

Successful Practices of Leadership in School Reform: A Case Study in a Private School in Dubai

ممارسات قيادية ناجحة في الإصلاح المدرسي: دراسة حالة لمدرسة خاصة في
دبي

by

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Abstract

Education reform is the remedy nations seek to develop and compete in a rapidly growing world. Different approaches to school reform, the main field of education, vary according to the contextual circumstances. However, leadership practices have the pivotal role that determines the success or failure of any school reform. Therefore, this study investigates how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices to provide recommendations of the best practices.

The study was designed to benefit from the mixed method that helps reach the best understanding of the research context. A questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data to understand the perspectives of teachers and school leadership on school reform. In addition, qualitative data was collected from a semi-structured interview with school leadership members to identify practices of leadership that led to school reform.

Data analysis showed that both teachers and leadership members defined school reform as a change in teaching and learning and school discipline approaches, teacher-parent involvement in curriculum design, and an effective parents' engagement in their children's learning. Moreover, the study concluded that the best practices for school reform included: conducting evidence-based professional development, encouraging collaborative decision-making among all stakeholders, and developing in-and-out school healthy relationships.

It is evident from the study findings that although school reform is designed and steered by school leadership members, all stakeholders have their prominent shares especially teachers and parents.

Key Words: School Reform, Leadership Practices, Stakeholders, Professional Development, Curriculum Improvement, Leadership Styles

ملخص الدراسة

إصلاح التعليم هو السبيل الذي تتخذه الأمم للنهوض والمنافسة في عالم سريع النمو، وتختلف الأساليب المتبعة للإصلاح المدرسي -المحطة الرئيسية للتعليم- وفقاً للظروف المحيطة به، ومع ذلك، فإن ممارسات القيادة المدرسية لها دور محوري يحدد نجاح أو فشل أي إصلاح مدرسي. لذلك تبحث هذه الدراسة في ممارسات القيادة المدرسية الناجحة التي ينتج عنها إصلاح مدرسي ناجح لتقدم توصيات بأفضل هذه الممارسات.

تم تصميم الدراسة للاستفادة من طرق البحث المختلطة التي تساعد في الوصول إلى فهم أفضل لسياق البحث. تم تطوير استبيان لجمع البيانات الكمية لفهم وجهات نظر كل من المعلمين والقيادة المدرسية حول الإصلاح المدرسي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم جمع البيانات النوعية من مقابلة شبه منظمة مع أعضاء قيادة المدرسة لتحديد ممارسات القيادة التي أدت إلى الإصلاح المدرسي.

أظهر تحليل البيانات أن كلاً من الكادر التعليمي والإداري قد عرّفوا الإصلاح المدرسي بأنه تغيير في مناهج التعليم والتعلم والانضباط المدرسي، ومشاركة المعلمين وأولياء الأمور في تصميم المناهج الدراسية، والمشاركة الفاعلة لأولياء الأمور في تعلم أبنائهم. علاوة على ذلك، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن أفضل الممارسات للإصلاح المدرسي تضمنت: إجراء تطوير مهني قائم على الأدلة، وتشجيع صنع القرار التعاوني بين جميع المعنيين بالعملية التعليمية، وتطوير علاقات صحية داخل المدرسة وخارجها.

يتضح من نتائج الدراسة أنه على الرغم من أن الإصلاح المدرسي تم تصميمه وتوجيهه من قبل الكادر الإداري بالمدرسة، إلا أن جميع المعنيين بالعملية التعليمية لديهم أدوارهم البارزة وخاصة المعلمين وأولياء الأمور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإصلاح المدرسي، الممارسات القيادية، المعنيين بالعملية التعليمية، التطوير المهني، تحسين المناهج،

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List of definitions and/or abbreviations

1. **DSIB**: Dubai School Inspection Bureau
2. **EPE**: Editorial Projects in Education
3. **KHDA**: Knowledge and Human Development Authority
4. **MOE**: Ministry of Education
5. **NCCA**: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
6. **OECD**: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
7. **PD**: Professional Development
8. **SP**: School Principal
9. **SPSS**: Statistical Product and Service Solutions
10. **UNESCO**: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents background information about education reform and quality in the United Arab Emirates. It also introduces the aim and objectives of the study and then converts them into specific research questions. It also reveals the motivation and rationale behind the examination of successful leadership practices for school reform.

1.2 Background and Statement of the problem

Education is one essential virtue of humanity, and a main component of any civilized society, and it has been sought continuous improvement throughout recorded history (Bhardwaj 2016). Historically, enhancing the quality of education has gone through different stages in which instructions isolated one or two components from the others and attempted to shed light on their significance on the educational system (Cohen, Spillane & Peurach 2017). They also added that these incoherent interventions resulted in substandard progress in the teaching and learning performance which made scholars look for a more holistic process that regards all educational components as a whole unit.

According to David and Abukari (2020), several educational studies strongly associate school leadership with its performance. They highlighted the crucial role school leaders have to cause a required reform on the teaching and learning process and thus on the schooling system. As a result, the success of any educational institute is largely dependent on its leaders and how they approach different situations.

Scholars have debated over the years what policies and strategies would be efficient for school reform (Escobar 2019). He added that despite being considered with different approaches and characteristics, these policies have not ignored the major role practitioners have as the key factor in the educational field in different contexts. However, school leadership practices occupy an undeniably significant role in observing these policies and contextualizing them according to the specific needs and natures of their educational environment (Flores 2018).

Educational reform attempts have depended on school leadership as the policy-makers eyes on the implementation process by designing sturdy frameworks within which educational leaders can effectively practice their comprehensive roles (Sepulveda 2015). Moreover, instructional, transformational, and distributed approaches -as major forms of leadership styles- facilitate creating a balance between enhancing the overall school academic performance and engaging different educational stakeholders in forming a shared vision by which they can all collaboratively work to achieve educational reform.

The OECD report (2011) stated that increasing school autonomy is the latest educational trends of high-quality education all over the world. However, reasonable concerns about the efficacy of schools' leaderships and their capacity to cope with these modifications. This makes it mandatory for policy makers to prioritize improving the quality of school leadership considering the heavy workloads principals have a long with the difficulty in replacing them.

According to the UNESCO (2016), development of school leadership has become the emerging challenge especially in developing countries, in which principals tend to practice a managerial role and are required to be more instructional leaders. This indicates a real necessity for related professional development and a need to share successful leadership practices along with proper

training for the role. Therefore, it is a must to research and examine top performance examples to provide education sector with successful reform outline.

Many studies in the UAE context investigated the relationship between school leadership and school reform. The lack of autonomy granted for the government schools leaderships in terms of teacher's recruitment was questioned as a barrier in the reform path (Thorne 2011). In addition, Alzuhair (2018) examined leadership strategies adopted for school reform in private schools of three different emirates and concluded that professional development, continuous curriculum reform, and stakeholders' collaboration are the best strategies for school improvement. Similarly, Matsumoto (2019) reviewed different factors affecting education reform in the UAE, and she concluded with the significance of professional development for both teachers and school leadership.

In 2020, with the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, millions of students all over the world have been affected by the preventive measures that led schools and universities in most countries to shut down (UNESCO 2020). However, education in the United Arab Emirates shifted from regular schooling to distance learning in all public and private schools and universities depending on individual educational leadership to adapt the means and policies convenient to their institutes (MOE 2020). Consequently, leadership practices have been considered as a matter of life or death to the continuity of teaching and learning under these tough circumstances.

1.3 Education Quality in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates, has recently gone through dramatic phases of progress in different sectors, and the decision-makers have prioritized education quality as a major factor of education reform whether on the federal level presented by the ministry of education (MOE) or on the

domestic level for each emirate presented by its educational council (O'Sullivan 2016). Each authority has established different entities to be responsible for evaluating the quality of education offered in the public and private educational institutes in the UAE (MOE 2020).

In Dubai, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) founded the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) to deliver information on the standard of private schools in the emirate of Dubai to the decision makers and to different educational stakeholders labeling each school with a specific rating as the major indicator of the quality of teaching and learning each school has (KHDA 2009). DSIB teams inspect private schools in Dubai and evaluate them on a yearly basis according to their overall performance. After the visits, schools receive one of a five-scale rating (outstanding, very good, good, acceptable, weak). Thus, inspection process and its reports have become of a prodigious value to different stakeholders.

School leaders, as the main personnel accountable for the quality of education, and consequently for the rating their school get, are the bases and the inspirational role models for school reform. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the various facets of leadership effective school leaders hold and the different scopes of school reform procedures they put into practice. A school which raised from “acceptable” to “good” is a worthy case study to be examined thoroughly so that its leadership practices are highlighted to be presented as an example for other educational institutes aspiring to enhance the teaching and learning within its context.

1.4 Conceptual Analysis

In this section, school leadership and school reform concepts are to be elucidated to eliminate any potential vagueness about their operational meaning.

School leadership is the school leading group that take executive and organizational decisions in order to impact learners' performance considering their needs and desires (Sergiovanni 2009). There is also an obvious distinction between leadership and management as leadership is the governing body that is associated with making a change while management is viewed as maintaining organizational activities (Cuban 1988).

School reform is the planned educational change that aims for improving students' outcomes by positively affecting the teaching and learning process (Gordon 2016). It is also defined as the progressive development of educational institutes to achieve desirable goals. According to Bush (2007) this development is of multi-dimensional process that integrate all aspects and personnel relevant to the schooling system.

1.5 Aim, Purpose, and Objectives

Research aim is the overall declaration that enlightens a particular path and highlights the broad direction targeted by the researcher or the main goal of the research project (Thomas & Hodges 2010). They differentiated between the aim and the objectives of the research as the latter is a set of detailed topics derived from the main theme included in the research aim and serve to narrow its wide view. Typically, the number of research objectives ranges between two and three depending on the ability of the research to achieve them (UNESCO 2017).

This case study aims to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices. To achieve this goal, the broad purpose of this project is divided into three objectives. The first objective is to identify what school reform is for teachers and school leaders. The second objective is to investigate how school leadership practices have facilitated the success

of the reform. The third objective is to examine what leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms.

1.6 Research Questions

As the case study aim is to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices, it has three objectives that are interpreted into three research questions to be answered in this paper. These questions are:

- 1- What is school reform for teachers and school leaders?
- 2- How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?
- 3- What leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms?

1.7 Motivation, Rationale and Significance of the Study

In the UAE context, all educational bodies - the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education and Knowledge in Abu Dhabi, and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in Dubai – depend on six performance standards to evaluate the teaching and learning process in public and private schools:

1. Students' achievement
2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills
3. Teaching and assessment
4. Curriculum
5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students
6. Leadership and management

Although all these standards generally depend on the performance of school leadership and the way they practice their roles as the heads of the educational process, the framework specifies one separate performance standard for leadership and management (KHDA 2009).

As an experienced practitioner and minor school leader, the researcher has gone through these inspection visits since they started in 2008. The researcher has witnessed a remarkable growth in his school performance, reputation, and consequently inspection rating which raised from “Acceptable” to “Good” only one year after the new principal arrival. The approach of the principal along with the leadership style affected the whole school and guided to teaching and learning reform. Therefore, studying such change in the leadership style is a real motivation to conclude with the best practices that lead to school reform.

1.8 The Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which introduces the role school leadership has on school reform and gives a brief background about educational reform in the United Arab Emirates. In addition, the introduction sets the aim and objectives of the study and explains the motivation and rationale to conduct such a research, and finally it specifies the research questions of this research project.

Chapter two is the literature review which contains a detailed analysis of the terms: school reform and school leadership and examines some of their relevant theories. Moreover, the literature review thoroughly inspects previous studies of the same topic to build on what other researchers concluded with and identify the gap that this research paper tries to fill.

Chapter three is methodology in which research design, instrument, sampling, and participants are all illustrated. It also shows data collection process and ethical consideration along with the study

delimitations. In chapter four, the research analyzes and discusses collected data. Finally, in chapter five, key findings are presented with recommendations for the future research.

1.9 Summary

This chapter paved the way for the research by setting a background about education reform and the pivotal role school leadership has on the school overall performance. It then stated the aim and the purpose of the study by considering the contextual aspects and shedding light on the UAE educational reform process which consequently illustrated the motivation and rationale of the project. It also set three research questions and ended with the structure this dissertation follows.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As the study aim is to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices, it is vital to identify and critically review research, knowledge, and ideas related to the topic. This chapter of the paper introduces theories relevant to the topic of the research. It also studies different leadership styles and dimensions of school reform that includes: school culture, mission, vision, values, teacher quality, curriculum, and in-and-out school relationships. It also examines context-related previous studies to build on the findings of other scholars, spot any literature gap, and enlighten the course for the future research.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Identifying the hypothesis and reflecting on the theory after data is collected and analyzed is the main aim of introducing the theoretical framework to decide whether these theories are confirmed or disconfirmed (Creswell 1994). In this section of the study, the researcher examines few theories closely related to school reform and effective leadership. These theories include: Transformational Leadership Theory, the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness, and Theory of Change.

In transformational leadership theory, goals set by the leader stimulate and inspire group members and subordinates to work hard (Odumeru & Ifeanyi 2013). This theory pinpoints four key constituents of the style of the transformational leader: charisma or idealized effect, stimulating

enthusiasm, rational inspiration, and individual attention (Jung & Sosik 2002). According to them, charisma denotes the estimable behavior that controls the way the leader of an institution deals with his or her subordinates and group members. Stimulating enthusiasm is the leader's ability to urge his or her team to reach their unsurpassed enactment by setting strong outline and obvious objectives. Individual attention identifies how the leader understands and touches each follower's potentials and needs.

In their analysis of the transformational leadership theory, Korejan and Shahbazi (2016) stated that transformational leaders strengthen the performance of their organization by pushing the organization towards the future, recognizing the environmental needs, smoothing appropriate changes, refining the quality of work, and increasing employees' job satisfaction. Moreover, Alqatawenh (2018) considered transformational leadership as the practices of leadership that not only concentrate on incentives for performance, but also stimulate subordinates intellectually and creatively and convert their own interests into an important portion of the mission of the organization.

This study benefits from transformational leadership theory with the focus the theory has on leadership approaches towards different elements of organization especially subordinates. In the educational context, teachers represent subordinates as the actual practitioners that implement reform directed by the school leader. The unique relationship, presented in this theory, between school leaders and teachers as an essential group of stakeholders is one important aspect of successful reform. This can inform the study as the interactions between teachers and school leaders is a key behind any success in school reform.

The capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement is of four main concepts closely connected with learners' achievement: outcomes, leverage, intellectual and social capital

(Hargreaves 2001). For him, outcomes refer to the achievements of the general cognitive and moral educational goals. He also described leverage as the association of teachers' input and educational output. He expounded on this relationship and relates school reform and the balance between teachers' exertions and the transformation in learners' intellectual dimensions. He reached a conclusion that intellectual and social capitals play a major role in school reform.

As this study investigates leadership practices that leads to school reform, the capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement is closely related to the aim of the study as it helps understand concepts of effective schooling. The theory can inform the study with the four elements of learners' achievement as school reform is basically meant to transform learner's to a higher level of attainment.

The theory of change suggests that teachers resist change when it comes from someone outside their classes (Morimoto, Gregory & Butler 1973). They added that when newly assigned superiors direct them towards a new approach to be followed inside their classes, teachers tend to consider it as an external threat to their educational values that takes their freedom and controls their teaching practices, so they refuse it. Sharratt and Fullan (2006) regarded change theory as a powerful tool to inform strategies of educational reform especially with expert scholars of the dynamics of how to function to reach specific results.

As reform is defined as changes made to improve a system, organization, or law (Cambridge 2020), reform is basically a change and thus, change theory can inform the study by understanding various challenges any reform faces. One of the major roles of leadership seeking reform is to understand such challenges to be able to deal with them successfully and cause the required change.

2.3 Dimensions of School Reform

School reform is the progressive development of education that leads to a change aiming to improve students' outcomes by positively affecting the teaching and learning process (Gordon 2016). According to Bush (2007) this development is of multi-dimensional process that integrate all aspects and personnel relevant to the schooling system. Studies identify many dimensions of leadership practices that determine how effective school reform is (Day 2009). Moreover, the influence each dimension has in forming a desired change differs according to the context of the learning community (Goksoy 2016). Creating a culture of change, leadership style, defining the vision, enhancing teacher quality, enriching the curriculum, and building relationships inside and outside the school community are all dimensions to be examined in this case study.

2.3.1 Creating a Culture of Change

In educational context, school culture plays a pivotal role in schooling reform; however, it is usually neglected (Sheeba 2016). For earlier scholars, school culture is defined as “the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic ‘taken-for-granted’ fashion an organization’s view of itself and its environment” (Schein 1985, p. 6). Similarly, Deal and Peterson (1999, p. 4) viewed it as “traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, and administrators work together and deal with crises and accomplishments”.

Recently, school culture change is one essential aspect that educational leaders consider and need to be trained in the fundamentals of its process (Houchens & Keaster 2015). By looking at organizational culture through Schein (2010), it has three layers: artifacts (formal and informal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures), values (shared beliefs about what is considered right

or wrong), and assumptions (unconscious thoughts and expectations), and these layers form the framework of leadership that is mainly conducive to achieving change.

For school reform to be successful, school culture is the first to be reshaped lest it stood as a conflicting barrier in front of any desirable change (Sheeba 2016). Therefore, understanding the culture of the school for the leaders seeking reform is similar to learning about the history of patients for physicians to locate the hidden corners that might need special treatment and address the negative elements accordingly (Deal & Peterson 1999). In addition, effective school leadership need to be alert of the negative impacts of toxic school cultures or subcultures and form policies and strategies to smoothly reshape or rebuild the unhealthy existing school culture (Peterson & Deal 2002).

Research shows that changing the culture of an educational context requires the presence of a lot of norms that facilitate and ease reform (Turan & Bektas 2013). Some of these norms are prioritized over the others according to each educational context, but some of them are of vital importance like professional development, appreciation, and involvement in decision-making. Consequently, unsuccessful educational reforms are usually caused by the lack of power to treat the various cultural aspects especially teachers, students, and parents' perspectives (Sarason 1996).

It is evident from the reviewed literature that school reform cannot be effective without paying enough attention to the school culture. School leaders seeking educational reform need to have sufficient knowledge to deal with the cultural barriers that will face their reform procedures. The aspects of these barriers might include some or all of the educational stakeholders. The best way to deal with cultural conflict is to thoroughly understand it and smoothly deal with it by appreciating stakeholders' roles and involving them in decision-making.

2.3.2 Leadership Style: Shared and Distributed Leadership

School leadership is the school leading group that take executive and organizational decisions in order to impact learners' performance (Sergiovanni 2009). Consequently, successful leadership practices are those effectively influencing the learners' outcomes. These practices highlight the role of the school leadership style especially when it comes to education reform as the core from which all educational decisions go through before being taken (Smith 2016). According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) leadership style is the behavioral patterns leaders follow consistently in their managerial and administrative interactions. In addition, school leaders need to know what leadership style works best for the context and the culture of their organization and whether it is appropriate for application during reform process (Moorosi & Bantwini 2016).

Literature is rich with tens of theories and styles of leaderships without a tendency to a particular approach as the most appropriate for school reform as the best always varies according to the context and the level of the reform (Khan, Nawaz & Khan 2016). However, much research shows that the most common effective leadership styles for school reform are usually a combination of more than one specific approach (Jung 2001). Transformational, transactional, shared, and distributed leadership styles are evident in literature investigating leadership practices and their positive impact on school reform (Goksoy 2016).

In transformational leadership, the relationship between the subordinates and the leader is of high priority which reveals a customized attention to their needs, accomplishments, self-efficiency, and personal development (Khan, Nawaz & Khan 2016). Thus, transformational leaders exemplify the ideal rapport that followers seek with their superiors which creates an atmosphere of motivation and inspiration that encourages team members to achieve goals and to be more creative (Samad

2012). Specifically, a study of school principals' leadership styles and school outcomes concludes that there is a strong positive impact of transformational leadership style on school effectiveness including teachers' satisfaction and students' academic performance (Nir & Hameiri 2014)

On the other hand, transactional leader does not engage in the preferences of his or her subordinates and instead the principle of awards and mutual exchange is the motivational pattern (Avci 2015). Since transactional leadership is highly effective in tasks, it shifts the subordinates' innovative potentials to be specific goals achievers aspiring to gain rewards set by the leader (Khan 2017). In his study examining leadership styles on teachers' efficacy, Walker and Slear (2011) concluded that rewarding policy in transactional leadership negatively impacts teachers' self-efficacy and thus the whole school effectiveness. Similarly, Hoxha and Hyseni-Duraku (2017) highlighted the adverse influence of transactional leadership on the spiritual and motivational atmosphere of the school.

Shared and distributed leadership styles share common features but are not exactly the same approaches (Leithwood 2016). According to Gronn (2002) despite aspects of similarities between both shared and distributed leadership styles, they are based on different theoretical basics. Spillane (2005) defined shared leadership style as a modern approach of leadership that combines the knowledge and the experiences of both the leader and his or her subordinates along with the interactions with different situations. This integrated process results in a culture that reflects the teamwork spirit. Distinctively, distributed leadership is defined as the revolutionary term of the traditional meaning of the hero leader as every individual is a sub-leader in his or her context (Halverson 2007). In his study comparing both approaches, Goksoy (2016) concluded that shared leadership is more prominent in primary schools while distributed approach is widespread in high schools.

Studied literature on leadership styles reveals that successful leadership style depends highly on the contextual circumstances. Each approach of leadership has its rewards. Transformational leadership represents the ideal relationship between the leader and the subordinates, and thus he or she can challenge them to reach their optimal efforts. However, this relationship is based on mutual benefit in the transactional approach based on reward and punishment. Both transformational and transactional leaders have the traditional statue of the heroic figure unlike shared and distributed leadership that superiors and subordinates interact and each individual has his or her share of leadership.

2.3.3 Defining the Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals Statements of the School

Identifying a clear school mission, collective vision, enunciated values, and precise goals is a core element of the major reform process of any educational institute (DuFour, DuFour & Eaker 2008). They also add that despite being thoroughly discussed in literature, these key elements are usually neglected by many school leaders which negatively affect the speed and the efficiency of the reform process. This intentional or unintentional abundance is feasible because of the held misunderstanding of the vital role these statements play in achieving any desired reform or even the confusion associated with their meanings (Watkins & McCaw 2007).

A mission statement is basically the core behind the existence of the school or as DuFour and Eaker (1998, p. 58) called it “stating the business of our business” and an attempt to answer “Why do we exist?” In educational context, it is essential to have a continuous community-based discussions about the essence of school existence and agreement on a communal pledge to the work held to school leadership (Lunenberg 2010). Consequently, different stakeholders in the same community might have different reasons they assign for school existence, but this variety in

purposes does not make it difficult for them to agree on primary cause of schooling (Stemler, Bebell & Sonnabend 2011).

While the mission statement represents the purpose of the school, the vision sets a specific location for the school in the future as it answers “what do we hope to become” (DuFour & Eaker 1998, p. 62). Clarity and meaningfulness are two main characteristics of an effective school vision so that all stakeholders are able to identify a picture of the teaching and learning of the school in the future (Pekarsky 2007). Consequently, this vision-guided educational system makes it clear for all stakeholders where the school is directed to be if they all work collaboratively to achieve this identified place. Kose (2011) also added that a well-crafted vision statement is an effective tool in school principals’ hands that eases and facilitates change required for reform.

As implied from its name, values statements are expressions of the beliefs all school members have, and it answers the question of “How must we behave in order to make our shared vision a reality?” (DuFour & Eaker 1998, p. 88). These shared values turns ordinary team members to an extraordinary achievers of the desired results (Blanchard & O’Connor 1997). They add that organizations with dominant collective values are reported to offer better services, improved job satisfaction among employees, and greater earnings. According to Calder (2011) these values positively create a pushing influence in the performance of the organization.

Among the four statements, the clearest is the goals statements as they precisely define performance levels in specific areas and identify roles each team member has in order to reach a specific goal (Gurley et al. 2015). For example, if the target is to improve teaching and learning in the school, then specific goals are set and expressed through clear and measurable statements for professional development sessions, teaching practices, and pedagogical approaches to be adapted

by a specific group of teachers of an exact subject or grade level. Specifically, goals statements answer the question, “Which steps will we take first, and when?” (DuFour & Eaker 1998, p. 100).

Literature shows that successful school reform requires a set of clear mission, vision, values, and goals statements. All the four foundational statements should not be created in isolation of the community, instead all stakeholders should actively collaborate to form them. These four statements smooth change necessary for any reform and neglecting or ignoring them will hinder the process or even stop it.

2.3.4 Enhancing Teacher Quality through Professional Development

Educational reform is usually linked to classroom practices which heavily depend on teachers, therefore school leaders seeking reform have had an increasing interest in professional development (PD) of teachers as a crucial factor of improving the quality of schools (Borko 2004). PD is vital for beginning teachers especially when dealing with professional identity tension usually associated with negative feelings of different sources and various symptoms (Pillen, Beijgaard & Brok 2012). In addition to beginning teachers, experienced teachers also are in need of PD to enhance their teaching practices, affirm the knowledge they gained throughout their career, and cling to the 21 century skills (Vann 2004).

PD is not limited only to formal structured sessions like seminars or workshops, but it is also extended to informal forms throughout teachers’ working hours and their interactions with school leaders, colleagues, students, and learning situations (Wilson & Berne 1998). Moreover, effective leadership is always keen on sharing teachers’ best practices and collaboration within the learning community by sharing insights along with teachers’ self-reflections which is considered one of the most effective common routes of PD (Coenders & Verhoef 2019).

The success of any PD is dependent on the individual teacher's enthusiasm, which requires school leadership to instill them with motivation, along with many other factors including teacher's age, gender, and years of experience (McRae et al. 2001). They also concluded that teachers with more than 20 years of experience are usually engaged with more PD sessions and activities more than those teachers of less experience. Similarly, one of the findings in their research was that male teachers tend to get more involved in PD activities than female teachers. However, this generalization is debatable for many other scholars (Yates 2007).

For PD to be effective, there are some factors to be put into consideration including the setting, content, frequency, and practicality (Yates 2007). Skilbeck and Connell (2003) said that PD for teachers tends to focus on pedagogy and curriculum despite the need to have more focus on psychological aspects of both educators and learners. In their evaluation of more than 80 PD sessions, they concluded that a contradiction between the theoretical contents of the sessions and the practical challenges facing teachers in the actual field of teaching and learning.

2.3.5 Enriching the Curriculum

Education scholars define the term curriculum differently according to stakeholders' perception (Su 2012). For Pratt (1994), curriculum is a design for the course of teaching and learning with a detailed attention to content. Curriculum includes study courses, books, materials, teaching aids, syllabuses, and anything advocated for teaching and learning (Jackson 2002). Traditionally, curriculum designing was regarded as a matter of technicality and was left to education specialists and assessment experts; however, this has recently shifted to become the concern of the whole society, represented by all stakeholders (UNESCO 2015).

Curriculum enrichment is a fundamental stage of education reform, and it is a four-stage procedure that starts with the analysis of the current curriculum and planning for changes, developing the new tips of the curriculum, piloting the implementation process, and finally the evaluation phase (Gustafson 2002). This systematic approach of curriculum amendment confirms that curriculum features are all of high quality, a research-based process, theoretically and practically comprehensive, internationally developed and well-informed, purpose-fit and well-grounded, and have been piloted in the education system prior to its implementation” (NCCA 2016).

For the curriculum reform to be successful, it is crucial to get all education stakeholders involved in the process of redesigning the curriculum (Pietarinen, Pyhäntö & Soini 2017). Therefore, students and parents’ inputs are of vital importance especially in the first and third stages: the analysis of the current curriculum and the implementation of the amendments (Law 2014). In their analysis of the successful process of curriculum reform in Norway and Singapore , Siveskind and Westbury (2016) and Changh (2011) concluded that evident collaboration of different stakeholder took place in curriculum committees on both subject and core levels. This collaboration enables harmonious integration in the different phases of curriculum reform and foils any intentional or unintentional lags (OECD 2017).

Literature shows that effective reform of curriculum is one essential element of reforming education. It must be research-based especially in the early stages of the reform. Moreover, reforming curriculum is a continuous progress that keeps revolving in a circle of systematically-arranged stations of analyzing and planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating. In addition, collaboration of different stakeholders plays a major role in effective curriculum reform.

2.3.6 Building Relationships inside and outside School Community

The shape of relationships built with different stakeholders inside and outside the school reflects how successful the leader is and is considered a keystone of several facets of educational leadership (Northouse 2015). Expressive engagement, productive collaboration, and interpersonal relationships among principals, teachers, students, parents, and community members are all effective ways to achieve educational goals and are effective steps in any school reform process (Odhiambo & Hii 2012). Therefore, a wide yet interconnected base of relationships are formed to help school leadership gather trustworthy data for research-based analysis and create new policies which pave the way for a smooth implementation and results at the end in a successful school reform (Henry & Woody 2013).

In his research paper, Lasater (2016) used structured role play to conclude with three major recommendations for developing relationships inside and outside the school: rapport, trust, and communications. According to Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares (2012) school leaders can develop rapports by being visible to students, staff, parents, community members, and other related stakeholders. Being visible is simply to be seen whether inside school by visiting classes, having regular meetings with teachers, or welcoming parents at school (Symeou, Roussounidou & Michaelides 2012). Moreover, both formal (e.g. meetings and forums) and informal (e.g. timely responses and phone calls) accessibility plays a major role in building strong rapport with different stakeholders (Northouse 2015).

The second layer of developing relationship inside and outside school is building trust as Tschannen-Moran (2004, p. 17) defined it “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent”. According

to her, vulnerability with all the relief it causes from anxiety and discomfort is what distinguishes trust from rapport. Trust can be built by engaging different stakeholders in decision-making process and meeting their expectations. However, meeting the expectations of different stakeholders is difficult. As a result, it is the task of the school leader to spare time to understand different expectations and thus create opportunities for shared expectations (Lasater 2016).

The third aspect of relationship in school community is effective communication that school leaders have to establish with different groups of stakeholders. Sparks and Hirsch (2005, p. 40) stated that “without supportive communication, a principal does not develop trust; manage the basic operations and align procedures; convey a vision; help others through the change process; or turn an organization into a teaching and learning group”. Moreover, Tylor (2016) stated that there is a positive correlation between effective leadership communication with different stakeholders and school overall performance after analyzing qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with eight school principals. He concluded that communication with stakeholders is more effective when trust exists.

As literature reveals, building relationships among stakeholders inside and outside school community is a major step in the reform process. Developing positive and effective relationships is a three-layer process of three different yet interconnected elements as the lack of any means the absence of the other two; rapport cannot exist without trust, and trust is essential to have effective communication and vice versa. Effective school leadership is responsible for facilitating developing these elements.

2.3.7 Previous Context-Related Studies and Literature Gap

In order to situate this study in the field, context-related studies are explored and examined analytically and thematically. Both the methodology approaches and the findings of each study are thoroughly analyzed in order to relate the conclusions drawn to each individual circumstances to be able to critically compare them to the findings of this study.

In the emirate of Abu Dhabi, a study examining the relationship between leadership and school reform, Thorne (2011) used a purposeful sampling of a principal in a public school and collected qualitative data through a semi-structured interview. Data analysis showed that professional development, recruitment process, and school relationships are among the factors that greatly affect educational reform. The study highlighted the significance of the criteria the ministry of education considers in the recruitment process as school principals are not involved in choosing their teachers and the ministry of education takes this responsibility. Despite the fact that the study is aware of the language barrier as English is the second language for the school principal, the study admits that this is a significant shortcoming especially when associated with the multi-interpretation of the qualitative approach the study applies.

Another study examined the impact of transformational leadership on school reform in five schools in five different emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman) concluded that professional development, sharing school vision, and setting a good example by the school leaders are the most significant practices that positively affect school reform (Litz 2014). He applied a mixed-method approach in which a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview representing the quantitative and the quantitative instruments respectively. The analysis of the collected data considered different demographic variables and their impact on participants' perception of

effective transformational leadership. However, the relatively small sample size is considered a major limitation of the study.

In her study of school leadership strategies adopted for school reform, Alzuhair (2018) used grounded theory methodological approach to analyze qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with five school leaders from different emirates in the UAE (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah). The analysis revealed that strategies focus on: building leadership team, research-based instructions and policies, systematic follow-up of the implementation, teachers' professional development, involving different stakeholders in decision-making, and continuous curriculum reform. However, the study did not conceptualize the term "reform" to facilitate understanding. Consequently, the research sampling is questionable as she neglects the dependent variable (reform) and uses location instead. Thus her investigation of the independent variable (strategies) is not accurately measured.

In another study that reviews education reform in the UAE and how different factors affect it, Matsumoto (2019) investigated more than 10 studies that examine different aspects of school reform. She summarized the findings of these studies and concluded that teachers as a major component of stakeholders' body should be deeply involved in any reform process. She also stated that change culture is one of the main challenges education reform faces. In addition, she referred to structured professional development for both teachers and school leadership teams as a vital factor effecting school reform. However, her total dependence on these studies methodologies and agendas is the main shortcoming as she only discusses their findings without a systematic analysis of their methodological approaches.

Literature is rich with various studies that conceptualize successful educational leadership and examine different theoretical approaches. Similarly, it has a thorough analysis of different

dimensions of school reform suitable for different contexts. In addition, different studies examine specific leadership aspects on improving specific elements of educational system. However, no recent studies in this context holistically scan practical and successful leadership practices that resulted in measurable and visible comprehensive school reform. This gap is the next phase of research that needs to tackle existing achievements in educational reform and link them to specific practices of school leadership to set role models and present practical suggestions for educational institutes seeking reform to follow after appropriate context-related amendments.

2.4 Summary

This chapter identified and critically reviewed theories frameworks relevant to school reform and school leadership. It also studied different leadership styles and dimensions of school reform that included: school culture, mission, vision, values, teacher quality, curriculum, and in-and-out school relationships, and also examined context-related previous studies.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the methodology chapter of this study, description of the research approach and methods used are presented including the research paradigm and design. Then types of case studies are examined spotting the rationale behind choosing the holistic single case study. The chapter also explores the study setting, population, and sampling. Moreover, it matches the instruments used with sought answers of different research questions and discusses their validity and sensitivity. In addition, it introduces the plan for data collection and demonstrates ethical consideration. The chapter ends with a table illustrating the different components of the methodology section.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm denotes the philosophies and beliefs which direct the assumptions and outline the research's comprehension approach (Kaushik & Walsh 2019). Despite having several paradigms (e.g. positivism, constructivism, pragmatism) that guide research, they all embrace the same basics of rhetoric, methodology, axiology, ontology, and epistemology (Lincoln, Susan & Egon 2011). While rhetoric is the common approach of research, methodology is the shared means of obtaining acquaintance. Axiology, ontology, and epistemology are all beliefs or assumptions of research morals, reality nature, and knowledge gaining respectively (Creswell 2009).

Unlike other paradigms, pragmatism sensibly examines the nature of the experience more than the theoretical nature of the reality (Morgan 2007). He added that pragmatic paradigm believes in the contextual circumstances and their inevitable influence on different actions and situations. For pragmatists, worthy consequences are to decide whether a certain reality is true or not; however,

the paradigm does not simply abandon philosophical arguments. Instead, the concentration is on human experiences with special highlight on the contextual settings (Baker & Schaltegger 2015).

To get an unbiased and accurate answers to the research questions, a pragmatic paradigm is utilized to allow flexibility. Consequently, singular and multiple realities will be concluded from both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Clark 2011). Accordingly, this paradigm supports a relational epistemology, a non-singular reality ontology, a mixed methods methodology, and a value-laden axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017).

Since pragmatic paradigm is an experience-based approach and views inquiry effective only if the desired achievements are fulfilled, it is the appropriate paradigm for a case study research (Hothersall 2019). Consequently, actions consequences are more pertinent than their antecedents, and thus it is a future-based paradigm that seeks enhancement in different fields of social life (Haight & Bidwell 2016).

This case study benefits from utilizing the pragmatic paradigm as the study aims to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices, and thus it is an experience-based study that highlights the consequences (school reform) and considers certain realities (leadership practices) true if proven effective in the performance course. Moreover, it examines reality and its interactions with an actual contextual experience that is linked to chosen outcome, and the pragmatic paradigm perfectly addresses these goals. Adapting this paradigm widens the range of acceptable leadership practices if proven successful in the reform process according to the study context and sheds light on the experience consequences rather than the theoretical guidelines.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the structure the study follows to be able to answer the research questions and reach a certain conclusion (Yin 2018). According to Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) research designs can be classified into three categories: experimental, quasi-experimental, and nonexperimental. While it is essential to have a formal design when conducting an experimental research, it is not a must for a case study research to include it despite the fact that a formal design facilitates and strengthens a case study research (Yin 2018).

In general, unlike experimental and quasi-experimental, a nonexperimental design cannot provide a cause and effect relationship between the research variables (Leedy & Ormrod 2010). Consequently, in case the research aims to identify such a relationship between dependent and independent variables, either experimental or quasi-experimental designs is appropriate depending on the way followed to assign participants. They also added that in an experimental research design (also known as lab experiment) random sampling is followed to strengthen internal validity, and in quasi-experimental (also called field experiment), in contrast, the ability to randomly choose participants does not exist.

This case study benefits from the quasi-experimental research design as it aims to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between the dependent variable (school reform) and the independent variable (leadership practices) and the quasi-experimental design is the appropriate design to show this relationship.

3.4 Types of Case Study

A case study is the experience-based examination of a specific phenomenon in different fields of knowledge (Yin 2003). What distinguishes case studies from other research strategies is the interaction between individuals within the case under observation and the real life experience they go through (Sandelowski 2011). According to Yin (2018) case studies are either of a single or a multiple design depending on the individual circumstances of the research.

Many fields of research consider single and multiple cases studies of different mythological frameworks, but Yin (2018) combined both under the same umbrella. He simply differentiated between both types as their names suggest: a single case study investigates only one subject, while a multiple case study examines more than one subject within the same case study. If the case study examines the broad nature of the case subject, then it is a holistic case study. An embedded case study, in contrast, is utilized when multiple subunits within the same subject are to be analyzed (Budiyanto, Prananto & Tan 2019).

A single case study might be a common, unusual, longitudinal, critical, or revelatory case depending on its nature (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018). According to Yin (2018), while a common case observes an ordinary situation seeking additional lessons, the unusual or extreme case examines subjects deviating from the norms. He also stated that longitudinal case represents subjects when the observation is planned to be at more than one time point. In a critical case, the case study examines specific theoretical propositions to decide whether they are true or not in a given context, unlike the revelatory case in which a previously inaccessible subject is examined (Ridder 2017).

This case study is a holistic single case study that investigates how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices in a private school in Dubai. It benefits from the holistic single case study as it examines one subject and analyzes only one of its units. It is also a critical case as it tests a key theory of school reform and seeks confirmation of its truth.

3.5 Methodology

In social sciences, three basic methods can be utilized in conducting research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods (Mohajan 2018). In the educational field, Rahman (2017) argued that both qualitative and quantitative methods have their benefits and drawbacks depending on the type of data analysis and results each method has. Consequently, a combination of both methods resulted in the mixed-method approach conceptualized to benefit from each method for a better understanding of the research problems (Azorin 2016).

Qualitative approach refers to any research attentive to subjective meaning and interested in gathering non-standardized information and studying manuscripts and images rather than numbers (Flick 2014). One of the main advantages of the qualitative approach is that it investigates thorough descriptions of the feelings and opinions of the participants, and examines the individual experiences of each (Corbin & Strauss 2008). In addition, it involves direct and fruitful interactions with the participants which makes it a flexible structure with the ability to be redesigned according to the changing circumstances (Maxwell 2012). All these advantages, however, cannot make researchers ignore various shortcomings that include: generalizability issues due to the small sample size, complex and time-consuming analysis of data, and the lack of context sensibility in favor of the meanings and experiences (Rumsey et al. 2016).

On the other hand, quantitative research as Bryman (2012, p. 35) defined it, “A research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data...”, and thus the focus in this approach is on the quantifiable patterns of social behaviors. According to Creswell (2009), and in contrast to the qualitative approach, sample size is large and generalizability can be evidently claimed in the quantitative approach especially in the education context. However, Katzenberger and Meilijson (2014) claimed that quantitative approach limits the whole understanding of the phenomenon of the research as it takes only a snapshots of specific themes by counting their frequencies. Consequently, difficulties in measuring aspects of educational significance are apparent in the quantitative research.

The mixed methods approach involves collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell 2014). He added that despite the mixed method is relatively new, it ensures the finest results, genuine analysis, and accurate understanding of the topic under investigation. Mixed methods approach is beneficial when qualitative and quantitative data are not sufficient if analyzed separately. Moreover, the integration of objectivity and subjectivity generated from both quantitative and qualitative methods emphasizes inductive and deductive approaches which give a valuable opportunity to distinguish between concepts and practical perceptions (Morgan 2007).

This study is designed to benefit from the mixed method approach so that the study is strengthen by both qualitative and quantitative data which helps reach the best understanding of the research context. In addition, mixed method approach enables the study to reduce the drawbacks of quantitative and qualitative data if analyzed separately.

3.6 Research Instruments

This case study has three objectives that are interpreted into three research questions need to be answered after analyzing data. This data was collected by utilizing the mixed method in which both quantitative and qualitative instruments are used. A questionnaire representing the quantitative instrument was developed to identify teachers' and school leaders' perspectives of school reform. For the quantitative instrument, a semi-structured interview was developed to decide on leadership practices that facilitated the success of the reform.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

Teachers' and leadership members' perceptions of school reform questionnaire was developed for this study and consists of four main sections. The first section the questionnaire starts with is a background and demographic information questions each participant needs to answer. The second section is a set of statements about changes participants experienced in the last two years in the school. The third section is a group of questions that identify influences on school reform. The fourth section asks questions about school leadership. The fifth and sixth sections ask questions about teaching and learning and about school culture. For sections from 2 to 6, Participants rate each item in relation to the reform activity on a four point scale ranging from: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree to 4 strongly agree.

This questionnaire was adopted from a survey conducted by Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) in the United States of America that aimed to study teachers' attitude towards reform (EPE 2017). However, specific context-related modifications were made, and the questionnaire was finally approved by the study supervisor. This instrument was appropriate to collect and generate the right data to achieve the research aim by answering the research question about teachers' and school

leaders' perception of school reform. In addition, it helped inform the semi-structured interview by critically synthesizing teachers' responses and the school leadership members.

3.6.2 Interview

The second instrument is a semi-structured open-ended questions interview. This instrument is meant to get the different interpretations of the participants regarding the successful leadership practices that led to school reform from each individual respondents' perspective. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and approved by the study supervisor.

The interview had 3 main sections: The first section was a set of background information questions about the interviewee. The second section contained questions about different leadership practices and approaches in leading the school. And the third section was about curriculum review and development. With these types of questions, this instrument is appropriate to collect and generate the right data to achieve the research aim by answering the second research question (How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?)

3.7 Validity, Liability, and Sensitivity

3.7.1 Validity

According to Messick (1995) validity is an assessment of the quantitative instrument that enhances the accuracy of the data collected and the analysis of the findings. Taherdoost (2016) divided validity into four different forms: construct, criterion, face, and content. He refers to construct validity as the ability of the instrument to translate a notion or a behavior into a functioning reality. For Ghazali (2016), criterion validity is the aptitude of each item of the instrument to predict the outcome of other items. Oluwatayo (2012) stated that face validity is the presentation of the

individual assessment and the relevance of the instrument to be reasonable and clear. In addition, content validity refers to the reflection degree the instrument has to the universal content each of its items generalizes which can be raised by literature review (Straub, Boudreau & Gefen 2004).

In this study, different forms of validity are considered for both the qualitative and quantitative instruments. Content validity for the two instruments was evaluated by the extensive literature reviewed on school reform and leadership practices. In addition, face validity was assessed by piloting the instruments and checking the clarity of their components to the participants. Moreover, the questionnaire was evaluated through its frequency in similar studies and was presented to the supervisor along with the interview for comments and were both modified accordingly.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of accuracy of the study population representation and results consistency over a period of time if repeated with parallel methodology (Griffiths & Rafferty 2014). Therefore, if the research instrument lacks reliability, its validity becomes questionable (Bolarinwa 2015). There are four main sources that affect the research reliability: researcher (being biased or not), respondent (hesitant or willingly misleading the research), instrument (being inaccurate or invalid), and external factors like gender, weather, or social contexts (Brink 1993).

In this study, all the four sources of reliability are cautiously considered. The researcher's bias is neutralized by adopting the mixed method and collecting data from both qualitative and quantitative instruments, and this is discussed in a separate section of this chapter. In addition, the questionnaire was emailed to participants to answer it at their convenience, and similarly, some interviews were conducted online to eliminate external factors. Moreover, the validity of both instruments were assessed as presented in the previous section.

3.7.3 Sensitivity

Some scholars define sensitivity as means to identify the ability of the instrument to accurately measure variability in responses (Zikmund 2002). Others define it as the instrument capacity to recognize variations between different clusters of participants (Fok & Henry 2015). Consequently, sensitivity assessment is the investigation of how sensitive the instrument is in valuing research outputs (Kimberlin & Winetrstein 2008).

To ensure that the study quantitative instrument is sensitive, the questionnaire had a four-point Likert scale ranging from: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree to 4 strongly agree. The researcher is aware of the significance of using a midpoint option so that participants who are unsure of their answers would choose it. However, it is more significant for this study not to give participants an easy way out, and thus the results would be more solid by encouraging thorough reading of each statement of the questionnaire especially for those lazy and bored readers.

3.8 The Role of the Researcher to avoid bias

Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines bias as “a situation in which you support or oppose someone or something in an unfair way because you are influenced by your personal opinions”. In research, bias is any intentional or unintentional tendency in any phase of the research leading to untruthful conclusions (Simundic 2013). In his review of bias in qualitative research, Galdas (2017) considered bias a serious shortcoming that affects the credibility of the research and makes it “worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (Morse et al. 2002, p. 14).

Triangulation is a trustworthy technique when used in research that guarantees a considerable decrease in the associated bias (Honorene 2016). He defined it as the combination of more than

one theory, method, or observer which leads to minimize bias rusted from using single method. Similarly, Sedoglavich, Akoorie, and Pavlovich (2015) stated that gathering data from qualitative and quantitative instruments reduce bias to its minimum as deductive and inductive approaches integrate and overcome the disadvantages of using them separately.

The researcher has been a teacher and a subject coordinator in the school under investigation for about ten years. Consequently, the researcher is completely aware that it is essential to eliminate any prior judgement and fairly analyze collected data. To ensure that bias is neutralized, validity and sensitivity of the research instruments are carefully assessed, and different sources of reliability are thoroughly considered. Moreover, this study adapts mixed methods approach, shares results with participants, and reviews the findings with peers. It also implemented stratified random sampling technique that guarantees that the sample truly represented the whole population. By doing this, the study becomes more trustworthy and increases the credibility of its findings.

3.9 Research Site, Participants, and Sampling

The setting of this study is a private school in Dubai with a population of 190 teachers and 13 administrative members representing the educators working in the school. For the quantitative method, 120 participants were involved in the questionnaire, representing 110 teachers and 10 administrative staff. Furthermore, 3 heads of departments and the school principal were interviewed in the qualitative method. To ensure that all fragments of the population are equally represented in the sample in order to increase the efficiency of the research, stratified random sampling technique is implemented.

Random or probability sampling refers to the technique that offers an equal opportunity for all population to be represented equally in the sample (Zikmund 2002). Despite being considered a

costly sample as it consumes time and energy, it guarantees a bias-free sample (Brown 1947). Stratified sampling is one type of random sampling in which population is separated into subgroups called strata and then a random sample from each group is considered (Taherdoost 2016). This approach fortifies the study and makes its findings more reliable (Creswell 2014).

In this study, population was divided into 3 different stratum according to the gender, years of experience, and the section participants work at. Then, random sampling targeted each strata so that they are all equally presented in the sample. Implementing stratified random sampling technique decreased the possible bias to the minimum and assured that the sample is a true representative of the whole population.

3.10 Data collection Plan

The setting of this research paper is a private school in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Data was collected from two instruments representing the mixed methods utilized in this research paper. The questionnaire was emailed to teachers and administrative members to collect data related to the first research question (What is school reform for teachers and school leaders?) Moreover, interviews were conducted with heads of departments and the school principal, and data collected was analyzed to answer the second research question (How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?)

3.11 Ethical consideration

For ethical considerations, school principal oral approval was already granted. Before conducting any research, a written consent was introduced to the school administration containing all the details related to the study and ensuring confidentiality of the information collected. Similarly, all

participants were offered a consent form attached to the survey email or emailed in advanced to the assigned personal for the interviews to be signed by all participants.

3.12 Methodology Summary Table

To sum up, the next table (Table 1) summarizes the methodology section including the research approach, instrument, sample, setting, and time plan for each one.

Research Question	Research Approach	Instruments	Sample	Setting	Time plan
1- What is school reform for teachers and school leaders?	Quantitative	Four-Likert scale Questionnaire	110 teachers and 10 administrative staff	A Private School in Dubai	4 to 7 October, 2020
2- How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	3 heads of departments and school principal	A Private School in Dubai	4 to 8 October, 2020

Table (1) Methodology Summary

3.13 Summary

In this chapter of the study, research paradigm was identified along with the rationale for its choice. In addition, the research design and types of case studies were meaningfully discussed and linked with this study. Research instruments, sampling, reliability, sensitivity, and sensibility were all highlighted. Then, bias was elaborated with details about the researcher's procedures to avoid it. Moreover, the plan for data collection, obtaining consents, and decimation of the methodology were all explained.

Chapter Four: Analysis, Results & Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the dissertation, both qualitative and quantitative data collected from the questionnaire and the interviews are analyzed and then critically discussed. For the quantitative data, Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) is used to analyze statistics manually imported from the questionnaire. On the other hand, content analysis is implemented to analyze interviews' data by creating codes and identifying common themes. Finally, results are analytically and critically discussed.

This case study aims to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices. The analysis of the quantitative data is performed to answer the first research question (What is school reform for teachers and school leaders?) and also to inform the qualitative analysis. In addition, the analysis of the qualitative data is performed to answer the second research question (How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?) The third research question (What leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms?) intended to be answered from synthesizing both analyses. The following table summarizes the objectives and the corresponding data analyses used to achieve each objective.

Objective	Corresponding Data Analysis
Objective 1: To identify what the school reform is for teachers and school leaders.	Quantitative Data informed by Qualitative Data

Objective 2: To investigate how school leadership practices have facilitated the success of the reform.	Qualitative Data informed by Quantitative Data
Objective 3: To examine what leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms.	Synthesis of both Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Table (2) Objectives and the Corresponding Data Analyses

4.2 Analysis and Results of Quantitative Data

In this study, survey questions were converted into a Google Form and emailed to 180 teachers, 5 heads of departments, and 10 administrative members ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities and their responses. Only 103 responses were received and data generated was manually exported to SPSS software for analysis. The analysis shows that:

4.2.1 Section 1: Background and Demographic Information:

What is your role/position?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Teacher	90	87.4	87.4	87.4
	Subject coordinator	7	6.8	6.8	94.2
	Head of Department	4	3.9	3.9	98.1
	Supervisor	2	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Table (3): Participants' role/position

Most participants are teachers; from the 103 participants, there are: 90 teachers (87.4%), 7 subject coordinators, 4 heads of departments, and 2 supervisors.

How long have you been working in this school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5	19	18.4	18.4	18.4
	6-10	53	51.5	51.5	69.9
	More than 10	31	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Table (4): Participants' number of years in the school

More than 80% of the participants have more than 6 years of work experience at the school while less than 20% have less than 6 years.

4.2.2 Section 2: What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?

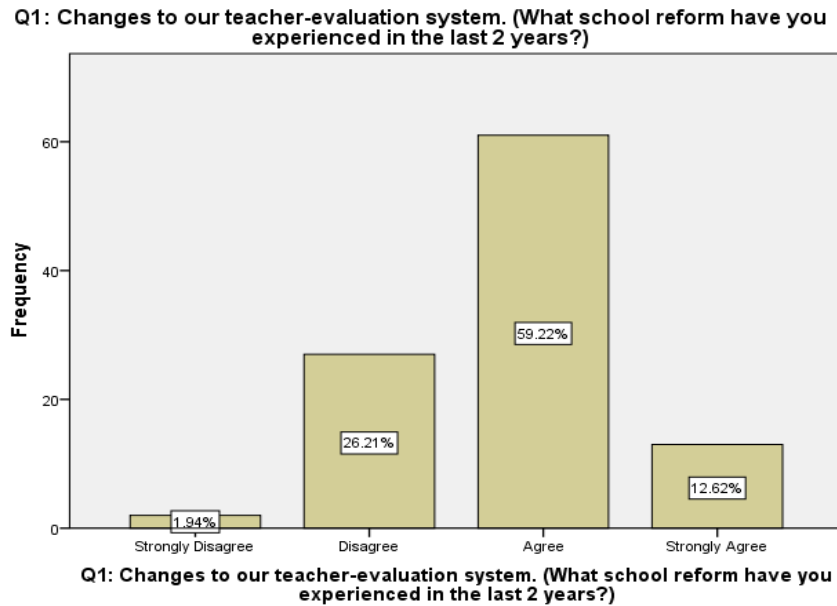


Chart (1): Q1: Changes to our teacher-evaluation system

Chart 1 shows that about 72% of the participants experienced changes to teacher-evaluation system while less than 30% did not experience this change.

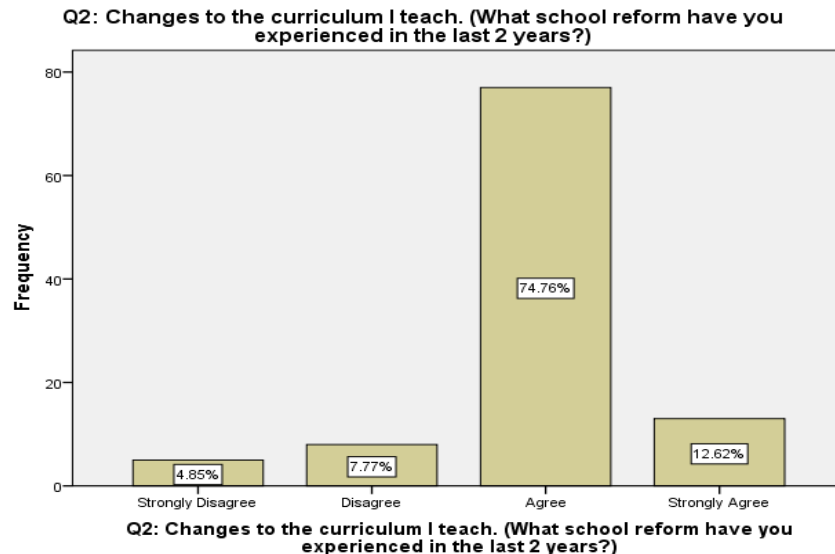


Chart (2): Q2: Changes to the curriculum I teach.

Chart 2 shows that more than 87% experienced changes to the curriculum while about 13% did not experience this change.

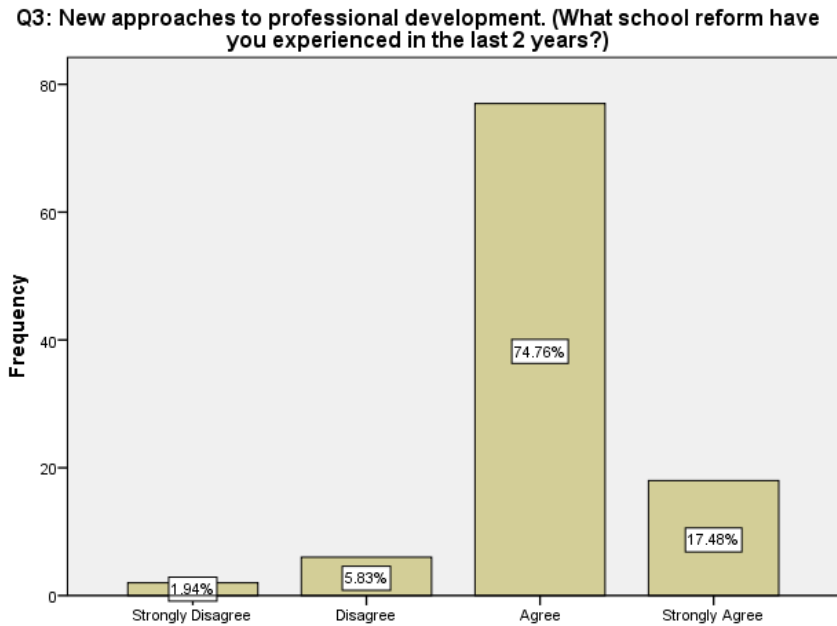


Chart (3): Q3: New approaches to professional development.

Chart 3 shows that more than 90% experienced new approaches to professional development.

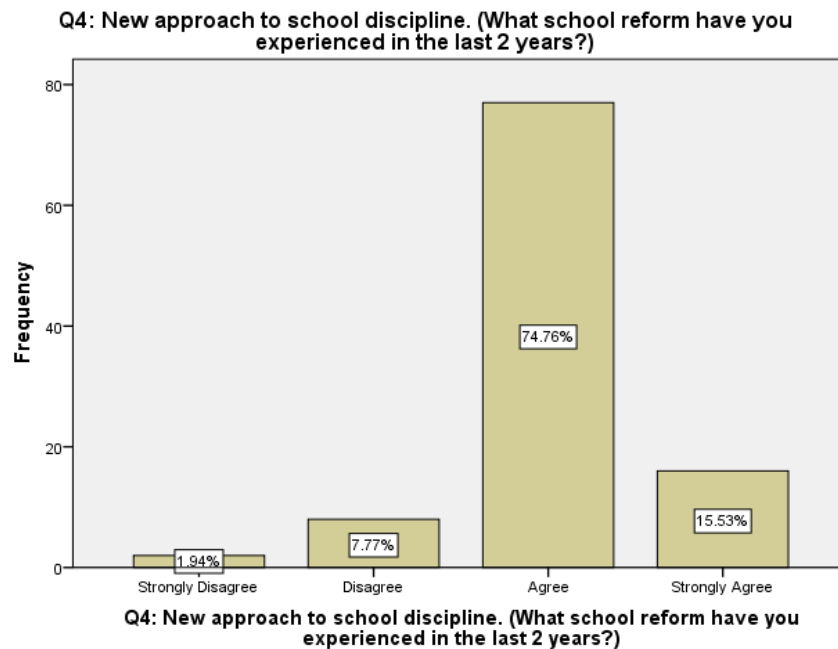


Chart (4): Q4: New approach to school discipline.

Chart 4 shows that about 90% experienced new approach to school discipline.

Q5: New technology-based reform. (What is school reform you have experienced in the last 2 years)

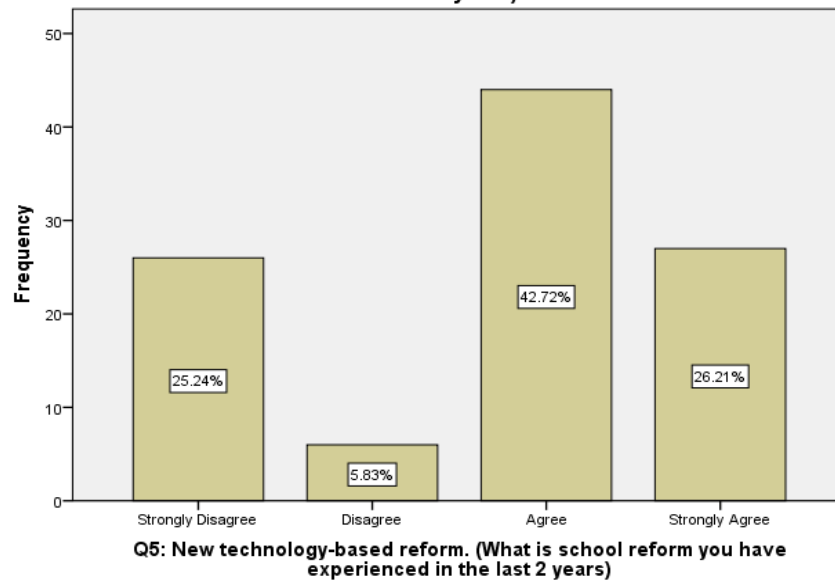


Chart (5): Q5: New technology-based reform.

Chart 5 shows that about 70% experienced new technology-based reform while about 30% did not experience this.

Q6: New social and emotional learning mindset-related initiatives. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)



Chart (6): Q6: New social and emotional learning mindset-related initiatives.

Chart 6 shows that about 68% experienced new social and emotional learning mindset-related initiatives while more than 30% did not experience this.

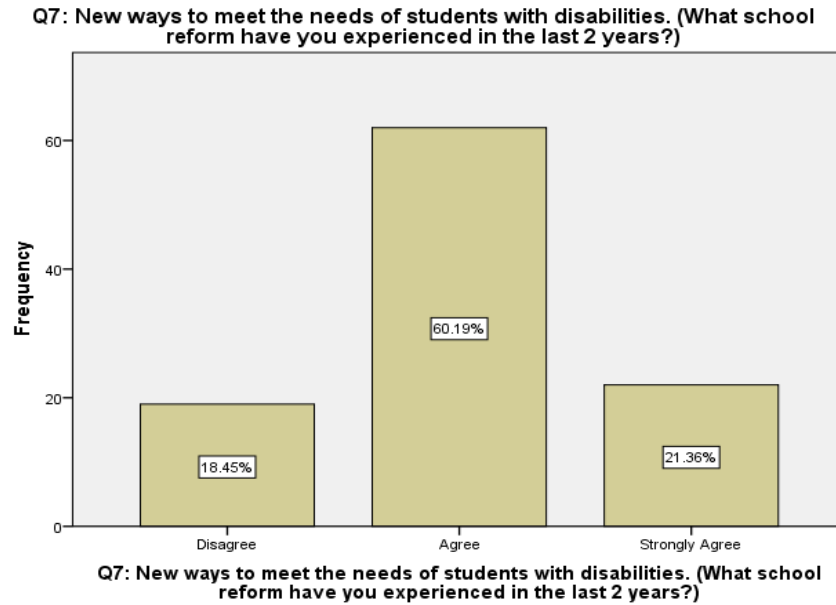


Chart (7): Q7: New ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Chart 7 shows that more than 80% experienced new ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

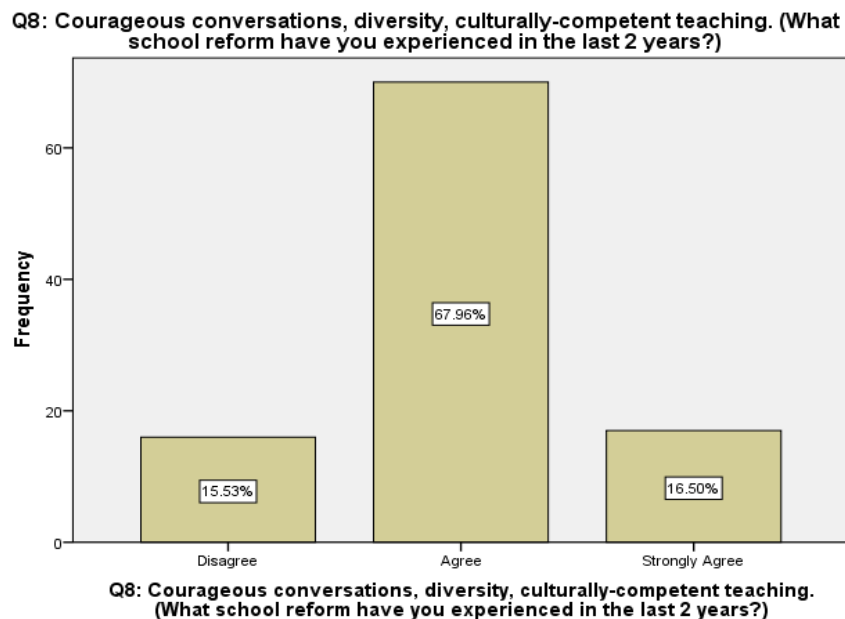
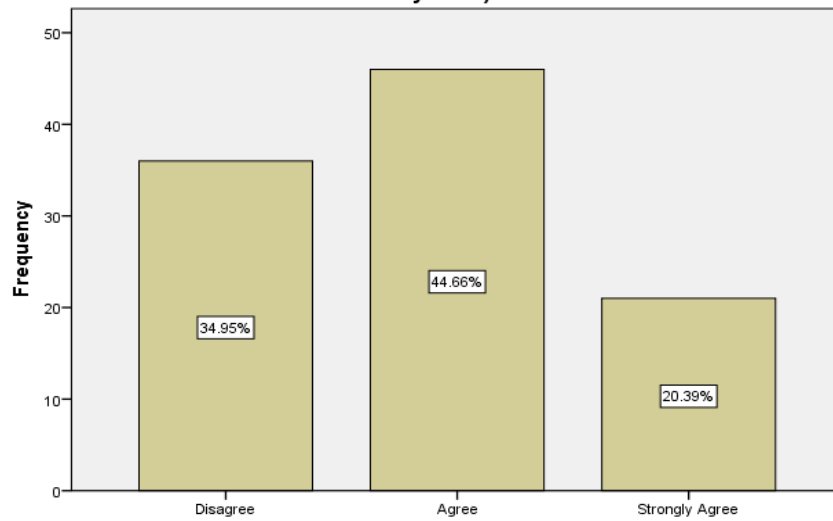


Chart (8): Q8: Courageous conversations, diversity, culturally-competent teaching.

Chart 8 shows that about 85% experienced courageous conversations, diversity, culturally-competent teaching.

Q9: New whole school reform. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

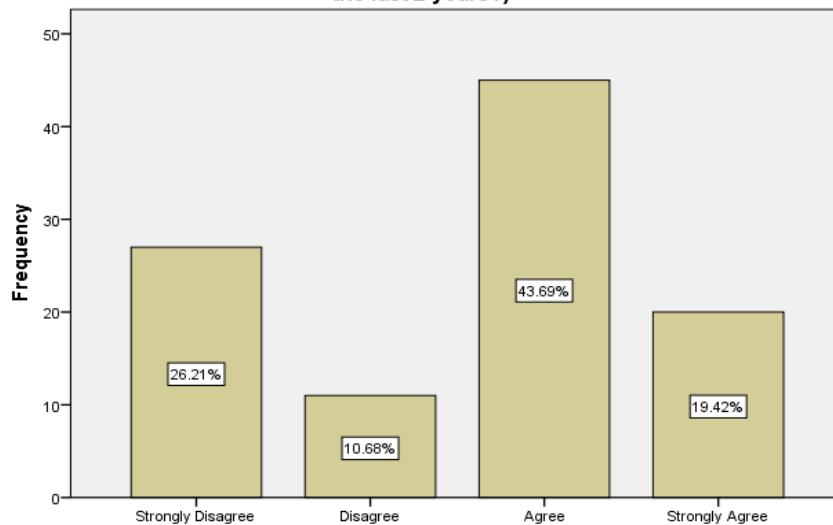


Q9: New whole school reform. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (9): Q9: New whole school reform.

Chart 9 shows that about 65% experienced a new whole school reform while about 35% did not experience this reform.

Q10: Changes in school culture. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

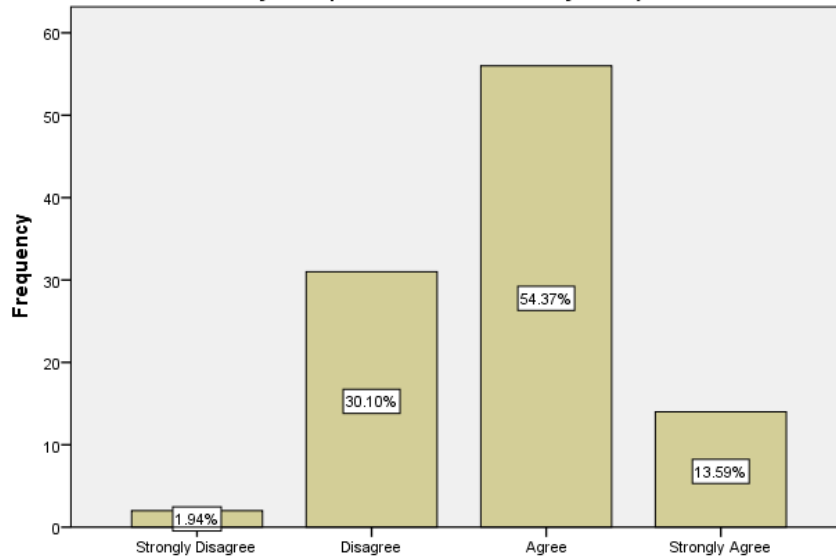


Q10: Changes in school culture. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (10): Q10: Changes in school culture.

Chart 10 shows that about 63% experienced changes in school culture.

Q11: Changes in formal and informal rapport among staff. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

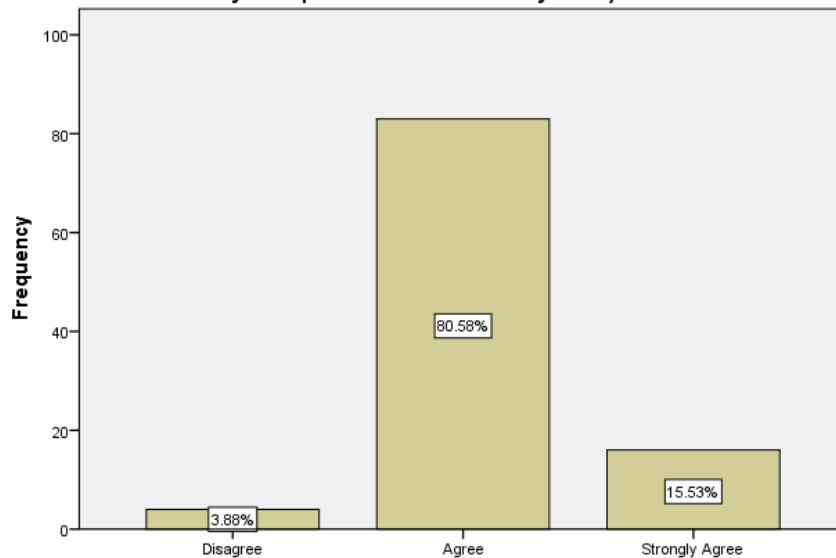


Q11: Changes in formal and informal rapport among staff. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (11): Q11: Changes in formal and informal rapport among staff.

Chart 11 shows that about 68% experienced changes in formal and informal rapport among staff.

Q12: Changes in teaching and learning approaches. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

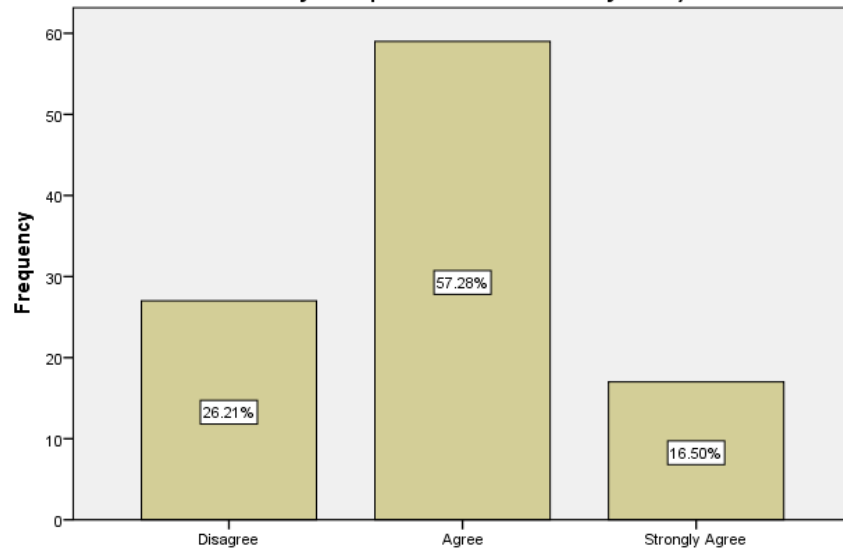


Q12: Changes in teaching and learning approaches. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (12): Q12: Changes in teaching and learning approaches.

Chart 12 shows that about 96% experienced changes in teaching and learning approaches.

Q13: Changes in parents engagement in their children's learning. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

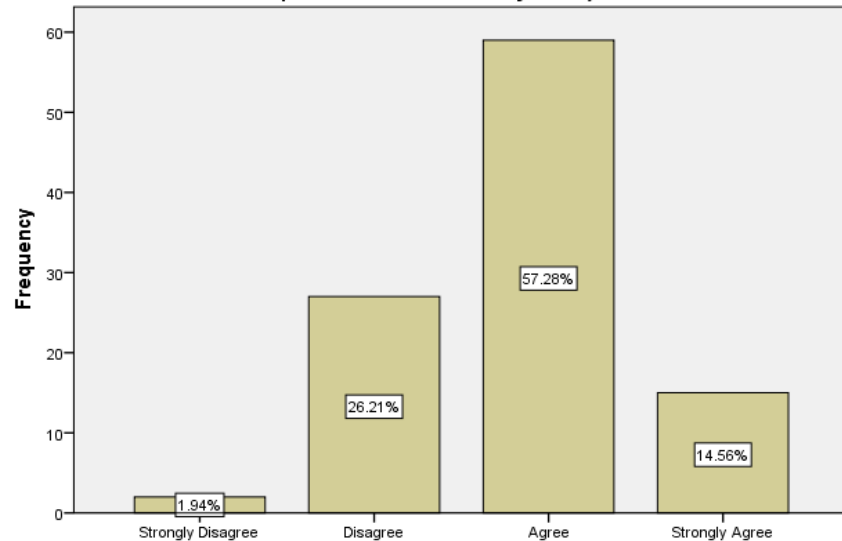


Q13: Changes in parents engagement in their children's learning. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (13): Q13: Changes in parents' engagement in their children's learning.

Chart 13 shows that 73% experienced changes in parents' engagement in their children's learning.

Q14: Changes in learner's motivation. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)



Q14: Changes in learner's motivation. (What school reform have you experienced in the last 2 years?)

Chart (14): Q14: Changes in learner's motivation.

Chart 14 shows that about 71% experienced changes in learner's motivation.

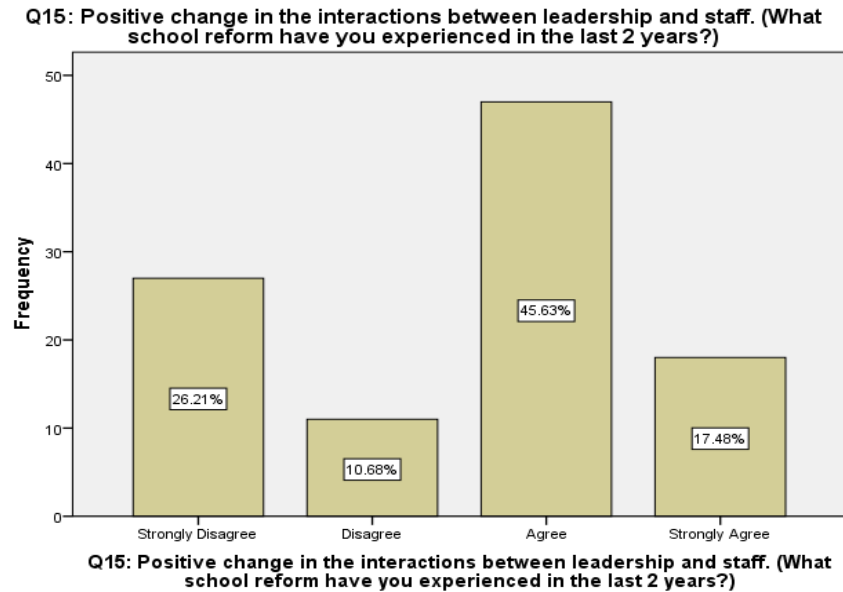


Chart (15): Q15: Positive change in the interactions between leadership and staff.

Chart 15 shows that more than 36% disagreed that they experienced positive change in the interactions between leadership and staff.

In this section, questions measured participants' perspectives of school reform they have experienced in the last 2 years. Most responses of the 15 questions are positive and fluctuate between agree and strongly agree. It is evident that the change in teaching and learning approaches (Q12) came first of the participants' perspectives as about 96% of the participants agreed on it (80.58% agree and 15.53% strongly agree). The perspective that came second on the list of responses' choices is new approaches to professional development (Q3) as about 92% of the participants witnessed a change in these approaches (74.76% agree and 17.48 strongly agree).

About 85% of responses came for the change in the courageous conversations (Q8) with 67.96% agree and 16.5% strongly agree. The fourth on the list is changes in school discipline (Q4) with 90% (74.76% agree and 15.53% strongly agree). Then came changes to the curriculum (Q2); about 87% of the participants chose it (74.76% agree and 12.62 strongly agree). Then 73% for parents' engagement (Q13) with 57.28% agree and 16.5% strongly agree.

4.2.3 Section 3: Input and Influence on Reform

Q16: When our school implements changes or reforms, we can adjust the plan as needed.

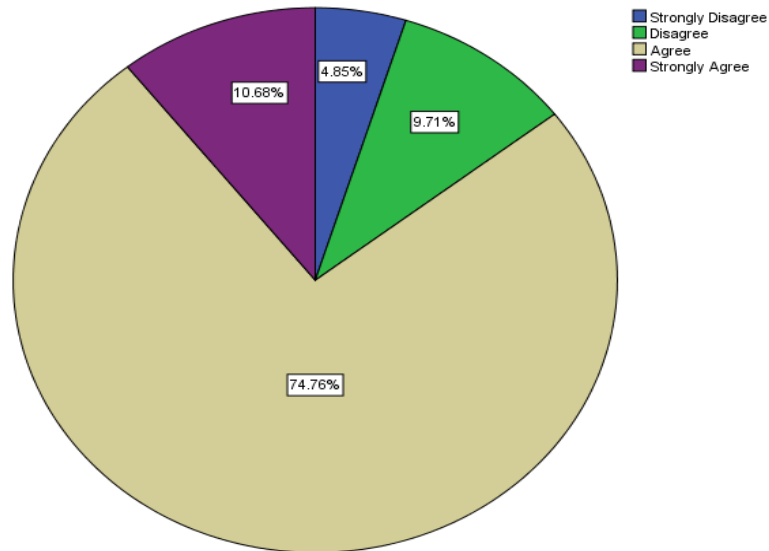


Chart (16): Q16: When our school implements changes or reforms, we can adjust the plan as needed.

Chart 16 shows that about 85% could adjust reform plans as needed.

Q17: I have the support I need to implement the changes or reforms.

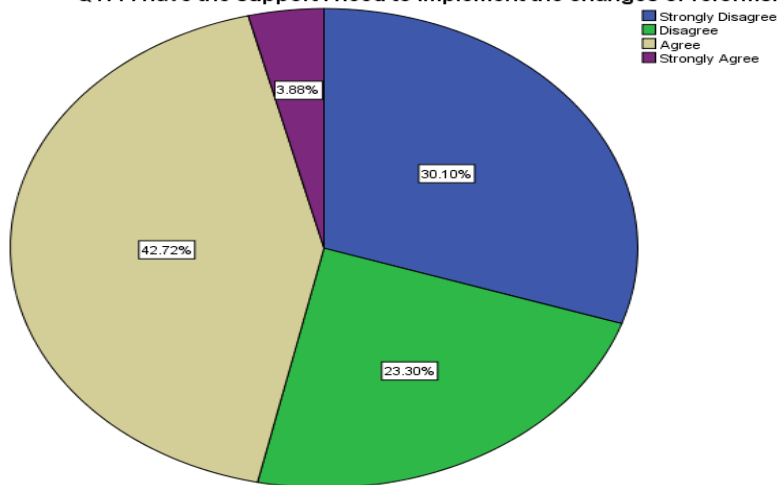


Chart (17): Q17: I have the support I need to implement the changes or reforms.

Chart 17 shows that more than 53% did not agree that they had the support they need to implement reform.

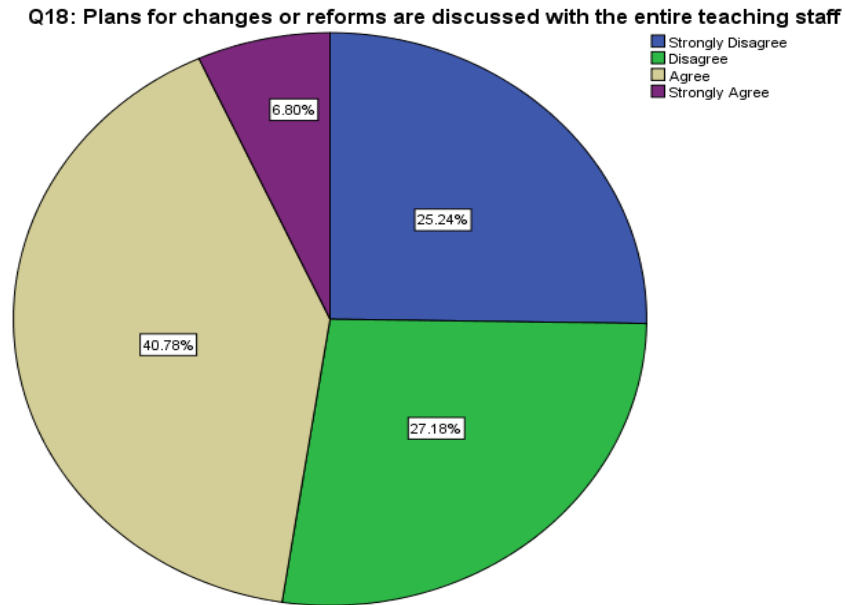


Chart (18): Q18: Plans for changes or reforms are discussed with the entire teaching staff

Chart 18 shows that about 52% were not involved in the reform planning.

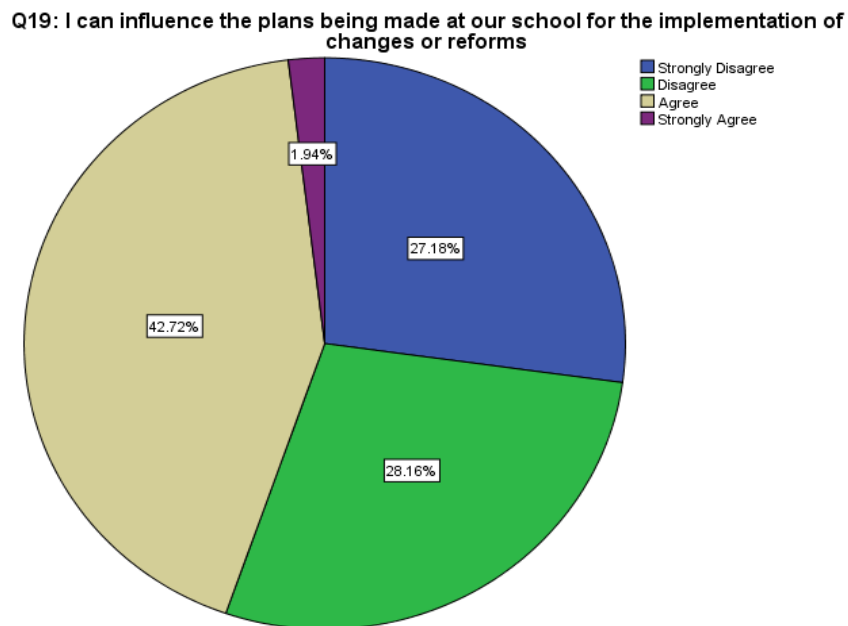


Chart (19): Q19: I can influence the plans being made at our school for the implementation of changes or reforms

Chart 19 shows that about 55% could not influence the plans for implementing reform.

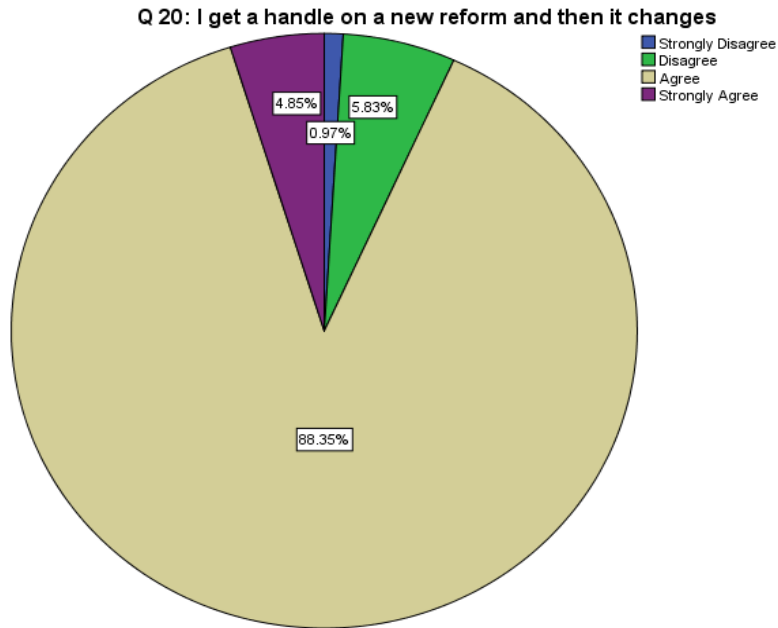


Chart (20): Q 20: I get a handle on a new reform and then it changes

Chart 20 shows that about 93% agreed that reform is repeatedly changing.

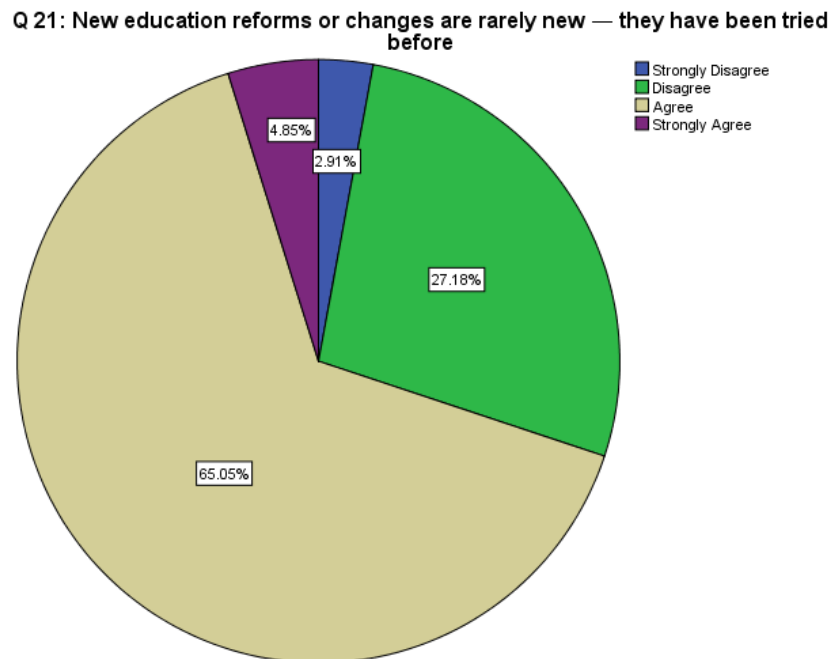


Chart (21): Q 21: New education reforms or changes are rarely new, they have been tried before

Chart 21 shows that about 70% agreed that reform they experienced is not innovative.

Q 22: Education reform has helped me change my practice so students learn better

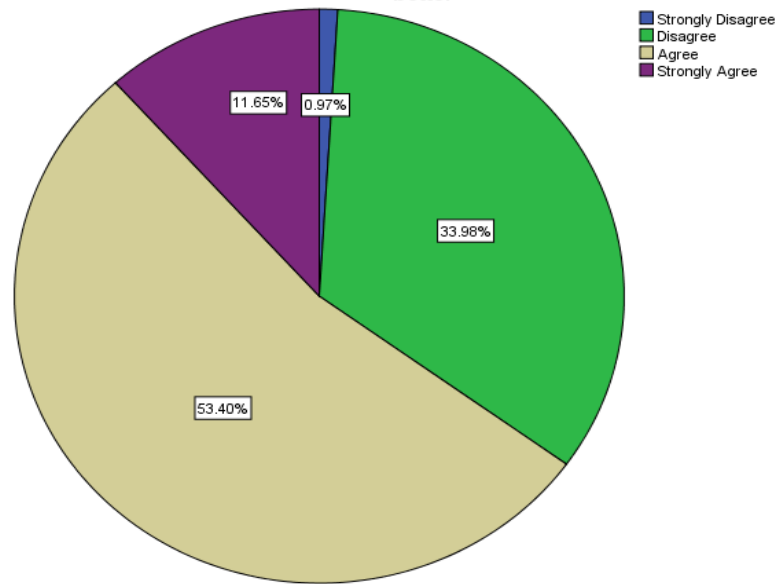


Chart (22): Q 22: Education reform has helped me change my practice so students learn better

Question 22 shows that about 65% benefited from reform in positively changing their teaching practices.

Q 23: The goals of the reform are in line with my goals as a teacher

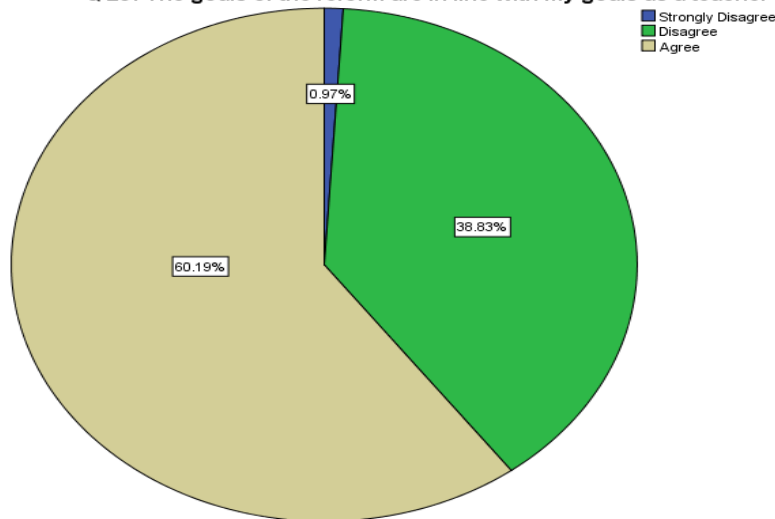


Chart (23): Q 23: The goals of the reform are in line with my goals as a teacher

Chart 23 shows that about 39% disagreed that the reform they witnessed matched their goals as teachers.

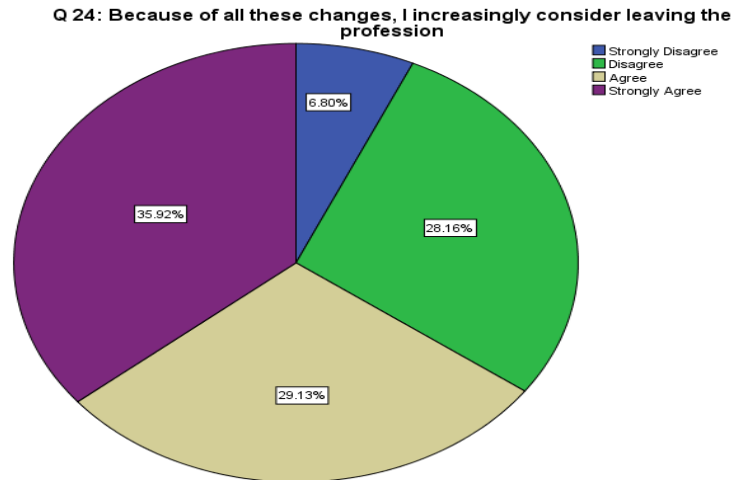


Chart (24): Q 24: Because of all these changes, I increasingly consider leaving the profession

Chart 24 shows that about 65% considered leaving education because of the reform changes.

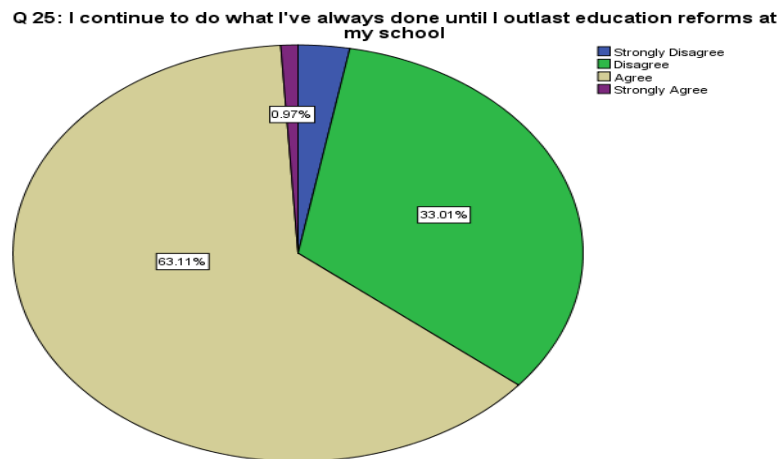


Chart (25): Q 25: I continue to do what I've always done until I outlast education reforms

In this section, input and influences on reform was measured. Statistics show that about 93% of participants agreed that reforms were continuously and repeatedly changing (Q20) with 88.35% agree and 4.85% strongly agree. Consequently, 65% considered leaving the profession (Q24) with 29.13% agree and 35.92% strongly agree. However, more than 50% of the participants disagreed that they could affect any change (Q19) and that plans for reform were discussed with the entire teaching staff (Q18).

4.2.4 Section 4: School Leadership and Management

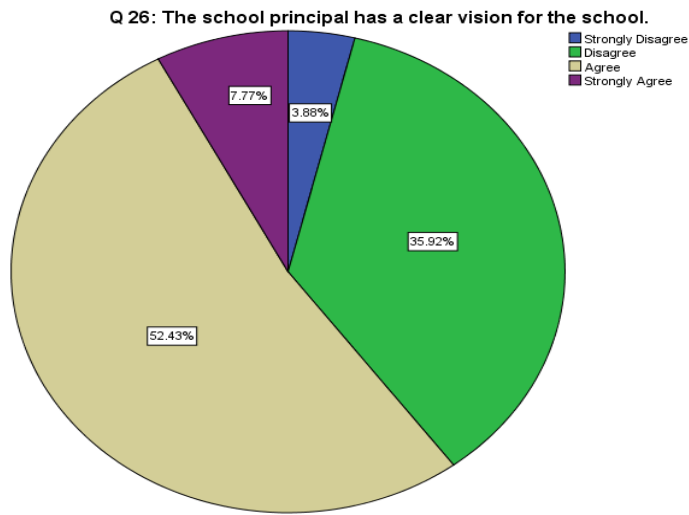


Chart (26): Q 26: The school principal has a clear vision for the school.

Chart 26 shows that only about 60% agreed that the school principal had a clear vision for the school.

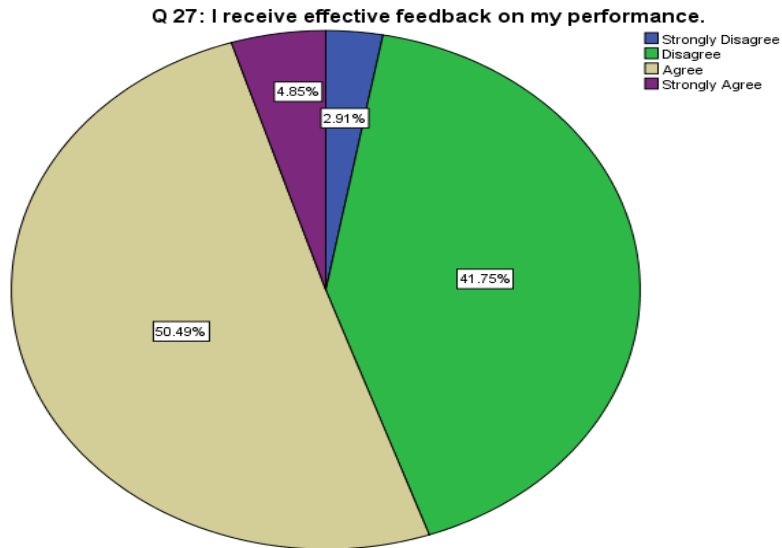


Chart (27): Q27: I receive effective feedback on my performance.

Chart 27 shows that only about 55% agreed that they received effective feedback on their performance.

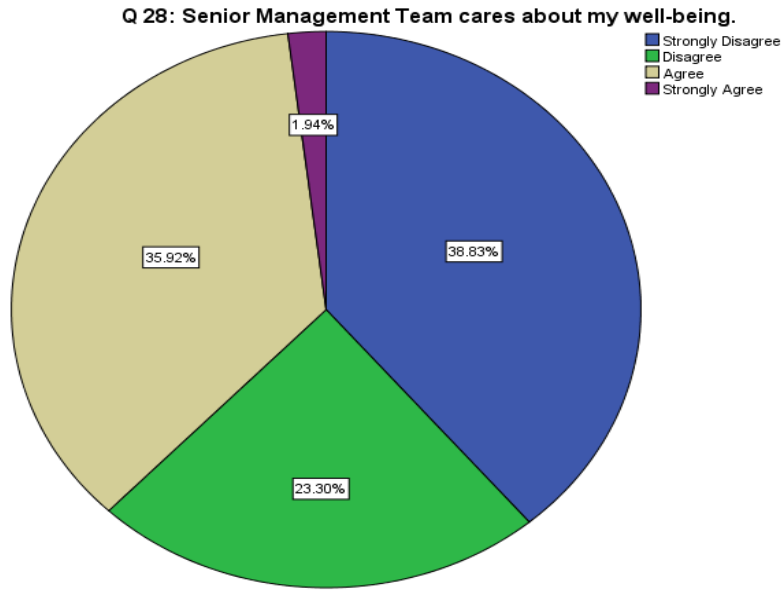


Chart (28): Q 28: Senior Management Team cares about my well-being.

Chart 28 shows that more than 60% did not agree that school senior management cared about their well-being.

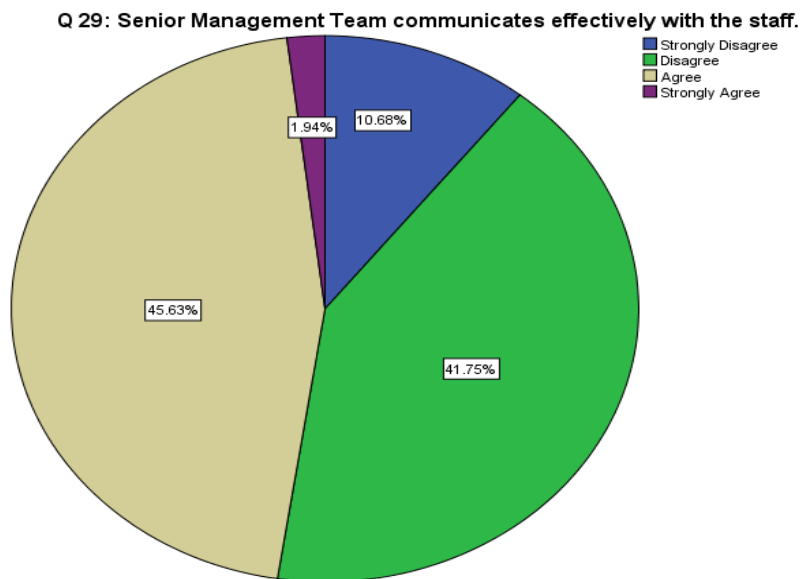


Chart (29): Q29: Senior Management Team communicates effectively with the staff.

Chart 29 shows that only about 47% agreed that Senior Management Team communicates effectively with the staff while more than 50% disagreed.

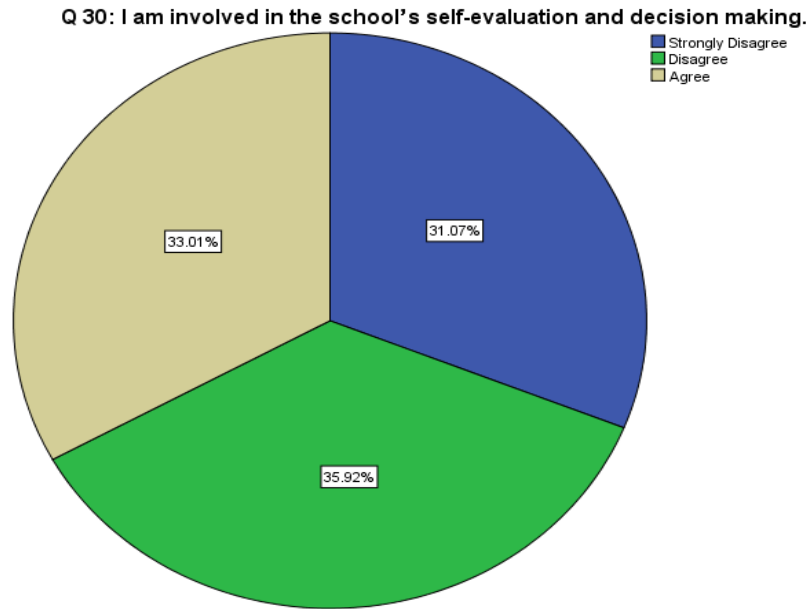


Chart (30): Q30: I am involved in the school's self-evaluation and decision making.

Chart 30 shows that more than 66% disagreed that they were involved in the school self-evaluation and decision-making process.

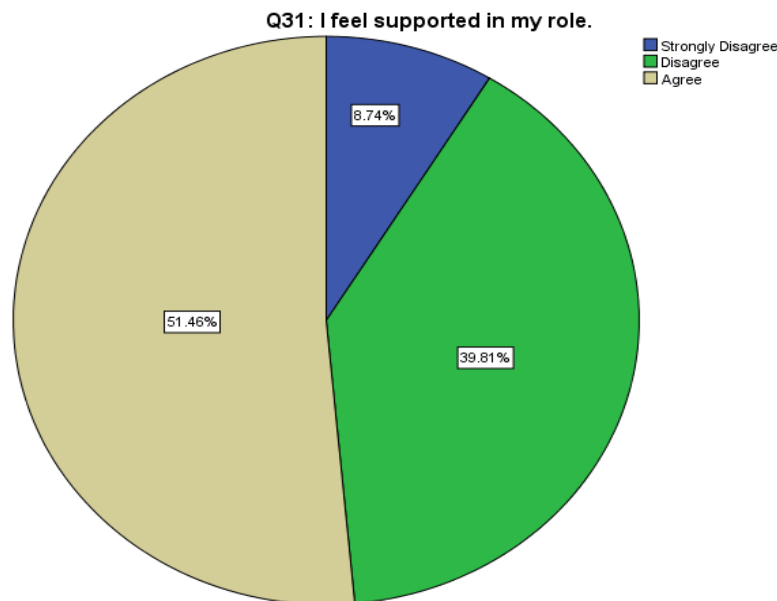


Chart (31): Q31: I feel supported in my role.

Chart 31 shows that only about 52% agreed that they were supported in their roles.

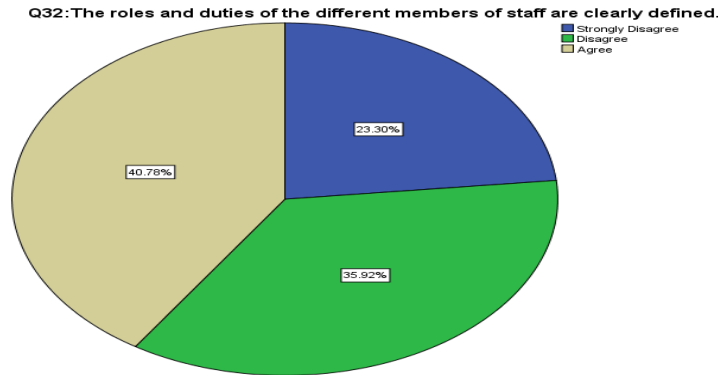


Chart (32): Q32: The roles and duties of the different members of staff are clearly defined.

Chart 32 shows that about 59% disagreed that the roles and duties of the different members of staff were clearly defined.

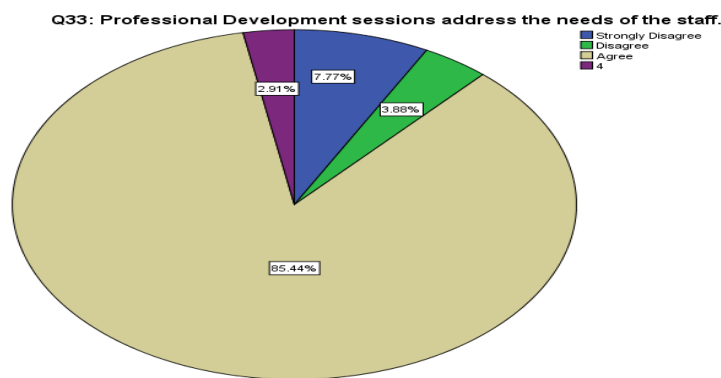


Chart (33): Q33: Professional Development sessions address the needs of the staff.

This section measured participants' perspectives of school leadership and management. Only about 55% of the participants agreed that they received effective feedback on their performance (Q27) while about 45% disagreed (41.75% disagree and 2.91% strongly disagree). In addition, about 62% of the participants disagreed that senior management team cared about their well-being (Q28) with 23.3% disagree and 38.83% strongly disagree. Similarly, about 52% disagreed that senior management team communicated effectively with the staff (Q29). Moreover, about 50% felt that they were not supported in their roles (Q31) and only 40% agreed that roles and duties of the different members of staff were clearly defined (Q32).

4.2.5 Section 5: Teaching and Learning

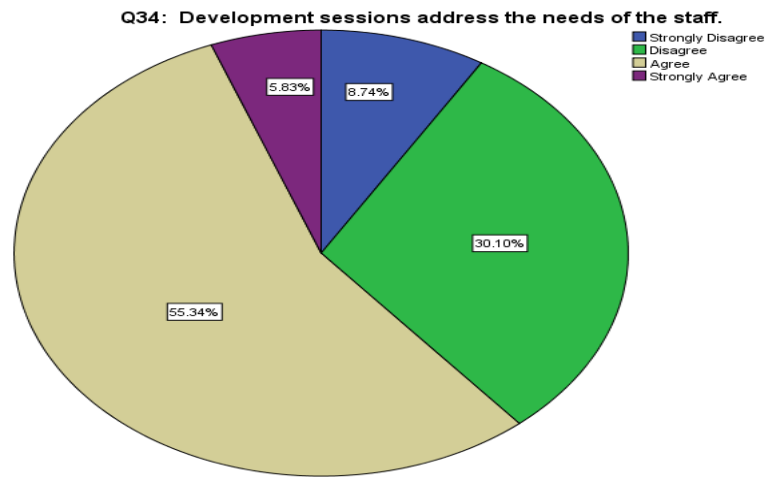


Chart (34): Q34: Development sessions address the needs of the staff.

Chart 34 shows that about 61% agreed that development sessions addressed the needs of the staff.

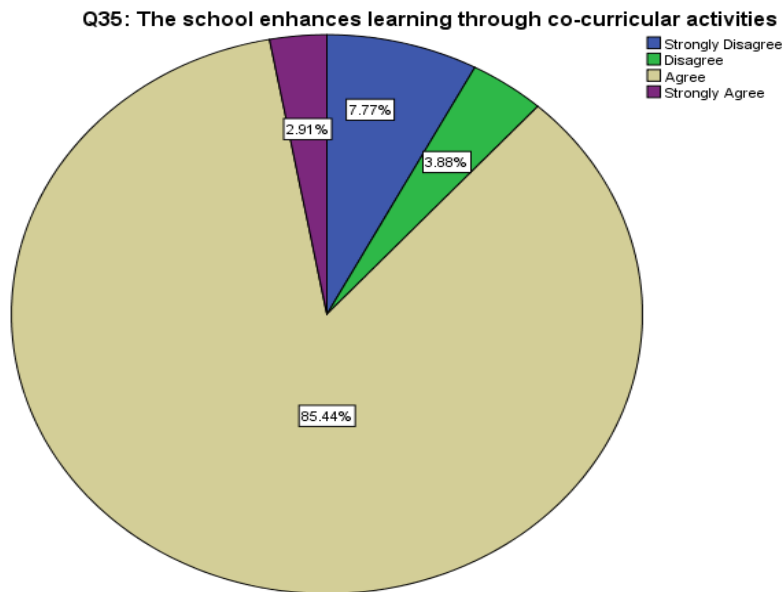


Chart (35): Q35: The school enhances learning through co-curricular activities

Chart 35 shows that about 88% agreed that the school enhanced learning through co-curricular activities.

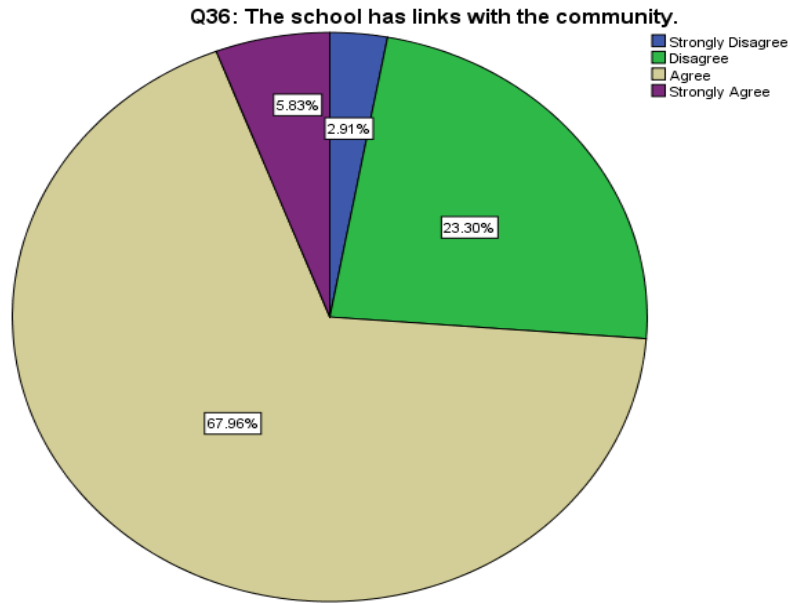


Chart (36): Q36: The school has links with the community.

Chart 36 shows more that about 73% agreed that the school had links with the community.

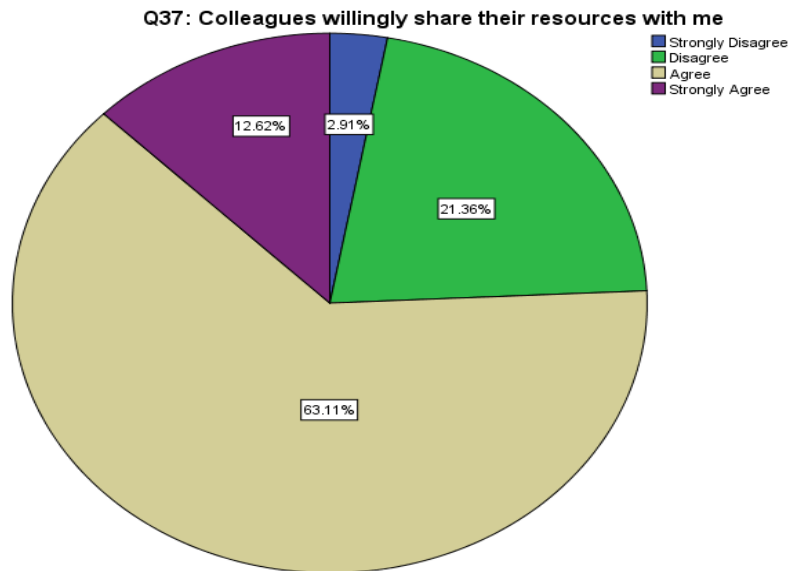


Chart (37): Q37: Colleagues willingly share their resources with me

Chart 37 shows that more than 75% agreed that their colleagues willingly shared their resources with them.

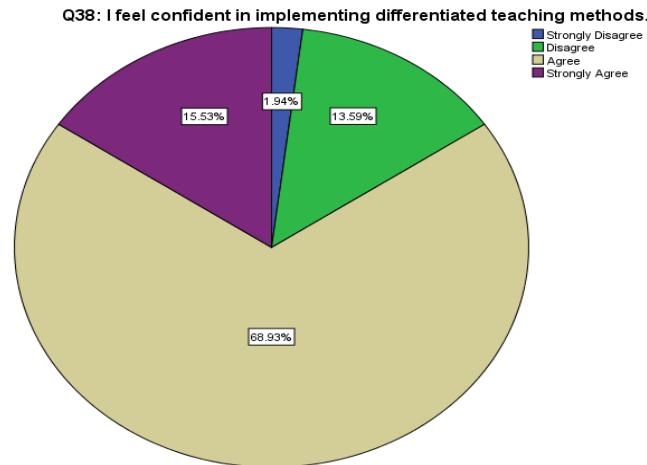


Chart (38): Q38: I feel confident in implementing differentiated teaching methods.

This section measured teachers' perspectives on teaching and learning practices in the school. Most responses agreed with the school policy on cross-curricular links, school connections with community, sharing spirit among colleagues, and the confidence in implementing differentiated instructions. However, about 38% of the responses disagreed that professional development sessions addressed the needs of the staff (Q34) while about 61% agreed on that.

4.2.6 Section 6: School Climate

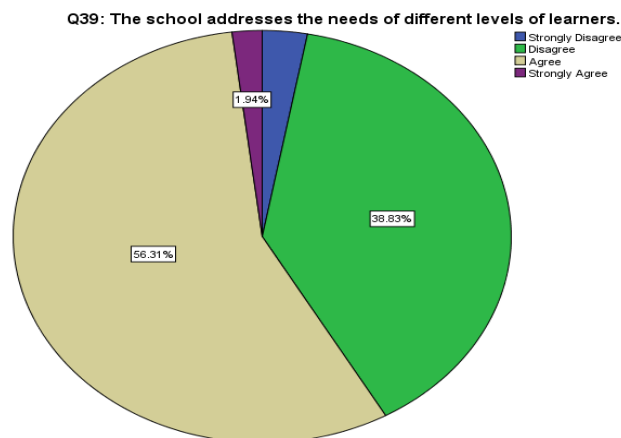


Chart (39): Q39: The school addresses the needs of different levels of learners.

Chart 39 shows that only about 58% agreed that the school addressed the needs of different levels of learners.

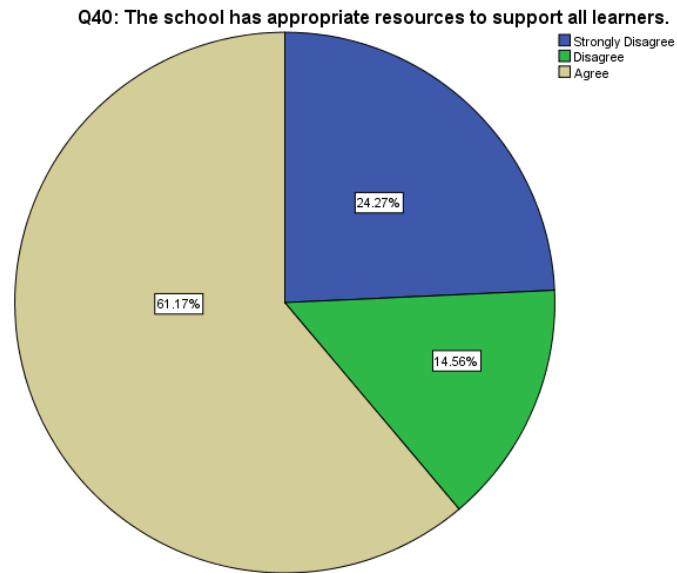


Chart (40): Q40: The school has appropriate resources to support all learners.

Chart 40 shows that only about 61% agreed that the school had appropriate resources to support all learners.

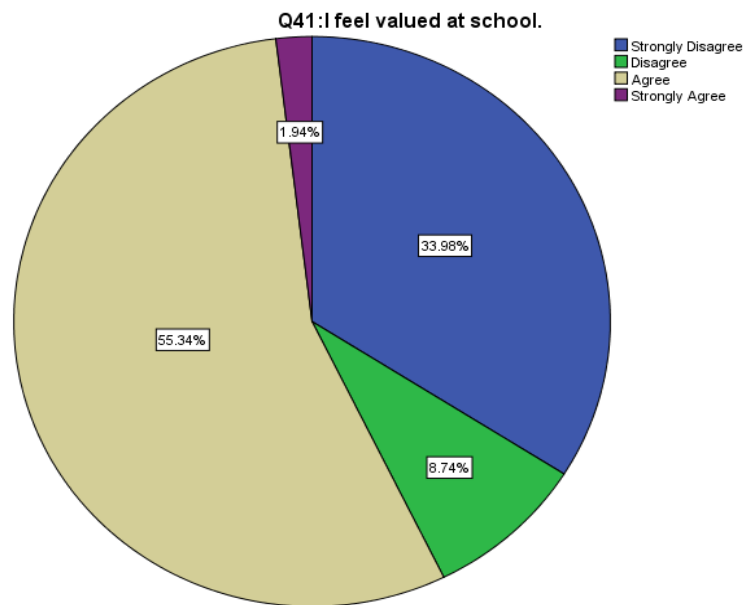


Chart (41): Q41: I feel valued at school.

Chart 41 shows that about 42% disagreed that they felt valued at school.

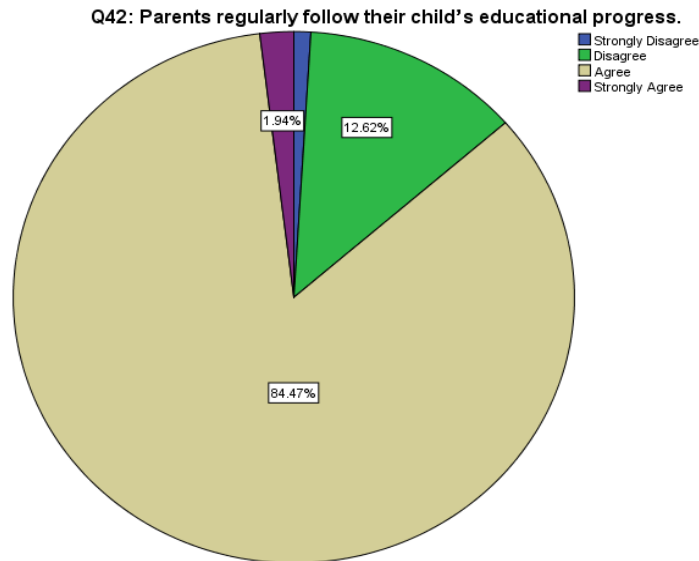


Chart (42): Q42: Parents regularly follow their child's educational progress.

This section measured participants' perspectives on school culture. About 85% of responses agreed that parents regularly followed their children's educational progress (Q42). In addition, only about 61% agreed that the school has appropriate resources to support all learners (Q40). However, about 42% of participants disagreed that they felt valued at school (Q41) with 8.74% disagree and 33.98% strongly disagree.

4.3 Results and Discussion of Qualitative Data

In this study, five interviews were conducted with 4 heads of departments (Islamic Studies, Arabic, English, and Mathematics) and the principal of the school. To distinguish between different responses, the school principal is coded "SP" while the heads of departments are coded "P" with numbers from 1 to 4. Data collected from interviews was analyzed using content analysis approach.

Content analysis is the process of reducing the content considering its contextual circumstances by categorizing it into related themes to successfully analyze its data (Roller & Lavrakas 2015). It

is also defined as "a systematic quantitative description of the manifest content" (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p.203). In addition, qualitative content analysis ensures the quality analysis in qualitative research notwithstanding what qualitative method is used (Roller 2019).

After reading the interviews' scripts and examining the notes written by the researcher during these interviews, 6 themes were identified: delegating powers, level of autonomy, leadership-subordinate interactions, parents' engagement, professional development, and curriculum development.

4.3.1 Delegating Powers

A common theme in the five interviews was the delegating of powers to different subordinates. SP stated that full delegation "is given to each person according to the responsibilities described in his or her job description". According to SP, all academic-related issues of any subject "is totally given" to the "expert of the field" as he called the heads of departments. However, this statement contradicts, to a certain degree, his approval of some intervention from school leadership members in the grading scheme of some subjects. SP also said that this delegation of power "is evident when it comes to the academic evaluation of teachers". Moreover, SP added that delegating powers to the heads of departments "is meant to show them a role model to delegate their powers in return to their teachers".

On the other hand, all participants showed their partial disagreement to the type of delegation offered from the school leadership. P1 and P2 both stated that curriculum development is in the core of their responsibilities, and they expressed their concerns of not having full authority privileged to them as heads of departments. Both P1 and P2 shared the same belief that any delegation of power offered by the school leadership is a restricted delegation as expressed by P1

“we, in this school, suffer from centralization of decision, and no single academic or administrative decision can be taken without the prior approval of the school leadership.” P2 said that even the delegation of power in the academic evaluation of the teacher is intervened when he clarified that “oral instructions are sometimes passed to heads of departments to change the evaluation reports of some teachers” and he recalled an incident a year ago when some terminated teachers decided to resort to the court for their unfair dismissal from work.

It is not the same with the other two participants as P3 and P4 highlighted that school leadership members are experts in teacher’s evaluation. P3 said “school principal has the complete authority to express his approval or disapproval of any academic evaluation as the principal would not be a principal if his academic evaluation is to be questioned”. When P3 was asked “How can the school principal evaluate a teacher academically in a subject the principal knows nothing about?” P3 answered that “the eye of an expert can decide whether a teacher is effectively implementing appropriate teaching strategies or not. The principal may not be able to judge the mastery of subject-knowledge a teacher has, that is why the principal leaves this to the academic heads of departments”. P4 likewise stated “I believe that having more than one eye to work on teacher academic evaluation would be fairer and would help avoid bias.”

When the SP was asked “What strategies do you follow to develop leadership among subordinates?” he answered that leadership is developed “not only among subordinates but is also extended to the learners themselves”. SP added that all members of the school “are always invited to introduce creative initiatives, and in many cases professional development sessions are held by teachers not only by heads of departments or by school leadership members”. He also added, “We have a professional development day in which each academic department proposes a number of professional development topics and, if approved by the school leadership, heads of departments

and teachers perform these workshops.” Students are also given the opportunity to act as teachers in the Future Teacher Day initiative when “selected students of middle and high school replace teachers and take their full schedule with the guidance of teachers.”

4.3.2 Level of Autonomy

When the SP was asked about the level of autonomy in his current role, he answered, “I have complete autonomy in making all decisions of the school along with my school leadership team”. “However” he added, “since it is a private school owned by a businessman, I have to consider all financial-related issues in all my decisions including teachers’ salaries and incentives.” For all the academic-related issues, the SP said that all are discussed with the heads of departments and decided on accordingly. He said “when I choose the head of department, it must be clear for me that he or she is more knowledgeable in his field than I am.” Consequently, all academic issues are the responsibilities of the heads of departments.

When the same question was asked to the other participants, their answers varied. P1 and P2 admitted that school leadership always highlighted the accountability of the academic heads of departments and the full autonomy preserved for them, but when it comes to the practical field both participants expressed their “incomplete autonomy” and “restricted autonomy” in their departments. P2 explained that when the his department tried to enrich the school library with extra books to enhance students’ interests in reading, genres and titles of books have always been questioned and interrogated by the school leadership and a “very low budget is offered in this regard” as P2 expressed. Similarly, P1 stated that “I might be given some freedom in the academic aspects as the highly experienced figure, but in other procedural dimensions, my autonomy is incomplete.”

4.3.3 Leadership-Subordinates Interactions

In response to the question about the kind of relationship between the leader and the subordinates, SP said, “Discussions between school leadership and the middle leadership represented by administrative supervisors and academic heads of departments are of vital importance to the effectiveness of any schooling system.” He also added that to ensure this, regular meetings are held with all heads of departments and supervisors in which “they freely and openly discuss different school policies, updates, and future plans.” SP also focused on the friendly rapports among teachers, coordinators, heads of departments, supervisors, and members of school board by adopting the “open-door policy” as no one is prevented from directly talking to the school principal.

This “strong” and “friendly” relationship as described by the SP is questioned by some other participants. P1 admitted that “it is true that there are open discussions, but all of these discussions are for the propaganda sake as none of the recommendations are taken into consideration.” Similarly P2 agreed to this, “These discussions are mainly for the formal records and meeting agendas completion. At the end, what the principal sees appropriate is what is decided and what is implemented even if not appealing to most of the academic members.” They both expressed that that decision-making in the school does not involve all stakeholders and that it is privileged only to the school board.

On the other hand, both P3 and P4 agreed that the open discussions with the school board members are usually productive. P3 said, “When it comes to the academic level, I feel that almost all discussions are fruitful and they are a two-way talk; we listen to the school board opinions, and they listen to ours, and then we all look at the advantages and the disadvantages, and at the end the

decision is a result of these discussions.” Similarly, P4 responded that “some decisions are taken away from our consultation, but these are the administrative decisions. I cannot recall any academic-related decision concerning my department and I was not involved or at least persuaded that it is the right decision.”

4.3.4 Parents’ Engagement

Parents’ engagement in the learning of their children is a central interest of all participants of the interviews. SP said that parents are ‘the major partners of education especially in the current situation of covid-19 pandemic and the restrictive procedures that made online learning a must’. Engaging parents is essential across all grade levels with special concern to phases 1 and 2 as young learners are dependent on their parents to facilitate their learning. SP also added that “the significance of the parents’ role was highlighted even before online learning by inviting them to have their share in decision-making through different forums and meeting.” Parents’ council is another approach to engage parents in decision making and sharing latest updates about the school.

When asked about the nature of parents’ forums, P1 said, “It is an annual meeting at the beginning of the school year in which parents are invited to attend a general meeting with SAC members (school board, academic heads of departments, and administrative supervisors) and listen to a briefing from each subject leader about the different components of the curriculum taught to their children in different grade levels throughout the school year.” In addition, P4 highlighted the importance of this annual forum “This forum is an orientation to an essential partner in the educational process about the whole school year. It is also a chance to hear directly from the parents at the beginning of the school year.” He also added that these forums give a chance for a strong rapports with parents built on understanding.

Another perspective of parents' engagement is presented by P1, 2, 3, and 4 as they all value parents' communication. P1 said, "I always encourage my teachers to record comments on the school management system where parents have access to track their children's performance. In this concern, P2 said, "comments on the school management system are very effective and time saving, as they deliver messages about learners' performance to their parents without the need to a scheduled meeting or a formal email." Similarly, P3 responded to the question "How effective are these comments?" and said, "comments are not the sole way by which teachers can communicate with parents as some parents do not regularly check the school website, so a policy is followed in case a certain student has a bulk of negative comments without any intervention from the parents, then the administrative supervisor takes the lead to call the parents and invite them to a formal meeting."

4.3.5 Professional Development

All participants highlighted the significance of professional development, but different perspectives on prioritizing the areas of professional development were expressed. SP said, "All school members have become aware of the significance of the professional development as a strategic tool to face and overcome challenges especially with the procedures followed due to Covid-19 pandemic and the resort to online learning." SP also stated that despite facing some opposition from some of the "academic wing" in the school in the last two years when the school tried to partially activate digital learning through Google Suit, all members of the school have become aware of how important it is to be equipped with different strategies. SP also added that professional development is performed on weekly basis through academic meeting within each department.

Professional development for P1 needed to be targeting the individual needs of each teacher. P1 said, “I think that most of my teachers need to have more professional development on teaching techniques and teaching strategies while the trend in the school is to prioritize what serves the shift to the newly adapted digital platforms.” P1 also added that “academic development is being neglected on the expense of other minor issues.” However, within the academic department, there is a parallel meeting for each grade level in which teachers share their experiences and reflect on their performance which is the core of professional development especially when enriched by the inputs of the head of department.

Another perspective of professional development is expressed by P2 when answering the question “What strategies do you follow to develop and support teachers?” as “the best support I provide for my teachers is helping them develop and improve their performance as teachers.” He stated that from his view as an academic head, “teachers need more focus on classroom practices including active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking.” Another important aspect of professional development as P2 viewed it is the focus on “constructive feedback whether in a written form or even orally during classes”. In his response, P2 added that “no one can deny the importance of the procedural professional development” highlighted by the school leadership, but this “should not be on the expense of the academic aspects”.

Both P3 and P4 shared the same belief that professional development need to be targeting the academic dimensions that have a direct impact on students’ academic achievements. They both consider benchmark exams as the major focus of any potential professional development addressed to teachers including analyzing students’ results and making the appropriate interventions. P3 said, “Benchmark exams are the standards that measure students’ progress and attainment, and improving students’ scores in these benchmark exams is a significant evidence of the academic

improvement of the whole school.” She agreed with the SP view of the significance of the professional development on the newly adopted platforms as this type of professional development plays a “major role in the proper delivery of the lessons”.

In addition to the benchmark exams-related professional development, P4 regarded “students of determination and inclusion learners” as a major area that school leadership and educational districts need to focus on when designing professional development sessions. He said, “although students’ of determination and inclusion learners have been the focus of the international and national educational entities, no sufficient professional development is dedicated to target the effective ways of dealing with those learners.” Moreover, P2 said, “instead of sparing time and money on professional development that does not tackle the improvement of teaching practices inside classes, it would be of great value to target differentiated instructions inside classes to meet various needs of learners.”

4.3.6 Curriculum Development

The process of curriculum development is a continuous process depending on many factors as SP described it as “an ongoing and continuous procedure affected by a lot of dynamics including the MAP exams in subjects like English and mathematics”. The process starts with analysis of students’ achievements in different benchmark exams by teachers and heads of departments, and thus the curriculum adaptation is performed accordingly. SP also added that planning the curriculum goes through open discussions between the head of each department and head of academics in the school, and then approved by the school administration.

Similarly, P3, and P4 had the same perspective on curriculum development process. In addition, they said that “it is a must to keep developing the curriculum to cope with the benchmark exams’

results and to improve students' performance in these exams. However, P1, 2, 3, and 4 expressed their concern about the intervention of the school leadership on the assessment part of the curriculum. Specifically, when it comes to the grading scheme, all participants argued the negative effects of such intervention on how marks are distributed for each subject. On the other hand, SP described school leadership as the "major representative of teaching and learning of the school and is responsible for the academic achievement of the students" and thus school leadership must have their input after listening to all voices.

On the other hand, P1 and 2 expressed their limited ability to amend the curriculum as the curricula of both subjects are prepared by the ministry of education in the UAE, and it is a must to cover 80% of the government curriculum. As a result, the discussions between teachers and heads of these departments are always limited to some minor changes in terms of extra-curricular activities. These discussions might also determine which lessons are to be taught within the content provided by the ministry of education and with the minimum percentage of 80% of the whole content.

4.4 Conclusion of the Analysis

The analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data answered the research questions and thus the research objectives are achieved. The answer for the first research question (What is school reform for teachers and school leaders?) is answered primarily by analyzing the quantitative data which showed that school reform means a change in teaching and learning approaches, courageous conversations, new approaches to professional development, positive changes in school discipline, and an evident parents' engagement in their children's learning.

The answer for the second research question (How have leadership practices facilitated the success of the reform?) was gained from both the quantitative and the qualitative data. Both analyses showed that leadership practices facilitated reform by involving different stakeholders in decision-making. In addition, practices included tackling reform dimensions including professional development, school culture, and stakeholders' engagement.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS and both bar and pie charts were presented to illustrate the frequency of each question of the survey. Charts were divided into sections following the order of the questionnaire. Each of these sections was concluded with a brief description of the most significant responses. Then, qualitative data collected from the interview were categorized into different themes and all responses were compared against these themes.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the answers to the research questions are to be highlighted to decide whether the research objectives are completely or partially fulfilled. Key findings of this study are also to be presented with a brief discussion of the limitations that the researcher faced. In addition, the recommendations resulted from the findings are to be introduced along with recommendations for further research. Then, the chapter is to be wrapped with a concluding note as a brief of the chapter and the whole study.

5.2 An Overview of the Research

This case study aimed to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices. To achieve this goal, the broad purpose of this project was divided into three objectives. The first objective was to identify what the school reform is for teachers and school leaders. The second objective is to investigate how school leadership practices have facilitated the success of the reform. The third objective is to examine what leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms.

The study examined literature related to both school reform and leadership practices. Then in the methodology chapter, methodological approaches were illustrated and the qualitative and quantitative instruments were presented. After collecting data from both instruments, it was analyzed and discussed and answers for the research questions were reached.

5.3 Key Findings

The first objective (to identify what the school reform is for teachers and school leaders) was completely met and specifically in the analysis and discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative data sections in chapter four of the study which showed that:

1. For teachers and school leadership, reform is a change in teaching and learning approaches, courageous conversations between teachers and school leadership team, new approaches to professional development, positive changes in school discipline, and an evident parents' engagement in their children's learning.
2. For school leadership, reform is a cooperative team with specific roles and duties of each staff member to ease powers delegation and facilitate decision-making with a degree of autonomy levels.
3. Teachers believed that education reform was performed on the expense of their well-being, and they thought of resigning because of the repeatedly changing reforms.

The second objective (to investigate how school leadership practices have facilitated the success of the reform) was completely met in the analysis and discussion of the qualitative and quantitative data in chapter four which showed that:

4. Professional development policies targeted areas of improvement and thus lessened teachers' resistance and eased reform process.
5. Teachers' involvement in decision-making facilitated the implementation of reform as practitioners were engaged in policy-making.
6. Open discussions relieved teachers' stress and reduced their readiness for opposition at the beginning of the reform process.

7. Healthy formal and informal interaction between leadership and subordinates helped eliminate obstacles in the implementation of the reform.
8. Effective parents' engagement resulted in a home-school integrated and continuous learning.

The third objective (to examine what leadership practices can be recommended to facilitate successful school reforms) was completely met in the analysis and discussion of both qualitative and quantitative data in the fourth chapter of the study and showed that practices include:

9. Conducting evidence-based professional development for all teaching and non-teaching staff members including the leadership team.
10. Encouraging collaborative decision-making process that involves parents, teachers, and different educational stakeholders.
11. Facilitating open discussion among teachers, subject leaders, parents, and school governing board to effectively redesign the curriculum to meet the needs of different learners.
12. Developing a healthy formal and informal rapport between leadership and subordinates of different levels.
13. Engaging parents in the learning of their children through effective communication.

5.4 Limitations of the Current Study

Three limitations restricted this study and limited its accessibility in different ways. Covid-19 pandemic, sample limitation, and methodological limitation are discussed in this section.

5.4.1 Covid-19 Limitation

Covid-19 Pandemic and the restrictive measures taken reduced the ability of the researcher to interview some participants in person. Three of the five interviewees preferred to be interviewed online using Google Meet software. Unlike face-to-face meetings, online interviews limited the researcher's observation of the non-verbal clues, and thus deprived the study from thorough contextualization of the interviewee. In addition, potential distractions might have existed and disturbed participants' engagement without the researcher's realization. However, the researcher tried to evade these obstacles by encouraging video conferencing and also paraphrasing the interview questions and repeating them to make sure that the interviewee is fully engaged in his or her responses.

5.4.2 Sample Limitation

The second limitation was the sample of the study. Most participants were teachers in the school under investigation, and many of them preferred not to participate due to the sensitivity of the questions about school leadership and school reform. In addition, some of those who participated were not willing to sign the consent form. Thus, it is difficult to decide to which extent their responses are genuine. However, the researcher talked to them individually in an attempt to persuade them ensuring the confidentiality of their identities.

5.4.3 Methodological Limitation

Despite the fact that this study fulfilled the objectives set in the first chapter and enabled the researcher to get a profound understanding of the study field and context, a caution should be considered because of the type of the case study it adopted. This study is a single case that did not intend to make statistical generalization, however, the researcher is aware that multiple cases

would be more compelling to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices.

5.5 Implications of the Current Study

While literature is rich with theoretical studies about successful educational leadership and its different approaches, by analyzing dimensions of school reform and examining leadership styles for improving educational system, no recent studies in this context holistically scan concrete and successful leadership practices that resulted in measurable and visible comprehensive school reform. Tackling existing achievements in educational reform and linking them to specific practices of school leadership is what makes this study distinct in this field as it sets a role model and presents practical suggestions for educational institutes seeking reform to follow after appropriate context-related amendments.

It is significant to consider the findings of this case study for policy makers and practitioners. For policy makers, a special consideration should be paid to teachers, the real practitioners, to reduce the amount of burden they carry when implementing reform. This burden can be lessened through gratitude and reconsidering their well-being and welfare. For the practitioners, this study revealed the great efforts performed by them in any successful reform and the valuable role they have in any reform process which must be reflected in their self-value and self-appreciation.

5.6 Recommendations of This Study

After analyzing qualitative and quantitative data and examining the key findings of this study, the following recommendations are to be considered:

1. The well-being of teachers, who are the actual practitioners and implementers of school reform, needs to be reconsidered. Teachers felt they were overloaded with endless tasks of reform procedures, and their welfare is the price they pay for the reform.
2. Changing reform practices repeatedly over a short period of time decreases leadership competency for the subordinates, so evidence-based reform is a key factor to avoid this.
3. Throughout the reform process, it is of paramount importance to motivate teachers to become practitioner researchers in order to facilitate research-based reform.
4. Piloting reform practices is essential even on the individual school level. It is true that it is not a guarantee of success, but it provides indicators about the possibility of success.
5. School principals need to obtain an educational degree in leadership or at least acquire extensive leadership-oriented professional development.

5.7 Recommendations for Further Research

Conducting multiple cases instead of a single case study to investigate how school reform has been successful due to successful leadership practices would be more compelling for the future research for generalization purposes. It is also recommended to extend school reform studies to public schools of different contexts to compare the degrees of autonomy in private and public schools and the impact it has on the process of school reform. Another recommendation is to study the effects of principals' qualifications on school reform and the way they affect principals' interaction with different schooling components when experiencing school reform. Teacher's well-being is another field of study that needs to be tackled to examine the effects of school reform practices on practitioner's well-being and how to reduce them to the minimum.

5.8 Concluding Note

Successful educational systems should consider the futuristic challenges, and educational reform is essential for building capacity for change. The current situation of Covid-19 and the lockdown of schools distinguished between two types of education systems. The first educational system had the ample infrastructure and shifted relatively smoothly to online learning and was the guarantee for sustainable education. On the other hand, the other system was not ready for such a change and the lockdown was not only for schools but also for the schooling system as a whole.

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Appendices

1- Questionnaire

<u>School Reform Questionnaire</u>			
1. Gender:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female		
2. Age:			
<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-64	
<input type="checkbox"/> 25-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 65 or over	
3. What is the highest level of education completed by your own parents?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree		
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate	<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree		
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate	<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
5. How many years of teaching experience do you have?			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-10	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 10	
6. How long have you been working in this school?			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-10	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 10	
7. Which section do you work at?			
<input type="checkbox"/> KG Section	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/> High School
8. What is your position/role?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Head of Department (HoD)	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor
Assistant			
<input type="checkbox"/> Others			

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
What is school reform you have experienced in the last 2 years:				
1- Changes to our teacher-evaluation system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2- Changes to the curriculum I teach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3- New approaches to professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4- New approach to school discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5- New technology-based reform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6- New social and emotional learning/mindset-related initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7- New ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8- Courageous conversations, diversity, culturally-competent teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9- New whole school reform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10- Changes in school culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11- Changes in formal and informal rapport among staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12- Changes in teaching and learning approaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13- Changes in parents engagement in their children's learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14- Changes in learner's motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15- Positive change in the interactions between leadership and staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Input and Influence on Reform				
16- When our school implements changes or reforms, we can adjust the plan as needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17- I have the support I need to implement the changes or reforms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18- Plans for changes or reforms are discussed with the entire teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19- I can influence the plans being made at our school for the implementation of changes or reforms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20- I get a handle on a new reform and then it changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21- New education reforms or changes are rarely new — they have been tried before	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22- Education reform has helped me change my practice so students learn better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23- The goals of the reform are in line with my goals as a teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24- Because of all these changes, I increasingly consider leaving the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25- I continue to do what I've always done until I outlast education reforms at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Leadership and Management				
26- The school principal has a clear vision for the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27- I receive effective feedback on my performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28- Senior Management Team cares about my well-being.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29- Senior Management Team communicates effectively with the staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30- I am involved in the school's self-evaluation and decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31- I feel supported in my role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32- The roles and duties of the different members of staff are clearly defined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33- Professional Development sessions address the needs of the staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching and Learning				
34- The school supports learners in developing their full potential as lifelong learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35- The school enhances learning through co-curricular activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36- The school has links with the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37- Colleagues willingly share their resources with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38- I feel confident in implementing differentiated teaching methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Climate				
39- The school addresses the needs of different levels of learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40- The school has appropriate resources to support all learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41- I feel valued at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42- Parents regularly follow their child's educational progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2- Interview Questions

A: Personal Information

- 1- What is your role in this school/organization?
- 2- For how long have you been in your role/position in this school / in other schools?

B: View of leadership:

- 3- How can you describe the freedom to approach the principal to discuss any issues?
- 4- How can you describe delegating powers in the school?
- 5- What do you think are the effects of delegating powers in the school?
- 6- Do you think it is important to engage teachers in decision-making? Why?
- 7- What is the level of autonomy in your current role?
- 8- What strategies do you follow to develop leadership among subordinates?
- 9- What strategies do you follow to develop and support teachers?
- 10-What strategies do you follow to engage parents?

C: Curriculum review and development:

- 11-Does your school have a policy directing how curriculum of the various subjects should be reviewed and developed?
- 12- Who oversees the process of curriculum review and development?
- 13- Is there anything else would you like to add?