually criticized me for being so
> strict with community children especially since I belonged to the same
> community. I explained to her that I might be from this community but I have to
> strictly follow the rules and regulations of the school. If I give differential
> treatment by making six children stand in line and allowing one child to join the
> class just because s/he is from my community it would send wrong signals to the
> other children and adversely impact students' discipline.

Another local teacher, Humaira, stated that her own family was quite supportive and allowed her to stay away from home for nearly two weeks to attend the Training of Trainers program but the local school community members were "mostly uneducated and quite conservative." Humaira noted that some of the locals questioned her about "whether

the environment" at the training site was "appropriate" for females because they "could not understand" how a female could travel alone so far away. She added that due to the "traditional mindset" of community members, she had to make a "concerted effort" to assure her family and acquaintances in the community that the environment at the training center was safe and secure for females. Similarly, Parveen too felt challenged by the "conservative and narrow-minded attitude" of her extended family who resided in the community. She asserted:

> Each time I visit my relatives, they pass snide comments about how parents should not rely on their daughter's earnings. I try to rebuttal their comments by telling them that there is no difference between a son and a daughter and that it is important for a girl to be financially independent so that she can support her family during tough times. They are uneducated and close-minded so they do not understand this logic.

Meanwhile, Huma revealed that she found it difficult to go out in the community and work owing to the conservative mind sets of community members. She explained that she "was not permitted by her family to venture outdoors much" so she could not visit parents homes to discuss any academic or disciplinary problems or to urge them to send their children to school. However, if parents wanted to visit her at home to discuss some school related issues, they were welcome to do so.

Physical structure of the school building. Only one interview participant believed that the physical structure of the school building hindered her agency to participate in school-wide decision-making. She noted that owing to "health problems,"

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she found it challenging to climb stairs to reach her classes. She further explained that the school building comprised three stories and "all secondary classes were held at the second and third floors" which caused her considerable discomfort, adding:

> By the time I climb two sets of stairs to reach my classes, my feet are swollen. I cannot move a lot; hence I only participate in limited extra-curricular activities, mostly pertaining to artwork and school décor.

Summary

Research Question Four sought Pakistani community teachers' perceptions of factors external to the school environment that influenced their ability to participate in school-wide decision-making. Results derived through teachers' interview responses indicated that teachers at Zafar Secondary School believed that their agency to assume decision-making roles and responsibilities was impacted by six extrinsic factors, including school funding, school policies determined by the NGO, uncooperative attitudes of parents, community influence, family constraints and the physical structure of the school building. Most of the participants viewed these influences as impediments to their active and meaningful involvement in shared decision-making practices. Nearly 68% of the teachers felt that limited funding and inadequate resources adversely impacted their pedagogical and school-wide decision-making within and beyond the classroom. Lack of quality teaching/learning aids limited teachers' ability to introduce innovative learning activities or to undertake educational school trips in order to forge deeper connections between students' theoretical and practical knowledge. Teachers believed that all high level policy decisions were determined by the NGO and teachers were not

empowered to initiate changes in those policies. Fifty-nine percent of teachers felt

constrained by certain NGO designed school policies, observing that these policies

impeded their autonomy to participate in shared decision-making practices. These

included the designing of the Mid Term and Final Term examination papers by the NGO

with no input from teachers; monthly fee collection by teachers and the policy that

required teachers to always behave politely with parents and students even if students

were uncooperative and parents became rude, aggressive and quarrelsome. Additionally,

55% of the teachers considered the uncooperative and discourteous attitude of parents as

a restraining factor that adversely impacted their agency to participate in school-wide

decision-making. They believed that parents' occasional practice of disrupting teachers'

classes at odd hours, delaying payment of monthly school fee despite repeated reminders,

and disturbing their children's school routine by taking them on prolonged vacations in

the midst of the school term disturbed teachers' lesson planning and caused them to lose

a lot of teaching time.

Whereas, 18% of the teachers alluded to the traditional and conservative mindset

of the local community as an obstacle, 68% of the teachers cited domestic compulsions,

the distant location of the training venue and family restrictions on mobility as

constraining factors impeding their active involvement in shared decision-making. The

fact that teachers had to secure permission from relatives, particularly male members of

their family, for participation in shared decision-making practices, was a manifestation of

the many barriers Pakistani community school teachers faced in this regard, including

personal inhibitions, familial and cultural constraints and structural barriers in school.

Overall Summary of Findings in Chapter Four

      In this chapter, findings supported by survey and interview data were presented for each of the four research questions. Results revealed that Pakistani community school teachers were positively inclined towards shared decision-making but felt that their degree of autonomy in decision-making could only be enhanced through authentic participation in the shared decision-making process, wherein their input was genuinely valued and incorporated into final decisions on student learning and school improvement. Additionally, teachers were found to be participating in strategic and day to day shared decision-making practices categorized under the three broad themes of pedagogical decisions, curricular decisions and managerial decisions. Whereas, all teachers were involved in knowledge sharing, professional collaborations, engaging with parents, designing school improvement plans, and overseeing school discipline, they had minimal involvement in key decision-making areas, such as teacher hiring, curriculum planning and development and budget planning, and allocation. Moreover, while a majority of teachers felt prepared to assume leadership roles and responsibilities owing to intrinsic factors such as, self-confidence, inner drive, and management support, a large number of teachers indicated that they had not received intensive staff development in the area of shared decision-making. Finally, both facilitative factors encouraging teachers' participation in shared decision-making and mitigating factors impeding their involvement in shared decision-making were identified. A discussion of the findings, conclusion and areas for future research and practice will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

When I initiated this research, I aimed to explore how Pakistani teachers in a reputationally effective community school understood the concept of shared decision-making. I also sought to understand how professionally relevant they felt shared-decision-making was for them, and whether they believed they possessed the capacity to participate meaningfully in shared decision-making in their school. Four research questions guided this study. The first question examined Pakistani community teachers' perceptions about their participation in shared decision-making activities in their school. The second question looked at ways in which these teachers felt prepared to assume decision-making roles within and outside their classrooms. The third research question explored how the school environment influenced these teachers' decision-making abilities, and the fourth question solicited teachers' perceptions of the factors external to the school environment that either contributed to or hindered their ability and agency to participate in decision-making roles.

This concluding chapter relates the study findings for all four research questions to corresponding literature reviewed in Chapter Two, and examines the ways that these findings support prevailing research in the field, or provides disconnects with those findings. It presents a comprehensive discussion of the significant findings pertaining to Pakistani community teachers' perceptions and practices of shared decision-making.

Finally, conclusions will be drawn and implications of this study on the NGO, school policymakers, and practitioners will be detailed. Also included is a presentation of implications that have emerged with regard to future research and practice.

Therefore, in Chapter Four, findings derived through survey and interview data presented several themes to describe Pakistani community teachers' beliefs and practices regarding shared decision-making. The following broad themes will be discussed:

1. Perceptions about what shared decision-making is.

2. Beliefs, thoughts and feelings about shared decision-making.

3. Participation in shared decision-making activities at the school site.

4. Degree of preparedness to assume decision-making responsibilities.

5. Facilitative and inhibiting factors inside the school influencing participation.

6. Facilitative and inhibiting factors outside the school influencing participation

Research Question One

The findings pertaining to this research question embodied both teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the concept of shared decision-making, as well as teachers' participation in shared decision-making activities in their school. The following discussion is informed by the findings derived through both survey and interview data.

Perceptions about what shared decision-making is. Several key areas emerged from the findings to reveal the teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making. First, all the interview participants defined decision-making as a means by which teachers gained greater voice in determining school policies and decisions. The premise underlying their assumptions was that teachers are closest to students and can fully understand their

psyche and their education needs, hence making more informed decisions. Thus, the Pakistani community teachers in this study were all able to articulate ideas and perceptions about shared decision-making. Even though they were not fully aware of the multiple dimensions that the term embodied in terms of practice, it was a known concept, and they wanted their ideas and voices to be an active part of the overall school dynamic.

This perception was consistent with prominent literature in the field that described shared decision-making as an empowering tool, whereby "teachers' voices" were included "in critical decisions that impacted their work (Short & Greer, 2002; Weiss, 1992). It also related to Liontos's (1993) assertion that "those closest to the students and 'where the action is' will make the best decisions about students' education" (p. 2).

Additionally, all the Pakistani community teachers subscribed to the view that collaborative teamwork and consultation between the management and teachers, and amongst teachers, were central to the idea of shared decision-making. Hence, they viewed shared decision-making as a process wherein all stakeholders were actively involved in giving input and making decisions that impacted the entire school community. This closely corresponded with Bauer's (1992) and Harris's (2014) perceptions that shared decision-making was an ongoing process of making decisions in a collaborative manner and that teachers in informal leadership roles could exercise influence through professional interactions with their colleagues.

Rauls (2003) emphasized that the success of shared decision-making was contingent upon the "leadership style and skills of the administrator, the willingness of the district office to decentralize and support collaborative decision-making, and teacher

interest in, knowledge of and participation in the decision-making process" (p. 6). In terms of Pakistani community teachers' knowledge about the various dimensions of shared decision-making, 90% of the participants acknowledged that up until their participation in this research, they only had a "vague and sketchy" understanding of the shared decision-making process and were largely unaware of the multiple instructional, curricular, extra-curricular and managerial facets that the concept embodied.

These findings are noteworthy because, although Pakistani community teachers' knowledge and perceptions of the process of shared decision-making are basic, these perceptions are nevertheless in consonance with the definitions of the concept prevalent in extant literature. Additionally, the findings suggested that for Pakistani teachers to make informed decisions about various aspects of school improvement, they must first develop a comprehensive understanding of the process of shared decision-making. Only when all community school stakeholders in Pakistan are cognizant of the process of shared decision-making, will schools go through a maturing process of involving teachers in decision-making to a greater degree. Decisions will apparently become more "participatory, informed, and context specific," and will more effectively cater to the needs of the students, thus enhancing "student learning and teacher job satisfaction" (Raul, 2003, p. 52). This finding supports the need for focused staff development to upgrade Pakistani community teachers' knowledge and understanding of the process of shared decision-making, thus empowering them to make sound decisions and helping them become more comfortable with any new roles pertaining to shared decision-making.

Beliefs, thoughts and feelings about shared decision-making. Another key finding emerging from the study was that a majority of the Pakistani community teachers were favorably inclined toward shared decision-making. While 94% of teachers believed that the school management should involve teachers in decision-making practices beyond the classroom setting, 88% of teachers showed preference for the process of shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model where the school head made all critical decisions. When asked why they believed shared decision-making was important, all interview participants indicated that they viewed shared decision-making as a way to positively impact school climate and teachers' psyche by helping teachers feel more valued, thus enhancing teacher morale, and buy-in. They also felt that shared decision-making generated innovative ideas, led to more balanced decisions that catered to the education needs of students, and built a "trusting relationship" between the management and teachers by 'strengthening the lines of communication" between them.

This finding was of particular importance because it provided insight into Pakistani community teachers' thoughts and feelings about the notion of shared decision-making. They felt that shared decision-making was relevant to their professional milieu because as stakeholders, they would be better motivated to make a more concerted and meaningful contribution towards an efficient, balanced and streamlined management of school affairs. Additionally, they were of the view that teachers who worked closely with students on a day to day basis must be involved in essential decisions regarding changes that impacted their daily lives. Only then could school decisions be more relevant to the needs of student learning. Besides bringing decision-making authority close to the

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classroom, Pakistani community teachers felt that distributing leadership would inculcate greater self-esteem in teachers and give them a new sense of responsibility and ownership in the school.

Again, these sentiments paralleled the reviewed literature. Bauer (1992) underlined the role of shared decision-making in boosting staff self-esteem, job satisfaction and commitment, and in turn improving school efficacy and student achievement. Similarly, several researchers enumerated the benefits of shared decision-making as strengthening teacher morale and motivation, fostering interpersonal skills for principals and the faculty, and cultivating a positive school culture by building teamwork and trust between teachers and the management (Fullan, 2001; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Leithwood et al., 1992; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Additionally, an interrelated finding of the study was that even though an overwhelming majority of Pakistani teachers favored shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model, 41% of the interview participants indicated that they would prefer to participate in shared decision-making activities in a limited capacity, not wishing to be involved in all domains of decision-making. They explained their lukewarm approach to participation in decision-making by expressing concerns vis-à-vis time constraints, increased workload, perceived loss of instructional time and lack of relevant staff development. They also alluded to intrinsic factors, including low inclination to participate in decision-making, belief that a teacher's job was only to teach, and low confidence in their ability to shoulder decision-making responsibilities beyond the classroom.

These findings corresponded with other studies (Duke, Shower, & Imber, 1981; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Lambert, 2003; Liontos, 1993) that found that teachers' participation in domains of managerial decision-making could distract their attention from their instructional responsibilities, reducing their actual teaching time and resultantly placing considerable pressure on them due to the additional workload that shared decision-making demanded outside the classroom. Moreover, these findings were important because they highlighted the complexities associated with active participation in shared decision-making.

Although Pakistani community teachers were aware of the personal and organizational benefits related to participation in shared decision-making, nearly half of them were unwilling to commit to a more involved role in decision-making in the absence of support mechanisms such as necessary training, resources, and additional time for effectively taking on leadership roles beyond their classrooms. This suggested that the idea of empowerment, despite its perceived attractiveness, may not necessarily appeal to all Pakistani community teachers, nor instill in them a sense of ownership particularly if they felt they lacked the expertise, inclination and/or time to enthusiastically commit to participation in shared decision-making activities (Dimmock, 1995; Keung, 2008).

Of particular importance was the finding that Pakistani community teachers Pakistani teachers needed to be reassured that their ideas and suggestions were a catalyst for school improvement and that they were an integral part of a larger community effort to initiate meaningful change. On the one hand, these teachers were unanimous in describing the decision-making process at Zafar Secondary School as "participatory" and

"collaborative," involving frequent faculty meetings in which teachers' views were solicited about student learning, school improvement, discipline and engagement with parents.

On the other hand, more than half the teachers either disagreed or were uncertain that they were decision makers in the school, conceding that they easily gave in to the opinions of the principal, despite having different views. Although these teachers indicated that they enjoyed considerable autonomy in their pedagogical practice, they were skeptical about their degree of autonomy in decision-making. Whereas one reason for their skepticism was that they felt bound by high level school policies designed by the senior NGO management, another reason was that while the management regularly solicited their views, it seldom incorporated their suggestions in the final decisions. In other cases, teachers acknowledged that some of the suggestions offered by teachers were not feasible in a given situation. Thus, the principal carefully listened to the suggestions of all teachers, and then tried to counsel them about agreeing to an alternative solution that was more workable. Hence, teachers reported that they ultimately changed their decision to be more in line with the one proposed by the management.

These findings are important because they indicate that Pakistani community teachers need to believe that their involvement in decision-making is genuine, that their opinions count, and have a critical impact on the final outcome of a decision. While being asked to give suggestions on school improvement was encouraging to Pakistani community teachers, this exercise in itself was not enough in helping them develop a sense of empowerment and ownership. Rather, their sense of autonomy was interlinked

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with the feeling that their opinions mattered in practical terms and that they were respected as valuable contributors to the decision-making process.

These results conformed to some of the findings in Weiss's study (2008) that I addressed in Chapter Two. Weiss found that while a majority of the teacher participants in her study perceived shared decision-making as a positive process, a few teachers felt that even though "opinions were requested, they were ultimately ignored" and in the end, the principal made the final decision (p. 108). Additionally, this outcome also paralleled the findings in Beckett and Flanigan's (1998) study on teacher empowerment in which teachers raised concerns that the decisions eventually made were "not the decisions that teachers had agreed upon" during faculty meetings (p. 6). The teachers in Beckett and Flanigan's study noted that, in cases where the management decided to change a decision that had been mutually agreed upon, the stance of those teachers who were opposed to shared decision-making was strengthened, whereas the position of those teachers who supported shared decision-making was significantly undermined.

Smylie (1992) asserted that teachers' job satisfaction increases when they are given meaningful opportunities to share in the decisions that are made. In the current study, teachers' mixed responses pertaining to their degree of autonomy indicated that more than half the Pakistani community teachers were not convinced that their participation in the decision-making process was authentic or that the decision-making process was being implemented with integrity. These findings underlined the importance of legitimate, authentic teacher participation in shared decision-making and the need to

value their suggestions so that teachers felt that their contribution to the decision-making process was influential in affecting school improvement.

Moreover, an overwhelming number of Pakistani teachers perceived that it was difficult to change people's preconceived notions and existing mindsets about their roles pertaining to decision-making. More than half the interview participants were of the view that inflexibility and resistance towards reexamining their traditional roles of decision-making was equally present among the management and the teachers. They felt that in about fifty percent of the cases, teachers themselves resisted assuming decision-making responsibilities due to increased workload, low confidence, insecurities about their professional expertise, and unwillingness to perform clerical tasks. Similarly, they believed that the management was equally reluctant to concede autonomy in decision-making domains, such as curriculum development, designing student examination papers, teacher induction, and budget, and was constrained to take decisions in view of the policies and directives of the senior NGO management.

This finding alludes to the fact that underlying any change in the school structure would be a change in the attitudes, feelings and behaviors of various stakeholders in a school learning community. Shared decision-making is a relatively new concept, particularly in the Pakistani context. In a typically hierarchical structure like Pakistan where the management makes critical decisions by controlling the flow of information, resources, and expertise to teachers (Chapman & Boyd, 1986) and teachers are used to working in isolation with little opportunities to share ideas, making a shift from a traditional approach to a more collaborative one can be challenging for both

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administrators and teachers. As data from this study suggested, some teachers felt reluctant to assume new decision-making roles because they lacked the requisite training, expertise, and knowledge to suddenly make the switch from isolated practice to working collaboratively with the management and colleagues. On the other hand, the management may be unwilling to let go some of its authority in certain domains of decision-making.

For shared decision-making to be effectively implemented, teachers and the management at ZSS need to consciously reevaluate their roles and responsibilities to be able to fully understand and accept the concept. As researchers pointed out, shared decision-making requires a "genuine commitment and willingness" on the part of teachers, principals, representatives of school districts and departments of education to change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards working in collaborative environments (Fauerback, 1996, p. 274; Smylie,1992;). This must not merely be a change in school structures but a deeper and enduring change in the beliefs, mindsets and attitudes of the education community about how they work and how the school should operate. Without a genuine readiness to change, shared decision-making, as an educational improvement measure, will meet with only limited success.

Participation in shared decision-making activities at the school site. A second part of Research Question One pertained to Pakistani community teachers' practices in shared decision-making activities at Zafar Secondary School. Collective results from the survey and interviews suggested that teachers' responses varied in their willingness, levels of autonomy, ability and degree of participation in 14 decision-making practices that fell within the broader domains of instructional, curricular and managerial decision-

making. Findings revealed that a majority of the teachers (60% to 100%) participated in decision-making practices such as knowledge sharing and professional collaboration, giving feedback to parents, instructional innovation, designing school improvement plans, collecting monthly student fees and filling scholarship forms, performing school discipline duties, and organizing and participating in school events. Moreover, from 20% to 60% of the teachers participated in decision-making activities, such as consulting additional instructional/learning materials, giving feedback about prescribed textbooks, setting standards for their own and their students' performance, planning and providing staff development, increasing student enrollments through community mobilization, and preparing daily duty schedules. On the other hand, decision-making domains in which teachers were not involved (1% to 10%) were budget, teacher hiring, co-teaching, planning and curriculum development, prescribing text-books, involving parents in classroom activities, and formulating staff improvement plans such, as salary benefits and school leave.

The literature has shown that professional collaboration and collegiality are critical components of shared decision-making (Rauls, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Shah & Abualrob, 2012; Weiss, 2008). Although teaching is inherently a social and interpersonal act involving an exchange of ideas and sharing of knowledge, teachers often find themselves working within isolated school structures. Despite these constraints, some highly motivated teachers seek opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues, identifying and resolving individual and/or mutual problems, while less inclined teachers prefer to teach in isolation hidden within the four walls of their classrooms.

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Of all the decision-making activities that regular teachers at ZSS participated in, knowledge sharing, reflective practices, and professional collaboration received the most positive responses both in the survey and the interviews. Lambert (2003) described reflection as a "higher form of learning" that helped develop the "inner voice" into a "public voice" (p. 61). One hundred percent of the teachers reported that they were positively inclined towards collaborative decision-making and valued working with their colleagues. With respect to the level of the teaching faculty's involvement in collaborative practices, an overwhelming number of teachers indicated that their colleagues frequently sought their advice about instructional practices, that they themselves spent time reflecting upon their pedagogical practice with colleagues, and that they freely expressed their views to their colleagues.

Survey and interview data also pointed to the fact that the management promoted a culture of collegial consultation and collaboration through various platforms. Participation in these platforms included regularly convened faculty meetings, during which teachers were given opportunities to share ideas about school improvement. They also included the daily 'Teacher Time' in which time was set aside for teachers to engage in collaborative decision-making such as shared reflection, joint lesson planning, coaching novice teachers, mentoring grade level colleagues, sharing innovative ideas about effective pedagogical strategies and mutually resolving problems pertaining to lesson planning, lesson delivery with the shared purpose of improving student learning. Other professional collaborative forums included the monthly Staff Development Day

(SDD), staff meetings to design the School Improvement Plan (SIPs) after the final exam and the yearly in-service training (INSET).

These findings are significant because they reveal that even though the school management had not formally introduced a shared decision-making model at the school site, it had put them in place enabling structures to foster an environment of ongoing professional learning, collegial collaboration, shared reflection and problem solving amongst the teachers. However, additional time was needed to support more meaningful professional collaboration between teachers within and across grade levels. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Shah and Abualrob's (2012) quantitative, non-experimental survey study found that teacher collegiality positively impacted professional commitment among Pakistani secondary teachers in public sector schools, thus implicating the need for school leadership to focus on enhancing teacher collegiality in order to improve teachers' commitment towards their profession.

Findings from my study also revealed that consistent with existing literature, Pakistani community teachers perceived professional collaboration and knowledge sharing as critical pieces of shared leadership (Lambert, 2003; Rauls, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Shah & Abualrob, 2012; Weiss, 2008. They believed that collaboration helped teachers break free from the isolation of their classrooms and enabled them to meaningfully participate in professional learning communities that promoted a shared vision and a culture of inquiry, joint planning, and problem solving.

Furthermore, teachers' responses varied in their willingness, levels of autonomy, ability, and degree of participation in different areas of decision-making. They reported

participating in instructional decisions, such as planning and providing staff development; knowledge sharing and professional collaboration; designing School Improvement Plans; setting standards, and consulting additional instructional/learning materials. Additionally, their participation in curricular decisions was limited to effecting slight modifications in the syllabus break-up and Teacher Guides, and providing feedback about prescribed books designed by the NGO. Teachers' participation in managerial decision-making pertained to maintaining school discipline; organizing and participating in school events; collecting students' monthly fees; filling scholarship forms; overseeing admissions; providing feedback to parents, and increasing student enrollments through community mobilization. These findings indicated that the school management typically involved teachers in decisions pertaining to instructional practices that impacted student learning and achievement and in managerial decisions that were of a more basic and operational nature.

Findings also revealed that teachers did not participate in instructional decision-making pertaining to designing Mid-term and Final-term examination papers; curricular decisions, such as planning and designing curriculum, and choosing syllabus textbooks; and managerial decisions, such as budget and resource allocation; staff improvement plans (salaries, leaves and other benefits); teacher hiring, and preparing daily duty schedules.

Moreover, another finding derived through teachers' interview responses was that while 59% of interview participants perceived their decision-making roles in broader terms both inside and outside their classrooms, 41% of the Pakistani community teachers

indicated that they would not prefer to participate in all domains of decision-making

They emphasized a greater desire to be involved in instructional and curricular decisions that impacted innovative practices in teaching and learning and promoted student achievement such as planning and designing the curriculum, choosing textbooks, designing the syllabus break up and participating in co-teaching.

On the other hand, they only wished to be involved in *selected* managerial domains, such as teacher hiring and designing the timetable, owing to difficulties in balancing their teaching responsibilities with their shared decision-making responsibilities outside the classroom. Whereas, all interviewees believed that the management should continue to manage issues related to budgeting, fewer than half (40%) of the teachers felt that their input should be sought in resource allocation pertaining to teaching aids/school supplies to a limited extent.

This result corresponds with the findings from Smylie's (1992) and Keung's (2008) studies, that found that teachers tended to show a greater inclination for involvement in decisions related to classroom instruction than for participation in school level administrative and management decisions. This suggested that Pakistani community teachers still viewed their sphere of influence in instructional and curricular decision-making domains as more important. Hence, school administrators should engage teachers in all the decision-making domains, but particularly in the decision areas of pedagogy and curriculum. As these teachers preferred to be involved in curricular and instructional decisions to a wider extent, it may be possible that through this preference, Pakistani

community teachers may become more practically committed to the process of shared decision-making.

Shared decision-making is based on the premise that some decisions that were traditionally made by the federal, provincial, and district level education administrators are funneled to the school level, and some decisions made by the school management are shared with other school stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members (Rauls, 2003). Findings from this study revealed that the NGO and school management at Zafar Secondary School still continued to exercise control over decisions pertaining to budget planning and allocation, curriculum development, and hiring. This paralleled earlier research findings that observed that sustained authority over hard core administrative decisions such as budget, staffing and curriculum by the school board, clearly indicated centralized authority (Cotton, 1996; Leech, 1999; Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995; Rauls, 2003). Hence, these findings suggested that while Pakistani community teachers felt considerably empowered in instructional decision-making domains, they believed their voices were excluded from strategic curricular and management policy decisions pertaining to information, resources, hiring, scheduling and curriculum development that had the potential of significantly empowering them as practitioners and teacher leaders.

Another finding emerging from the interview data was that Pakistani community teachers perceived their participation in clerical, and thus managerial tasks, such as fee collection a "sheer waste of their time." More than half the teachers interviewed believed that fee collection was not a shared decision-making responsibility but an additional

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shared workload that had been thrust upon them and significantly reduced their teaching time, thus placing undue pressures on them. They felt that performing fee collection duties did not in any way enhance their influence over and agency in strategic decisions that directly impacted student learning and school improvement. This was consistent with Chapman and Boyd's (1986) assertion that teachers felt particularly "frustrated" when their workload involved school based management tasks that were mostly "clerical" in nature or general organization work (pp. 44-45). This finding suggested that Pakistani community teachers need to feel that the teaching time they lose in participating in shared decision-making activities is a worthwhile investment of their time. Hence they need to be involved in important shared decision-making practices in which they genuinely feel that their contribution is meaningfully impacting decisions related to student learning and school improvement.

Another essential finding derived through the study was that shared decision-making varies from one school site to another, from the decisions made, to the participants involved; hence as researchers point out, there is no right or wrong way of implementing it (Liontos, 1993; Rauls, 2003). The nature of shared decision-making largely depends upon who is making the decisions and "what works best for each school "based upon the context and the ground realities (Rauls, 2003, p. 53). This was particularly true in the case of a successful community school like Zafar Secondary School that had to navigate through several constraints, including a limited budget, a relatively younger and inexperienced teaching faculty, and a hierarchical management structure in which all critical policies originated from the top. In view of these

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constraints, the school management did not have a free hand in going exactly by the accepted notion of shared decision-making as defined in existing literature, and they interpreted the concept and implemented shared decision-making in view of the contextual ground realities. Therefore, they used the more workable approach of including teachers' voices in decision-making through interactive staff meetings and professionally collaborative platforms such as 'Teacher Time', Staff Development Day and in-service, besides seeking their input in designing school improvement plans and encouraging them to engage with parents and community members.

These findings suggest that a western model of teacher empowerment may not be as effective at Zafar Secondary School as a homegrown model of empowerment that takes into account the cultural context and the ground realities. At the very least, such a model would have to be modified if the research were to serve as the foundational cornerstone. It would be pertinent to suggest that the NGO and school management at ZSS may analyze the school's needs regarding the practice of shared decision-making, and then adapt selected processes that fit in with its local circumstances and context. Additionally, ZSS will need to build the capacity of its teachers in leadership, based on how the process is implemented specifically at their school site.

Research Question Two

  Degree of preparedness to assume decision-making responsibilities. Creighton (1997) observed that when teachers are assigned more decision-making responsibilities, they often find that nothing in their training has prepared them for their new roles and responsibilities. Research Question Two ascertained whether teachers felt prepared to assume leadership roles and responsibilities in school. The findings were quite interesting because even though a majority of the survey and interview participants felt prepared to assume leadership roles and responsibilities, nearly 91% of the interview participants acknowledged that the one-time training sessions they had received on a few aspects of shared decision-making, had not adequately prepared them for effectively undertaking school-wide leadership responsibilities. Nearly 64% of the teachers indicated that they felt prepared to assume leadership responsibilities, not because they had received comprehensive training in decision-making, but because they either felt self-motivated and confident to assume such responsibilities, or because they received support from the management and their colleagues in effectively carrying out these tasks. Twenty-eight percent of the teachers stated outright that they did not feel prepared to assume leadership responsibilities owing to low confidence and/or lack of exposure to intensive staff development in the area of shared decision-making.

  These findings suggest that a majority of Pakistani community teachers believed that the staff development they had so far received on leadership and decision-making had not been beneficial. They also felt that intensive staff development in the area of shared decision-making would significantly enhance their capacity to assume new and

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existing shared decision-making roles and responsibilities. Interview data found that 82% of teachers favored intensive staff development in the areas of confidence and character building, interpersonal skills, process of shared-decision-making, strategies of effective decision-making, effective ways to engage with parents and community members, time management and the role of expert teachers in teacher hiring. Teachers' responses reflected the importance they ascribed to relevant staff development in strengthening the effectiveness of the shared decision-making process at ZSS. They believed that the one-time training sessions on teamwork, and stress management, and informal guidance on interacting with colleagues and engaging with parents had not been beneficial in nurturing their decision-making capabilities and grooming them into teacher leaders.

Findings indicated that the staff development that the teachers had received in some components of shared decision-making, had inadequately met their needs to undertake leadership responsibilities. These findings were consistent with Rauls's (2003) study on teachers' perceptions of the shared decision-making process as implemented at an elementary school in a large urban district in California. Rauls (2003) found that an overwhelming number of teachers supported the process of shared decision-making, concluding that staff development would enhance the effectiveness of shared decision-making at their school site.

Similarly, Liontos (1999) emphasized that lack of skills and knowledge was one of the many reasons that prevented teachers from changing traditional behavior. Hall & Galluzzo (1991) also observed that both teachers and administrators were not used to exercising collaborative decision-making because teachers typically made classroom-

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related decisions in isolation, whereas school administrators made school related decisions without consulting teachers. Thus, when teachers were given more decision-making authority, they sometimes found that their existing training had not prepared them to effectively assume their new roles and responsibilities.

Research has demonstrated the positive effects of focused professional development in the area of decision-making on teacher empowerment. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Meher et al. (2003) reported a professional development initiative undertaken by the Aga Khan University – Institute of Educational Development (AKU-IED) and USAID. Her study found that the leadership capacity of her teacher participants was enhanced through professional development on decision-making in the areas of curricular content, pedagogy, art of questioning, interpersonal communication and engaging with parents and colleagues. Not only were these teachers in Meher et al.'s study elevated to important decision-making positions by the NGOs they worked for, but they also acquired a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities as teachers, their relationship and interactions with colleagues improved significantly, and they were able to confidently respond to student' questions and deal with parents owing to their newly acquired interpersonal skills.

The findings in Meher's research, and my own study, serve to underline the need for focused staff development in various dimensions of shared decision-making to enable teachers at ZSS to develop a clear understanding of the process, implementation and evaluation of shared decision-making, as well as to become more comfortable with their new roles and responsibilities in this process. Besides intensive training for teachers,

Leech (1999) recommended similar training for the school principal, pointing out that in schools where shared decision-making was less successful, the principals resisted giving up control. Even if a principal supported shared decision-making, her lack of training in various aspects of decision-making may limit her ability to effectively encourage teachers to participate in the decision-making process, thus impeding the impact of this reform effort. Discussions with the principal and a review of the training module designed for principals (developed by the NGO's training wing) revealed that the principal had indeed undergone extensive pre-service and in-service training in leadership and management skills. Many of the training topics fell under the realm of shared decision-making, including communication skills, team building, problem solving, decision-making, ways to enhance staff motivation, accepting and initiating change, community mobilization and the art of promoting effective staff meetings. While it is encouraging that the ZSS principal has some basic knowledge and skills pertaining to different aspects of shared decision-making, it would be more beneficial if she received more focused training on ways to facilitate the shared decision-making process at her school site, to promote professional learning communities, and provide requisite support for teacher empowerment through access to research opportunities, relevant information and teacher education.

Research Question Three

Facilitative and inhibiting factors within school influencing participation.
Researchers have underscored the need to examine factors that influence teachers' willingness to participate in the shared decision-making process (Leech, 1999; Smylie,

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1992). Findings derived from interviewee responses identified factors within the school that either facilitated or impeded teachers' participation in school-wide decision-making. Interview data revealed that 73% of the teachers at Zafar Secondary School felt encouraged to participate in school-wide decision-making due to the positive school environment characterized by supportive attitudes of the management and colleagues. Additionally, 32% of the teachers observed that their own self-confidence, inner drive, and high degree of motivation encouraged them to participate in school-wide decision-making. This finding was noteworthy because it gave insight into the supportive and friendly working relationship between the principal and most of the teachers at ZSS. It also underlined that the principal's attitude and the principal-teacher relationship were both powerful influences on teachers' willingness to participate in decision-making. Most of the teachers felt that the principal maintained a balance in her role as a manager and a facilitator, readily providing assistance to teachers in their pedagogy planning and practice as well as in dealing with parents or tackling discipline related issues.

Related to this finding was the indication that seven Pakistani teachers perceived their relationship with the principal as strained, exclusionary and characterized by elements of distrust. During interviews, they demonstrated little enthusiasm and inclination to participate in school decision-making because they felt that the management neither valued their opinions, nor encouraged them for their efforts in engaging in shared decision-making, hence they felt demotivated and discouraged. Interestingly, six of these seven participants had earlier been identified by the management as relatively inactive teachers who exhibited moderate to low degree of

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inclination towards school-wide decision-making practices. There was also evidence to suggest that these teachers' responses pertaining to their mistrust towards the management may also have been influenced by individual characteristics, such as low self-esteem, low inclination to participate, and a deep-seated belief that the place of a teacher was solely within the parameters of the classroom. These findings were supported by prominent literature that emphasized the importance of a trusting and respectful teacher-management relationship in enlisting teachers' participation in shared decision-making (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Leech, 1999; Smylie, 1992).

Another important finding that emerged through survey and interview data was that Pakistani community teachers believed that encouragement was a critical motivating factor towards their participation in school-wide decision-making. The majority of the teachers who perceived the managements' attitude as friendly and cooperative also agreed with the survey statements that the management encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making and supported teachers in taking innovative initiatives for school improvement. However, even these teachers acknowledged that encouragement was mostly through verbal appreciation, with some teachers advocating institution of a dedicated award in the form of an appreciation letter or a medal to recognize teachers' active participation in extra-curricular and managerial decision-making responsibilities. Nearly 15% of the participants felt that the management did not encourage and applaud their efforts whereas 12% of the participants were undecided.

This finding corresponded with Johnson and Pajares's (1996) study underlining the need for the management to support teachers through staff encouragement, provision

of necessary resources, training, and facilitation to enable a smooth transition from a traditional to a democratic process. The findings of the current study are significant because they suggest that encouragement, in addition to other factors, is instrumental in enhancing teachers' participation in shared decision-making activities. Hence, it could be an incentive for teachers at ZSS if the management offered some form of dedicated award or appreciation certificate to recognize them for actively participating in managerial and extracurricular responsibilities besides instruction.

Researcher observations confirmed that although the school had a well-defined hierarchical structure of communication with the principal at the top, the nature of communication was considerably less hierarchical. The management maintained an open door policy wherein teachers were free to walk into the principal's office to discuss issues of concern. Additionally, the principal, Academic Coordinator and Senior Teacher were seen making frequent rounds around the school and offering support to teachers in their pedagogical practice or the maintenance of discipline whenever required. Although there were a few divergent views, a majority of the teachers believed that the principal exercised tact while assigning leadership decision-making responsibilities to teachers, ensuring that she did not make it sound like an order and that she consulted her staff about various matters to accommodate diverse views. Teachers also mentioned that if they found a task to be too challenging, the management encouraged them not to give up but to complete the task in installments, assuring them of all support.

Significantly, even though a majority of the teachers described the management as friendly, supportive, accessible, and appreciative, nearly 56% of the teachers still did not

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feel empowered as decision-makers in the school. This contradiction in teachers' beliefs and perceptions suggests that while a friendly and open teacher-management relationship encouraged teachers to participate in shared decision-making, the element of mutual trust is however more important for teacher empowerment. In terms of shared decision-making, this trust can be inculcated by soliciting valuable input from and facilitating authentic participation of teachers who are most affected by these decisions. Trust can be further built by providing teachers reliable and up to date background information necessary for them to deliberate over various decisions in order to arrive at more informed and context sensitive decisions. Additionally, teachers need to be given autonomy to express concerns and differing ideas without fear of reprisal as well as the freedom to innovate in their pedagogical practice and grow as professional learners. Finally, it is important to treat teachers as capable and independent professionals whose insights are valuable and judgements are trustworthy.

Pakistani community teachers also identified four inhibiting factors within the school that impeded their agency to engage in shared decision-making. These included time constraints, low inclination, lack of support from management and colleagues' negative attitudes. Amongst these factors, most of the participants (55%) identified time constraint as a barrier that prevented them from participating in collaborative practices. This finding was consistent with existing research. Several researchers identified insufficient time as a common concern at shared decision-making sites and underlined the need to provide additional time to ensure the success of shared decision-making (Barth, 2001; Duke et al., 1980; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Liontos, 1999; Rauls, 2003; Weiss,

2008). Hall and Galluzzo (1991) estimated that it took at least "three to five years" for structural and procedural change to occur because the process involved defining new roles and responsibilities for staff members and investing time to prepare teachers and the management to effectively assume those responsibilities (p. 13).

More than half the teachers at ZSS felt reluctant to assume leadership roles and responsibilities owing to the challenge of balancing leadership time with instructional time. Identifying time as a major barrier, teachers believed that the timetable was inflexible and 'Teacher Time' only spanned half an hour, hence not allowing teachers sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues from other grade levels. These findings are important because they highlight Pakistani community teachers' concerns about the pressures of time and workload resulting from involvement in decision-making versus classroom teaching responsibilities. It also brings to attention their suggestion for an additional period besides 'Teacher Time', to facilitate their meaningful involvement in decision-making and the development of a culture of collaboration amongst teachers from within and across grade levels.

Research Question Four

Facilitative and inhibiting factors outside school influencing participation. Research Question Four sought Pakistani community teachers' perceptions of factors external to the school environment that influenced their ability to participate in school-wide decision-making. Findings from teachers' interview responses indicated that Pakistani community teachers believed that their agency to assume decision-making roles and responsibilities was impacted by six extrinsic factors, including school funding,

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school policies determined by the NGO, uncooperative attitudes of parents, Nearly 68% of the teachers felt that limited funding and inadequate resources adversely impacted their pedagogical and school-wide decision-making within and beyond the classroom. This result is similar to the research findings of Johnson and Pajares's (1996) study that found that lack of additional resources was a constraining factor in the successful implementation of shared decision-making. Other researchers too have highlighted "money, resources, time, staff development and skilled leadership as imperative to the success of shared decision-making (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Leech, 1999).

Although all the interview participants in my study were well aware of the fact that their school had a limited budget, 45% of these interviewees advocated additional funds to purchase props, teaching and learning material and arrange for educational school trips to facilitate teachers' participation in the instructional, curricular and managerial domains of shared decision-making activities. This finding is significant because it underlines the fact that similar to other study participants in western research, Pakistani community teachers, too, considered additional resources as instrumental to their meaningful participation in shared decision-making both within and beyond the classroom. It is to be noted that these teachers viewed the need for additional resources to support their day to day instructional and managerial decision-making practices. However, funding will not only be required to support Pakistani teachers' practical involvement in shared decision-making, it will also be required to build their collective knowledge, skills and capacities on order to prepare them to take on leadership roles and initiate positive change in the lives of their students.

The uncooperative and discourteous attitude of some parents was another extrinsic factor identified by Pakistani community teachers as an obstacle to their participation in shared decision-making. Teachers believed that some parents' occasional practice of disrupting their classes at odd hours, delaying payment of monthly school fee despite repeated reminders, and disturbing their children's school routine by taking them on prolonged vacations in the midst of the school term disturbed teachers' lesson planning and caused them to lose considerable amount of instructional time.

This extrinsic barrier to shared decision-making was significant because it exclusively emerged from the context of a Pakistani low-cost community schools and reflected the day to day challenges teachers faced in dealing with parents who were mostly unschooled and ascribed little priority to their children's education. This was a major reason why Pakistani community school teachers were reluctant to engage parents in classroom activities. Nonetheless, they made concerted efforts to mobilize the community to enhance enrollments and to provide them regular feedback about their children's progress.

This finding suggests that the management needs to develop community teachers' capacity for effective interaction with different kinds of parents through comprehensive professional development. Moreover, the management may also examine the possibility of forming a Parent Teacher Association that includes some relatively more informed and supportive parents, as well as a group of teachers and representatives from the school management. This would provide enhancement for parents' involvement in school affairs, with the goal of leading to greater rapport between them and the teachers, and

providing motivation for them to mediate between the school and some of the less cooperative parents.

A final significant finding of the study was that despite being capable professionals, a majority (68%) of the community teachers at ZSS encountered cultural, familial, and contextual barriers to participation in shared decision-making activities, including mobilizing the community to enhance enrollments after school interactions with parents, and travelling outstation to attend the Training of Trainers (TOT). Many of these teachers were obliged to secure permission from relatives, particularly male members of their family, for participation in shared decision-making practices. This highlighted the impediments Pakistani community school teachers faced on a daily basis, including personal inhibitions, familial and cultural constraints and structural barriers in school. A large number of teachers observed that if the training venue of the Training for Trainers (TOT) had been situated closer to their homes, they would have more readily volunteered to participate in this activity. These findings underlined the need for taking into account the cultural norms and context while planning shared decision-making activities for Pakistani community teachers. Moreover, they are also indicative of the fact that teacher empowerment is deeply grounded in the cultural, contextual, social and economic structures of a society. Hence, shared decision-making practices may be designed in light of these realities to facilitate teachers' active, authentic and meaningful involvement in this process.

Conclusions

Four major conclusions may be drawn from this study. First, all the Pakistani community teachers at Zafar Secondary School were positively inclined towards the process of shared decision-making and believed that the management should involve teachers in decision-making beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, nearly half of the participants preferred to participate in shared decision-making activities only up to a limited degree owing to the pressures of time, increased workload, low inclination, and low self-confidence. Paradoxically, a majority of these teachers perceived the decision-making process at their school as collaborative and participatory and described the teacher-management relationship as friendly and supportive. Yet, more than half the teachers felt that they lacked the autonomy to take decisions because they were bound by school policies determined by the NGO. Although their suggestions were frequently sought, they were rarely incorporated in the final school decisions.

Second, Pakistani community school teachers participated in all three decision-making domains: pedagogy, curriculum, and management; however, the degree and nature of their participation in these domains varied significantly. While they participated in pedagogical decisions of a more strategic and substantial nature, such as designing School Improvement Plans, knowledge sharing, professional collaboration, planning and providing staff development, and setting performance standards, their involvement in curricular decision-making was found to be insignificant, with no role in planning or designing the curriculum. Additionally, although their participation in managerial decisions was varied and fairly wide ranging, it was mostly of routine nature involving

practices such as, providing feedback to parents, mobilizing school community to enhance enrollment, performing discipline duties, organizing and participating in school events, collecting student fees, filling scholarship forms, and preparing daily duty schedules. Teachers had minimal involvement in strategic school based curricular and managerial decisions pertaining to budget, teacher hiring and curriculum planning and development – domains that have traditionally been the sole responsibility of the school management or school district.

Third, a majority of the Pakistani community teachers felt that their previous training had not adequately equipped them with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assume shared decision-making roles and responsibilities. They believed that comprehensive staff development in various domains of shared decision-making would significantly enhance their capacity to meaningfully participate in the shared decision-making process.

Fourth, the interview findings identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors within and outside the school that impacted Pakistani community school teachers' willingness and agency to participate in the shared decision-making process. Teacher-management relationships, peer relationships, and time constraint were found to be the most significant extrinsic factors within the school to influence Pakistani community teachers' willingness to participate in shared decision-making. On the contrary, self-confidence and inner motivational drive were the most influential intrinsic factors within the school that impacted teachers' participation.

Of the six extrinsic factors outside the school that impacted these teachers' willingness to participate, funding constraints and family restrictions were found to be the most influential. These were followed by school policies and parents' uncooperative attitude.

The final conclusion drawn from this study is that Pakistani community school teachers at ZSS supported the process of shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model. Nevertheless, they felt that effective and meaningful participation in shared decision-making was possible only through deeper understanding of the process and acquisition of relevant skills. Additionally, they needed to feel that their involvement in various domains of decision-making process was genuine, and that their input would significantly influence the final outcome of decisions. Therefore, Pakistani community underlined the need for intensive professional development on shared decision-making and support structures such as additional time and resources to facilitate their active and authentic participation in shared decision-making.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

Findings derived from this study suggest that the NGO and the school management need to develop a more collaborative, professional culture characterized by shared governance across various instructional, curricular, and managerial domains and build teachers' capacity to make transformative shifts from an isolated approach to a more participatory approach. These findings will help inform practitioners (school management), policymakers (NGOs) and teacher educators in Pakistan and other developing countries about Pakistani teachers' beliefs regarding the degree to which they

wish to be involved in the shared decision-making process, the areas in which they would like to be involved and the facilitative and inhibiting factors that would impact their participation. With the right conditions in place, shared decision-making can become a powerful force for empowering educators and school communities.

Implications for practitioners. Implications may be drawn from the study to assist practice. These include the following:

Additional collaboration time. Time constraint is an area of common concern amongst educators at school sites that have implemented shared decision-making. Rauls (2003) asserted that teachers need time to "participate in collaborative meetings, engage in discussions with colleagues, research issues, visit other schools, attend professional development workshops and communicate with the larger community. This study found that despite the provision of 'Teacher Time', more than half the teachers at ZSS still struggled to balance their teaching responsibilities with additional decision-making responsibilities owing to time constraints and increased workload. To empower teachers and encourage greater collegiality within and across grade levels, additional collaborative time may be carved out from the school day to enable Pakistani community teachers to meet, mutually plan lessons, devise innovative pedagogical strategies, design grade level assessments, modify the syllabus break up if needed and resolve issues pertaining to student learning and discipline. The principal may also provide support by reducing teachers' instructional workload and in some cases, relaxing the school regulations to encourage more collegial collaboration such as the practice of co-teaching.

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*Incremental steps***.** As prior research suggests, shared decision-making will be more effective if schools take incremental steps to adopt innovative collaborative practices (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Liontos, 1999). Moreover, one size does not fit all and a shared decision-making prototype that may work in one school setting, may not work in another. Therefore, the school management at Zafar Secondary School may examine the needs of the school and its stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) and then design a shared decision-making model that best fits those needs. It may solicit teachers' input while determining the structure of the shared decision-making model and in considering important aspects such as who will be involved; how many groups, councils or committees will be formed to address different areas of decision-making; the size of each group or committee, what will be the procedure for taking decisions and who will make the final decisions on issues.

Implications for teacher educators and policymakers. The implications of this research for teacher educators are also very crucial.

*Role of the NGO in broadening the scope of teacher participation***.** The study findings revealed that a majority of the teachers desired a more involved role in strategic decision-making pertaining to curriculum planning and development and teacher selection. They believed that they had more experience in curricular matters and that their input should be sought before designing the monthly and weekly syllabus break up and the STL books. Having dealt with students of varied learning abilities, they felt they could better guide the management about suitable topics to include in the syllabus as per the students' mental level and interest.

These findings present an opportunity for the NGO to play a proactive role in developing leadership expertise of community teachers at ZSS and encouraging them to step into the largely unchartered territory of teacher leadership. The NGO needs to make deeper investment in these teachers with regard to their added professional knowledge of teacher leadership and shared decision-making. The qualities, beliefs, perceptions, and desire to participate in shared decision-making are present in many of these teachers but they need professional development and financial support to make a successful transition from passive recipients of school change to active participants in planning for school improvement. Teachers have innovative ideas for change and have the ability to initiate reform both inside and beyond their classrooms, but they need greater attention and support from the education community and the NGO management.

The cultural transference – a Pakistani model of shared decision-making.
Given the fact that existing literature on teacher leadership and shared decision-making is largely western-based, a pertinent consideration for policymakers and practitioners in Pakistan would be how to culturally transfer to the Pakistan education context this knowledge about successful, or not so successful shared decision-making practices as defined in the western literature. Undeniably, cultural context plays a critical role in determining the shape and form a teacher leadership model can take in a Pakistani education institution.

The findings of my study suggest that Pakistani community teachers are positively inclined towards shared decision-making and are willing to be invested in to enhance their degree of empowerment. However, they do not feel adequately prepared to

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assume leadership roles to the same extent that their western counterparts are routinely assuming. Although steps have been taken by the Government of Pakistan to decentralize education management from the federal to the provincial and district level, in practical terms, a majority of education institutions, particularly in the public sector, continue to function under a centralized and hierarchical management structure with all authority flowing from the top.

The idea of shared decision-making is inherently appealing; however, it cannot be applied in its true essence in the Pakistani education context. Even if there are examples of successful shared decision-making practices in some public, low-cost private and community schools in Pakistan, these are exceptions and not the norm. Pakistani teachers are typically conditioned to accept externally mandated policies and are not yet professionally mature enough to take independent decisions without supervision because they have not been prepared to perform leadership roles.

Under these conditions and constraints, importing a purely and unaltered western concept of teacher leadership would not be culturally sustainable in Pakistan; rather, an effective Pakistani teacher leadership model must be grounded in the structural and socio-cultural realities of the country. In view of this, a workable Pakistani teacher leadership model would still have the school principal playing a central and pivotal role in school management. To encourage the development of teacher leadership, the principal will have to receive suitable professional development to facilitate collaborative and interactive practices involving the teachers. Additionally, s/he will need to introduce dedicated professional development program for teachers to develop their leadership

skills and groom them into teacher leaders. In this limited decentralization approach, the principal would still continue to shoulder the overall responsibility of school management, but s/he would plan and devise leadership roles and responsibilities for teachers in consultation with them and advocate for teachers' innovative ideas. Even if the management structure might begin from the vertical, the structure of communication between the management and the teachers should be interactive and participatory in which both the management and the teachers were accountable to each other.

Furthermore, to provide a conducive and supportive work environment, the principal would allow teachers relative autonomy, encouraging them to take independent decisions in professional matters, even if these entailed some risk taking. Towards this end, s/he would plan and constitute various forums such as school management committees, school-based decision-making councils, learning/research committees, and parent teacher associations in order to allow the teachers and parents a formal role in school decisions pertaining to curriculum development, student learning, professional development, teacher selection, and the day to day running of the school. This interactive teacher leadership model could be a first incremental step toward empowering Pakistani community teachers. As these teachers become more accustomed to their new leadership roles and responsibilities, this model could be upgraded and expanded, calling for a more active decision-making role for teachers in future.

Intensive professional development for teachers. The success of shared decision-making is contingent upon a reexamination of roles and responsibilities and a change in beliefs, mindsets, attitudes and behaviors on the part of all education stakeholders. More

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than half the teacher interviewees in this study believed that inflexibility and resistance towards reexamining their traditional roles of decision-making was equally present among the management and the teachers. The study also found that some teachers, particularly novice teachers, lacked confidence to voice opinions, seek help from colleagues or assume shared decision-making responsibilities. Furthermore, a majority of the teacher participants indicated that barring a few one-time training sessions on team building, stress management, and the role of teachers as counsellors, and informal guidance in dealing with parents and colleagues, they had not received intensive staff development in various dimensions of shared decision-making. Hence, they felt inadequately trained to participate in the collaborative process.

Shared decision-making is a complex procedure that involves "listening" to one another's point of view, weighing different options, "taking stands, confronting conflicts," negotiating differences of opinion and learning to accept other's viewpoints (Weiss, 2008, p. 10). These findings have deep implications for teacher education programs in Pakistan. They underline the need for education policy makers to organize extensive teacher education programs that expose community teachers to various dimensions of shared decision-making so as to expand their knowledge, understanding and expertise pertaining to the concept and applicability of shared decision-making in their school context. One aspect of professional development may be geared towards helping novice teachers develop efficacy and self-confidence through focused sessions on character and confidence building. Another aspect of professional development may focus on enhancing teachers' knowledge about the process of shared decision-making as

implemented at the school site. Still, a third aspect of professional development may include concepts such as time management; interpersonal skills; the art of negotiation; effective ways to interact with different types of parents and community members; leadership skills; nature and technique of asking questions during teacher induction and basic training in resource and budget management. Additionally, teachers at ZSS may be taught how to collaborate as educators and to take greater responsibility for their profession and their schools. Through leadership focused professional development, these teachers need to be made to understand that the essence of shared decision-making lies in sharing expertise and actively participating in the process and it may not necessarily mean that all their suggestions will be incorporated in the final decisions.

Finally, to be empowered, teachers need to be knowledgeable about all aspects of an impending decision. The principal may provide teachers the background information needed to arrive at informed decisions. Conversely, s/he may train teachers about ways to access relevant, reliable and up to date information to enable them to make practicable decisions pertaining to student l

Intensive professional development for the school management. As extant research suggests, school administrators are accustomed to making decisions in isolation (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991, Liontos, 1999, Rauls, 2003, Weiss, 2008). In shared decision-making, both educators and the management need support in learning how to perform their new tasks, and in becoming comfortable with their new roles and responsibilities. Therefore, Kazilbash (1998) underlined the need to first expose formal education leaders particularly in the Pakistani context to professional development in "team building,

reflection and collaborative culture" (p. 134). Ongoing professional development in collaborative leadership would prepare not just the teachers but also the school management in reevaluating its existing beliefs and attitudes about traditional decision-making roles. It would also broaden the management's scope of thinking that leadership is not the prerogative of one individual; rather decision-making involves combined strengths, effort, and expertise of leadership teams comprising both the management and teachers. This realization will enable the management to more willingly accept its new roles and responsibilities in a shared decision-making structure.

Additional resources. Murphy (1994) asserted that creating collaborative decision-making climates not only entailed nurturing stakeholders' professional capacities, but also involved the provision of requisite information and resources. Less than half the interview participants underlined the need for the budget to be prepared in keeping with teachers' input about requisite teaching/learning aids because teachers often faced resource constraints that impeded their active participation in shared decision-making.

Successful implementation of shared decision-making requires the allocation of dedicated resources particularly for planning, designing, and implementing a sound and comprehensive professional development program in the area of shared decision-making (Hall & Galluzzo, 1991). Without time and money, it is difficult to build a collaborative learning community among the professional staff. It is therefore recommended that the NGO management may consider reexamining its existing priorities and way of thinking by moving beyond "interventions in teaching and student learning" to making greater

monetary investments in teachers and community school leaders in order to build professional communities. Additionally, it is critical to acknowledge that teachers are capable professionals who, if given the requisite resources and autonomy, can effectively solve local school problems. Hence, there is a need for the NGO to find a potential funding stream through partnerships with for-profit organizations to invest in teacher development and support teachers' meaningful involvement in shared decision-making.

Resources such as power, knowledge/skills training, information, and incentives play a significant role in empowering teachers in the shared decision-making process (Leech, 1999; Liontos, 1999). Schools not only need to ensure that teachers have basic resources to teach innovatively but they also need to create reward structures to provide incentives for teachers to participate in shared decision-making activities. The NGO management can enhance Pakistani community teachers' level of motivation and self-efficacy by offering them tokens of encouragement in the form of appreciation certificates for actively participating in school-wide decision-making.

Outside support from NGO/school boards. As Hall and Galluzzo (1991) pointed out, "no school is an island, and implementing school-based decision-making reinforces that truism" (p. 15). Shared decision-making can only take root and flourish if a school receives support from within and outside. If the decision-making culture outside the school remains traditional and the NGO management and school boards continue to preserve the status quo, then it will be difficult for stakeholders within the school to support shared decision-making practices. Both teachers and school principals need supportive environments to be able to nurture professional learning communities. It is

important that the NGO management, Provincial School Board members, and education policymakers at the Federal level reexamine their traditional roles and hierarchical structures, and adapt some existing policies and standard operating procedures to accommodate a more collaborative approach.

Future Areas of Research

This research examined Pakistani community school teachers' perceptions of their roles in shared decision-making. Building upon the results of this study, two major areas of research have emerged for exploration in the future.

First, as mentioned earlier, the shared decision-making process varies from one school site to another based upon the local needs of the school and the cultural and social context within and outside the school. I would like to replicate this study at another low cost Pakistani community school managed by another NGO to examine in what ways are the perceptions and practices of teachers in that particular community school similar to or different from the shared decision-making perceptions and practices of teachers at Zafar Secondary School. It would be interesting to explore whether the vision of the NGO, its existing policies and procedures and unique characteristics, as well as the local context of the school community, have a bearing on the way the process of shared decision-making unfolds at this particular school site.

Second, schools do not exist in a vacuum; they need outside support to ensure the success of the shared decision-making process. In this respect, another significant area for future research would be to examine the beliefs and perceptions of NGO management about shared decision-making, exploring whether and to what extent they believed the

process was relevant to the context of community schools. It would also be useful to study the NGO management's perception about the type of shared decision-making model they believed would be feasible for a low cost community school and to examine the kind of support they would be willing to offer to Zafar Secondary School in terms of autonomy, resources, time and professional development in order to facilitate the development of a collaborative culture at that school site.

Final Thoughts

As a Pakistani doctoral student in the US with professional experience of the development sector in Pakistan, the concept of shared decision-making as discussed in western literature intrigued me immensely. I felt the need to examine whether the notion of shared decision-making could take root in an education climate that was typically hierarchical and bureaucratic and whether a successful low cost Pakistani community school had taken any steps to move from an overly centralized management structure to one that was more flexible and accommodating of the voices of all stakeholders. I also wished to take a closer look at how Pakistani teachers in this particular community school viewed their own level of professional empowerment in terms of decision-making and what decision-making roles and responsibilities they assumed beyond the bounds of their classrooms. Finally, I sought to understand, through the perceptions of these teachers, the facilitative and inhibiting factors that influenced their participation in school-wide decision-making.

My knowledge base regarding shared decision-making is drawn from my understanding of the concept as defined in western literature, as well as my insider's

perspective on the cultural, educational, and social context of Pakistan and a familiarity with the management structures of NGO funded schools. All my knowledge, skills, and international perspective contributed to enhancing my understanding of the process of shared decision-making and the power dynamics at play between the school management and the teachers at this one successful community school in Pakistan.

Added to this were teachers' culturally and linguistically rich narratives in their native language Urdu, which enabled me to delve below the surface and gain deeper insight into Pakistani community teachers' interpretations and understandings of the concept of shared decision-making, examining it against existing literature. I learned that Pakistani community teachers' perceptions of and practices in shared decision-making were largely shaped and influenced by the realities and needs of the cultural setting in which they functioned. Given the constraints of time, resources and a hierarchical set up, there was evidence that the school management at ZSS endeavored to develop, a participatory and collaborative decision-making process to some degree by involving teachers in instructional decision-making of a strategic nature, and by carving additional time out of the school day to facilitate teacher professional collaboration and knowledge sharing. Teachers, too, tried to navigate through the constraints and limitations of their milieu to participate in collaborative and participatory practices for meaningful school improvement.

Nonetheless, there were some weak areas particularly pertaining to minimal teacher participation in strategic curricular and managerial decisions of curriculum planning and development, hiring, scheduling, and budget allocation. Changing a culture

of practice is a multifaceted endeavor, and this study serves to inform the complexity of this process. To enhance their commitment to school policies, the NGO management may consider looking into expanding Pakistani community teachers' involvement in strategic decisions of curriculum planning and development, teacher hiring, to some extent, resource allocation so that they feel that their participation in decision-making is authentic and valuable to the larger cause of improving student learning.

In the arena of teaching and learning, teachers have traditionally worked in isolation within the four walls of their classroom. The notion that teachers are not as significant to the change process as administrators is so deeply entrenched in the psyche of policymakers and practitioners both at the school, district, provincial and national levels, that the views of progressive teachers are often overlooked in the pursuit of high stakes accountability and student improvement (Lukacs & Galluzzo, 2014). As research has shown, little attempt has been made to hear teachers' voices, to capture their visions for school improvement and to recognize them as knowledgeable professionals fully capable of resolving issues in their professional milieu, teachers largely remain an untapped resource compelled to conform to externally mandated initiatives as passive recipients (Barth, 2001; Griffin, 1995; Leech, 1999). This is in evidence worldwide, but particularly so in the Pakistani context.

When I chose Zafar Secondary School as a research site for my study, I was unaware of the degree of shared decision-making I would find there. Despite being a successful community school in terms of student learning, the physical infrastructure and provision of a dedicated professional development program, it had introduced no formal

shared decision-making model and had few structures in place to facilitate the process of shared decision-making. I was curious to learn how, in the absence of formal support structures, reform-minded teachers could informally engage in practices of shared decision-making at ZSS. As the study progressed, I discovered rather unexpectedly that although some teachers did not appear to be highly empowered or inclined towards shared decision-making beyond the classrooms, others actively initiated change by voluntarily reaching out to their colleagues as a routine without being asked to do so. A supportive school environment and an inner drive motivated these teachers to assume more active roles in shared decision-making.

Even though teachers' input was not openly sought in most strategic matters pertaining to curriculum planning and development, teacher hiring, and resource allocation, teachers believed, nonetheless, the management did create a culture of professional collaborative learning that allowed them to nurture their problem solving expertise and engage in reflective and cooperative practices. DuFour and Eaker (1998) asserted that the most powerful strategy for sustained school improvement and teacher empowerment is developing the capacity of the school personnel to function as a professional learning community. Creating networks of relationships among the education community is critical to helping teachers take transformative steps from a state of powerlessness to one of power where they feel fully empowered to assume control of their professional lives.

Rarely do traditional teacher preparation programs prepare teachers to be leaders outside their own classrooms (Leech, 1999; Rauls, 2003) and the in-service program at

ZSS, no matter how comprehensive and dedicated, was no exception. As teachers in this study indicated, the focus of professional development at ZSS was mostly on imparting pedagogical skills with little attention paid to grooming their personalities and building their capacity to lead within and beyond their classrooms.

The essence of shared decision-making lies in developing leadership throughout the school community and enabling all stakeholders to share responsibility for learning and decision-making through a shared vision and purpose. Policymakers and teacher educators wholly miss the point that making exclusive investments in student learning at the expense of nurturing teachers' character, confidence and leadership skills may prove to be counterproductive in the long run. Listening to teachers' voices will enable teacher educators, practitioners and policymakers in Pakistan to acquire a better understanding of how best to reinvent the roles and responsibilities of community school teachers both inside and outside the classroom and to support and empower them in authentic ways as they strive to shape the thinking and future of children from underprivileged backgrounds. Linda Lambert (2002) powerfully captures this perception in the following excerpt and I end this dissertation with her apt and thought provoking words:

> Our mistake has been in looking to the principal alone for instructional leadership and decision-making, when this is everyone's work. We need to develop leadership capacity of the whole school community. Out of that changed school culture will arise a new vision of professional practice linking leading and learning (p. 37).

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

DATE:	April 8, 2015
TO:	Rebecca Fox
FROM:	George Mason University IRB
Project Title:	[729030-1] Teachers' Perceptions of Shared Decision-Making: A case study in a Pakistani community school
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS DECISION
DATE:	April 8, 2015
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA) has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be submitted to the ORIA prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Motsinger at 703-993-4208 or kmotsing@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Appendix B

Teacher Survey Questionnaire on Shared Decision-Making

Demographic Background Information

1. **Gender? (Check ONE)**

   ---- Male   ---- Female

2. **Which Age category do you belong to? (Check ONE)**

   ---- Less than 20 years ---- 21- 30 years ---- 31- 40 years ---- 41- 50 years ---- 51 or older

Educational Qualification and Professional Experience

3. **Highest Educational degree earned? (Check ONE)**

   ---- Matriculate/High school   ---- FA/Intermediate   ---- Bachelors   ---- Masters

   ---- M.Phil/PhD

4. **Total number of years you have taught to date? (Check ONE)**

   ---- Less than a year ---- 1-3 years   ---- 4-6 years ---- 7-10 years ---- 11-15 years ---- 16+

5. **How many years have you taught in this school? (Check ONE)**

   ---- Less than a year ---- 1-3 years ---- 4-6 years ----- 7-10 years ---- 11 or more years

6. **Grade level(s) you teach in this school?**

   _____

7. **Did you receive pre-service training before you started teaching?**

   ---- Yes   ---- No

8. **What is the usual way you spend your time before and after a class? Please choose one or more of the following that may apply to you: (check all that may apply)**

   a.   ------ Checking class assignments.

   b.   ------ Designing and reviewing lesson plans independently.

   c..   ------ Gathering my thoughts and reflecting upon my teaching strategies on my own..

   d.   ------ Knowledge sharing and reflecting upon my instructional practice with teaching colleagues.

   e.   ------ Engaging with parents.

Shared Decision-Making

Shared decision-making means that many more people besides the school administrators have the knowledge, freedom and authority to make decisions about school improvement and initiate changes, including teachers and parents. Instead of one or two people making decisions alone, teams make decisions by consensus after all participants have voiced their opinions and support for the change.

9. **Did you receive any training to prepare you for participating in school-wide decision-making activities** (For example, instructional coordination, curriculum development, knowledge sharing, professional staff development, teacher selection, evaluation, general school improvement, rules and discipline, engaging with parents and policymaking on budget allocation)**?**

   ---- Yes   ---- No

10. **If you received training on school-wide decision-making, please describe what concepts of leadership, management or decision-making were covered during the training? (If not, then please proceed to the next question)**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. **How involved have you been in school-wide decision-making in this school? Briefly describe your involvement**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. **In which of the following school-wide decision-making activities have you participated during this school year or prior years at your school site? (Check as many activities as you think are applicable in your case)**

------ School Vision (Worked with the school management in developing a shared school vision)

------ Budget (Participated in matters related to resource allocation/designing and implementing the school budget)

------ Hiring of personnel (Supported the administration in making decisions about recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and assigning staff)

------ Curriculum planning and development (Participated in determining the school program, curriculum goals, textbook selection, educational materials, and classroom pedagogy)

------ Knowledge sharing with colleagues (Reflecting upon pedagogical practice with colleagues and students)

------ Planning and designing Staff Development and In-service Programs (Engaged in designing staff development activities that meet their own needs)

------ Providing staff development (Implementing staff development activities that meet their own needs)

------ Choosing Textbooks and Instructional Materials in addition to the prescribed syllabus to improve student learning

------ Setting Standards (Sharing in setting standards for their own performance and for student performance and discipline)

------ Creating class rosters/timetables/day schedules

------ Scheduling within the school day (recess schedules, duty schedules, staff meetings, etc.)

------ Engaging with parents and the community to mobilize support for increased enrollment

------ Regularly talking to parents about learning expectations and providing feedback about students' progress

------ None of the above

Other: _____

13. **How supportive do you feel the school administration has been in involving you in school-wide decision-making?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

Next, I would like to ask you how strongly you agree or disagree with a list of statements about shared decision-making at your school.

Please read each statement carefully and give an honest and independent response. Please **circle ONE** of the following choices for each statement given below:

> **SA (strongly agree)**
> **A (agree)**
> **U (undecided)**
> **D (disagree)**
> **SD (strongly disagree)**

14. I value working collaboratively with other teachers. SA A U D SD

15. I believe that in order for school improvement to be successful, teachers must work together. SA A U D SD

16. What happens outside of my classroom is not my concern. SA A U D SD

17. I believe that the school management should involve teachers in decision-making beyond the classroom setting. SA A U D SD

18. Teachers in my school easily give in to the opinion of the principal even if they have differing views. SA A U D SD

19. My school management encourages teachers to participate in decision-making. SA A U D SD

20. My school invites and supports new ways of doing things. SA A U D SD

21. I am a decision-maker in my school. SA A U D SD

22. When I see a problem, I feel confident that I can find a way to solve it. SA A U D SD

23. My only job is to be responsible for teaching my students. SA A U D SD

24. I am willing to take risks to change something about which I feel passionate. SA A U D SD

25. I believe that teachers can change their schools' culture. SA A U D SD

26. If my ideas for change are met with resistance from my administrator(s), I am unable to continue to pursue those ideas. SA A U D SD

27. My colleagues frequently seek me out for advice. SA A U D SD

28. I actively seek learning opportunities to grow professionally. SA A U D SD

29. I am unable to envision myself making a difference beyond my classroom.
SA A U D SD

30. I like to spend my time talking to other teachers about ways to improve my own and their teaching skills. SA A U D SD

31. If I feel it is necessary, I will speak out and express my views to my colleagues.
SA A U D SD

32. I feel adequately trained to take on leadership roles and responsibilities in school other than teaching. SA A U D SD

33. I am reluctant to suggest improvement initiatives because I feel my opinion will not be valued. SA A U D SD

34. I prefer the process of shared decision-making over the traditional decision-making model where the administrator makes the majority of school decisions. SA A U D SD

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Would you be willing to participate in a follow up interview about your views on shared decision-making?

------ Yes   ------ No

If so, kindly provide your preferred means of contact for researcher follow up (phone number, email address or Skype ID).

_____

_____

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Community School Principal

General Background

- Would you please tell me a little about your background as an educator?

- How long have you served as a principal in this school?

- What motivated you to join this particular school as a principal?

- What are your major responsibilities as a principal?

- Do students get free textbooks?

- What kind of a population does the school serve and do students pay any fee to attend this school?

Perceptions about School Leadership

1. What is the vision of your school?

2. How was this vision developed?

3. How do you see your role as a school leader?

Perceptions about School Leadership

4. How do you believe that shared decision-making can contribute to school improvement?

5. How have you tried to incorporate shared decision-making in your school?

6. How did you explain shared decision-making to your staff?

7. In what ways are teachers encouraged to participate in collegial activities beyond the classroom?

8. How often do you involve others (i.e., assistant head, department heads, teachers, students, parents) in the decision-making process?

9. How do you work with teachers individually and in groups?

10. What have you done to support teachers in voicing their opinions and effectively participating in decision-making responsibilities?
(*Provision of adequate time, reduced teaching loads, resources, waivers from contracts and regulations, and changed schedules to facilitate collegial work*)

   a. Are there any budget provisions in place to compensate teachers for the work they do to organize and support schoolwide activities and professional development?

11. How are teachers who do not hold a formal leadership position (head teachers or department heads) involved in decision-making?

I am now going to ask you a few questions about teacher training and teachers' engagement with parents.

12. What opportunities are provided to teachers to develop professionally and reflect upon their practice?

13. Do pre-service or in-service trainings include any concepts of shared decision-making or teacher leadership?

   (*Concepts may include team building, negotiations, school organization and management, developing school timetables, maintaining school records, data entry, managing physical resources, teacher professionalism, teacher learning, professional development and reflective practices*)

14. How are parents involved in their children's learning and in what ways are they encouraged to participate in school activities?

15. What opportunities are provided for parents/community families to learn the skills of shared decision-making?

16. Can you describe a successful example of how a decision was made that included a shared decision-making model?

17. Can you also share with me a shared decision that has not been so successful? What were the reasons for it being unsuccessful?

18. What significant obstacle(s) have there been to the effective implementation of shared decision-making in your school?

   a. Is it easy or difficult to change people's mindsets, opinions, and beliefs about their roles, the way schools operate, and how decisions are made in school?

19. Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the shared decision-making process in your school?

20. Are there ways that you feel that your school could be more successful?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add that I did not address?

Thank you for participating in this interview!

Appendix D

Interview Guide for Community School Teachers

General Background

- For how long have you been in the teaching profession? Do you enjoy teaching?

- For how long have you taught in this particular school? What grades and subjects do you teach?

- Would you please tell me a little about your background as an educator?

- How many children do you have in your class?

- Why did you join this particular school?

- What are your major responsibilities as a teacher both inside and outside the classroom?

- What has your experience been of teaching at this school?

Perceptions about Shared Decision-Making

1. From your teacher perspective, what should be the role of a school leader?

2. How are decisions about school improvement made in your school?

   a. In what ways does the school administration seek teachers' input in decisions?

3. How would you describe the relationship between the principal and the teaching faculty in terms of the decision-making process?

4. What does the term "shared decision-making in schools" mean to you?

5. When did you first hear about the concept of school-wide shared decision-making and how did you feel about it?

6. How do you feel about school-wide shared decision-making now that you are involved in the classroom?

7. What is the role of teachers in this school in selecting the curriculum and textbooks?

8. What is your role in developing and designing teaching materials for your class?

Level of Preparedness (Teacher Education/Professional Development)

9. Have you engaged in any school-wide decision-making or leadership responsibilities beyond your classroom?

10. Did you feel prepared to assume any leadership responsibilities you were delegated? Why or why not?

11. Were you provided any professional development to equip you with the skills needed for effective decision-making?

Decision-Making Practices

12. How are teachers who are not holding a formal leadership position (head teachers or department heads) involved in leadership? Can you give a few examples?

13. Are you provided opportunities to engage in ongoing reflective practices such as peer coaching, journal writing or collaborative practices with your peers?

14. Have you ever taken initiatives to introduce new programs to the school?

Community Engagement

15. How do teachers engage parents in their children's learning and encourage them to participate in school activities?

    a. Do teachers play a role in mobilizing the local community to enhance school enrollment?

16. Is there anything within the school environment that either helps you to participate or hinders you from participating in decision-making roles?

17. Is there anything about your family and/or the local school community that influences your ability to participate in school-wide decision-making?

    a. Is it easy or difficult to change people's mindsets and beliefs about their traditional roles and how decisions are made in school?

18. Have you noticed any changes in the style of leadership since you joined this school?

19. In your view, how can decision-making be made more effective in schools?

20. What would you like to change?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add that I did not address?

Thank you for participating in this interview!

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