Transforming School: Role of School Leadership in Managing Educational Change – A Case Study of an American School in Dubai

التحوّل المدرسي: دور القيادة المدرسية في إدارة التغيير التربوي ـ دراسة حالة لمدرسة أمريكية في دبي

by

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Abstract

My research will focus on the role that school leaders play in school transformation by managing change process generated by the changing face of economies and political agendas in any given country. School leadership needs to skilfully manage change in order to minimize chaos and ensure sustainability of the process. This study will focus on the intricate process of change and resistance management. School leaders need to exhibit distinct and diverse leadership styles, as demanded by the circumstances while leading school communities through the time of intense change. According to Stoll and Fink (1996), school leaders today are faced with countless innovations. New ideas have swamped the education industry, and it is important for school leaders to make sense of change, stability, resistance, meaningful and necessary innovations all at the same time while ensuring the sustainability of such changes.

This study will use an American School in Dubai as a case study for the implementation of theoretical concepts; where the current school principal helped establish a culture of change and innovation. The school was established 25 years ago, hence it has a long-standing culture and managing change is a very complex process due to the nature of its context. In particular, I will focus on how the current principal was able to break the status-quo and motivate her team(s) to keep moving forward in the face of intense change.

ملخص الدراسة

سيتركز بحثي على الدور الذي يلعبه قادة المدارس في التحول المدرسي عن طريق إدارة عملية التغيير الناتجة عن تغير الوجه الاقتصادي والأجندة السياسية في أي بلد. تحتاج قيادة المدرسة إلى مهارة إدارة التغيير من أجل تقليل الفوضى وضمان استمرار العملية التعليمية. ستتركز هذه الدراسة على عملية معقدة من التغيير وإدارة المقاومة حيث يحتاج قادة المدارس إلى إظهار أنماط قيادة متميزة ومتنوعة على النحو الذي تتطلبه الظروف خلال قيادة المجتمع المدرسي في وقت التغيير. وفقا لدراسة تمت سنة 1996 من قبل ستول وفينك، فإن قادة المدارس اليوم يواجهون ابتكارات لا تعد ولا تحصى حيث أصبحت صناعة التعليم مليئة بالأفكار الجديدة، وأصبح من المهم أن يعي قادة المدارس مفاهيم التغيير، الاستقرار، المقاومة، الابتكارات الهادفة والضرورية مع ضمان استدامة هذه المفاهيم.

سيتم استخدام مدرسة أمريكية في دبي كدراسة حالة للمفاهيم النظرية المنفذة، حيث ساعدت مديرة المدرسة الحالية في تأسيس ثقافة التغيير والابتكار. تأسست المدرسة منذ 25 سنة، ومن ثم فإن إدارة عملية التغيير معقدة جدا نظرا لثقافة المدرسة القديمة. على وجه الخصوص، سأركز على كيفية تمكن المديرة الحالية من تغيير الوضع القائم وتحفيز العاملين على المضي قدما في سبيل التغيير.

Dedication

I dedicate this research work to my husband who has always practiced commitment and grit both as a professional and as a human being, and in turn has always encouraged me to practice the same in my life. I could never have finished my masters without his continuous support and encouragement. Thank you, Ahmed Elkady, for being patient with me and putting our lives on hold while I invested in my dream. I would also like to thank my family for helping me be the person and the professional that I am today. I sincerely hope that my study will benefit someone in their quest of knowledge.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The more complex the social systems become, the more the need for schools to adapt to these increasingly complex social systems arises. Schools, in fact, are considered the pathways to advancement and progress for any society. Global economies rely on educational systems to produce individuals who are able to keep up with the advancements of the time. Change is constant, and history shows, that organizations that do not change either become obsolete or extinct. We live in a society where technological advancements are changing the world at an extremely rapid rate. Just about everything we knew about ten years ago has been radically transformed by the technological advancements. According to McKinsey Global Institute (2018), new research predicts that almost 30 percent of the hours worked globally could be automated or taken up by technology by 2030.

According to Gleick (2000), the pace of change is rapid and just about everything is happening at a nanosecond rate. Such an influx of technological advancement puts a heavy focus on schools to prepare students to cope with the challenges of a highly automated global society. If such is the state of affairs, then the question is whether school leaders and teachers are sufficiently equipped with skills to prepare their students for the jobs of the future? This puts a heavy focus on the school leaders to lead their teams through the times of such radical change with a foresight. Schools all across the world are trying to find ways to cope with the changes imposed by technological advancements and in turn, policy reforms. Changes in a certain school system are usually led by a change or shift in national educational policies, national economic goals, or even a shift in school's internal policies.

Although change is imminent, it is often accompanied by both anticipated and unanticipated challenge. Meeting inspection requirements, maintaining student-population, satisfying school-

community, ever-changing policy reforms, over-inundated numbers of external standardized assessments, national agendas, student-achievement gap, dissatisfied teams and teacher turn-over are just a few examples of the challenges that school leaders face in the process to manage changes within their schools. School leaders must act quickly and wisely to react to these changes because when the environment around you is radically changing, you can't sit still and wait for the storm to blow over. Leaders are expected to not only take action quickly, but such action must be measured for positive impact and deeply thought-out to achieve desired outcomes.

The dilemma for school leaders is how to manage radical change within their organizations without demotivating their teams. School leaders are beginning to realize that in order to stay relevant with the current times, they must adapt to the impending change, but the question remains how school leaders do just that while taking their teams along on this long, arduous, and challenging journey. Change is a challenging process and school leaders must ensure that changes brought about in their schools are not only relevant and purposeful, but are also sustainable. However, according to Michael Fullan (2001), the situation is not so gloomy as it appears, because we not only have a better and deeper knowledge-base for effective leadership in the modern times, but we can also benefit from many case studies of large-scale transformations in education. In other words, school leaders have a lot of examples to gain insight from and to lead their course of action, in order to successfully take on school-wide transformation.

2.7. **Background of the Study**

In order to meet the global requirements of education, like many other countries, the MoE in the UAE has taken multiple reformative steps to change the current face of education in the UAE. These changes are triggered by UAE National Agenda. This agenda focuses on the development of first-rate education system in the UAE. According to www.vision2021.ae, in order for the UAE

schools to meet the requirements of national agenda (2014), they must abide by the following parameters for securing first-rate education system in the UAE:

- Improved average PISA score

- Improved average TIMSS score

- Students with high skills in Arabic according to the national tests

- High quality of teachers

- Highly effective leadership in schools based on school monitoring and evaluation systems

- Schools to ensure that no students need to join the university foundation program

In order to meet the national agenda parameters set by Vision 2021, the UAE Ministry of Education invested in some policy reforms to hold schools accountable for their progress. The school inspection system across the country is unified by introducing schools' inspection framework. Schools are required to adhere to this framework by the local regulatory authorities such as KHDA/DSIB, and are required to produce evidence of progress against the following six performance standards:

1. Students' achievement

2. Students' personal and social development and their innovation skills

3. Teaching and assessments

4. Curriculum

5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

6. Leadership and management

Additionally, UAE Ministry of Education has introduced many new reforms including UAE teachers' licensing scheme (TELS-UAE) in order to support the demands of both school's inspection framework and national agenda parameters. Innovation in Education and Inclusion are

a few of such reforms to bring the UAE education system up to par with the world's fastest growing economies.

Hence, school leaders in the UAE are faced with a number of arduous challenges, and in turn, need to reflect complex changes in the internal running of their schools. Most school leaders in the UAE are introducing changes and innovations within their schools in order for the schools to secure a good rating with the annual inspection system and to show evidence of school's contribution to improved student-achievement. This process is intricate and complex and demands from the school leaders, a set of skills to lead their schools through transformation to meet the challenges of these policy reforms. School leaders in the UAE are faced with a unique nature of challenges that requires them to be strategic, measured, and insightful in their approach to lead their schools through transformation. As explained by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), specific school leadership behaviors have a strong impact on student achievement. School leaders, in fact, are directly linked to their schools being either effective or ineffective. The question, then, remains what kind of skills are needed by the leaders to drive their schools through transformation in a successful manner.

2.8. **Significance of the Study**

As Payne (2013), suggests that 30 years of reform brought very little change in urban schools, my interest in the management of reforms led me to look deeply into how reforms are introduced and handled in schools in order for them to bear desired outcomes. Payne suggests that school administrators are rather a part of the problem than the solution when it comes to improving schools. Not all reforms in the educational policy require educational change in the schools. According to him, the schools that exhibit poor performance in standardized tests, are also most often the schools that display a lack of "curricular coherence" and a lack of communication among the teachers and the leadership in such schools. Payne believes that educational change is possible

if the policy-makers introduce innovations and reforms in keeping with the schools' current practices in order to avoid the mismatch between the policy and the practice. In other words, it is important to start with the outcome in mind. School leaders need to introduce changes while keeping the main outcome of such changes in mind. In fact, the desired outcomes must directly correlate to the changes and the existing culture of the school in order to bear fruit.

Moreover, Kershner and McQuillan (2016), in their article suggest that the school leaders need to disrupt the status-quo in their schools in order for schools to become adaptive to change. However, in doing so, school leaders need to depend highly on distributed authority and relational trust because the process will build on an existing school culture. In their research, they study two school principals, who approach school change differently; however, both principals rely on the underlying principals of building a common school culture. The main reason why one principal is more successful in the process of change management is her management of distributed leadership and building collegial trust through establishing learning communities within her school.

To support my research, I studied an American school based in Dubai as a practical foundation to my study, where the school principal led the school through transformation in keeping with many new policy reforms introduced by ministry of education. I work in the same school as a director of curriculum and academic standards as a part of senior leadership team; hence the topic undertaken for my research is my direct area of focus. As a part of decision-making team in the school, I studied in depth the factors that are necessary for bringing about educational change in the schools. My research focuses on the following aspects of educational change:

- Set of skills that school leaders need for effective school transformation
- The challenges faced by school leaders in the change process and how leaders cope with them
- Reforming teaching and learning practice in the school through the effective employment of innovations

- The role of collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership in school change

It is important for school leaders in the UAE to make sense of the rapid change in school reforms in order to introduce changes to their teams in order to avoid distrust and chaos. It is even more important for them to build relational trust and common learning culture within their schools. School leaders alone cannot be successful if they try to do everything on their own, so it is extremely significant for them to build collaborative learning communities and establish distributed leadership opportunities in their schools to support the systemic changes as well as improving student achievement. It is my hope that this study will bear some significance for those school leaders based in the UAE who are trying to drive sustainable changes in their schools in order to make a meaningful difference in improving student achievement.

2.9. **Rationale of the Study**

I am interested in studying leadership's role in managing school change because it currently falls within the scope of my personal work. I am working as a senior leader in an American school which is going through intense change under the reforms imposed by the Ministry of Education; hence it is important for me to study effective management of change. Additionally, not many studies have been conducted in this field especially within the UAE. Most schools in the UAE have an established cultural context, in terms of pre-inspection era and post-inspection requirements. The schools are forced to change rapidly in order to meet the requirements of inspection and national agenda. Each year, authorities such as KHDA/DSIB (Knowledge and Human Development Authority/ Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau) are focused on raising the bar for schools in terms of higher student-achievement. Schools have been handed hefty goals to meet national agenda requirements and to secure good rating for their schools to prosper. Parents are becoming increasingly aware of what good education for their children means in the UAE. In fact,

it is a time of complex change in education for all schools in the UAE. In this context, schools have to be highly dependent on strong and focused leadership to adapt to the changes successfully. How school leaders prepare their respective schools to combat the challenges of inspection and raising student-achievement while simultaneously managing change, is the direct focus of my study. The seriousness of the hefty reform challenges for school leadership in the UAE and the intricate role of school leadership in managing change sparked my interest in this study. Hence this study will examine the role of school leadership in leading their schools through the complex process of change in a skillful and insightful manner in order to achieve desired outcomes without causing chaos and distrust among teachers.

2.10. **Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to investigate the role school leaders play in managing school transformation in particular to the context of challenges faced by school leaders within the UAE. I will more specifically look at how school leaders are able to establish strong trust and collegial relationships through using multiple leadership skills and creating a common vision for their teams to follow.

My study will furthermore concentrate on the distributed leadership opportunities that support the transfer of knowledge in a purposeful manner and how school leaders can use such distributed authority to their advantage. Additionally, I will examine how learning communities within the schools particularly aid in improving teaching and learning processes in the school. This study will also focus on the effective management of innovations during school transformation process. Once these factors are studied individually, the outcomes will be used to see how transformational leadership skills can help school leaders in successfully navigating the challenges, developing distributed leadership opportunities, establishing collaborative learning communities and managing meaningful innovations in the school. The aim of the study is to see the impact of these

factors on improving teaching and learning practice in schools, breaking the status-quo and establishing a common vision for overall school improvement.

2.11. **Research Questions**

The study will be focused on the following questions:

1. Do school leaders need just transformational leadership or a hybrid approach to be successful in their endeavors for school-wide transformation?

2. How can school leaders skillfully navigate the challenges they face in the school transformation process?

3. What role is played by collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in school transformation?

4. How can school leaders ensure that impactful innovations are employed in the process of school transformation without losing focus of the desired outcomes?

Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the foundational literature that helped me in formulating the research questions. The theoretical framework chosen for this study focuses on what is "transformational leadership". This chapter focuses on the need for school leaders to not only depend on transformational leadership but to use a variety of leadership skills in order to be successful in transforming their schools. This study outlines some of the challenges that school leaders face during the change management process. It also discuses the importance of "distributed leadership" and "collaborative learning communities". Additionally, the study reviews how school leaders can effectively manage the challenges such as chaos and disorder caused by the disruption of status-quo in a school with an already existing culture. This chapter also argues the importance of building invested teams in the process of school transformation who believe in the collective vision for school improvement.

2.2. Transformational Leadership

Burns (2012) first originated the term "transformational leadership" in 1978 to describe political leaders, but now the concept engulfs all organizational leaders. Burns describes transformational leadership as a process where ""leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". Burns conceptualized two exclusive styles of leadership: transformational and transactional. Transactional leaders work within the existing culture by setting standards, resolving issues that arise, but do not believe in disrupting the status-quo of the organization. In general, such leaders believe in exchanging one thing for another without focusing on a complete shift or change. While transactional leaders set expectations and desired targets,

manage behaviors, and reward accomplishments of their teams, they do not create followers who believe in taking risks or exhibiting initiative.

Transformational leaders, however, focus on bringing about a complete cultural change in the organization which gives way to the disruption of the status-quo. According to Burns, a transformational leader brings about a significant change in the manner, people in the organization think, which in turn, creates a significant change in the perceptions of the employees by changing their expectations. A leader can bring about organizational change through his behavior, personality, and ability to set examples. Such leaders not only set challenging desired outcomes but also "energize a vision". Their followers respond to their articulation of challenging goals and their exemplary vision. Essentially, transformational leaders are more often seen as moral agents of change who are working for the benefit of all stake-holders.

According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders believe in "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents".

Bass (1985) further developed the concept of transformational leadership when he explained how transformational leaders can influence their followers' motivation and performance. Such a leader is able to establish trust, loyalty, mutual respect, and an admiration for the cause in his organization. As a result, employees are able to work harder because they believe in the vision. It is important that these leaders are charismatic because their followers are transformed and motivated by his idealized influence. Such a leader motivates his team into finding new ways to challenge the status-quo in order to change the existing culture and environment. Bass further developed four key factors that formulate the character of a transformational leader. Sosik & Dionne (1997) referred to these characteristics as four I's of transformational leadership.

2.4.1. Individualized Consideration: A transformational leader pays specialized attention to each member of his team, especially those who feel neglected. The leader acts as a mentor and/or a coach as demanded by the situation. While the leader empathizes and provides support if the employee is in need, he simultaneously sets challenging goals. This helps the employees gain respect for the leader and makes each member of the team feel celebrated when they make a contribution to the team. This also instills a sense of self-development in all members of the team and helps them build aspirations in keeping with the goals of the organization. Paying attention to each member of the team encourages them to take risks and develop intrinsic motivation for challenging tasks.

2.4.2. Intellectual Stimulation: A transformational leader encourages their teams to take risks and come up with initiatives that challenge the status-quo. Such leaders not only stimulate the intellectual ideas but they also initiate conversations that challenge the existing culture of the organization. They develop their followers into independent thinkers, problem-solvers, and risk-takers. For such leaders, knowledge-building and sharing is essential and they see challenges as opportunities. When the leaders think outside the box, this encourages their teams to think outside the box, think of old problems in innovative ways, and consequently build better systems.

2.4.3. Inspirational Motivation: Transformational leaders are visionaries who inspire their followers into believing in a greater cause which benefits all. This helps both the leaders and their teams in setting high performance expectations supported by an organizational vision. Additionally, transformational leaders set a strong sense of purpose for their teams to create intrinsic motivation for the achievement of mutually beneficial goals. The energy provided by the sense of purpose helps push the teams in moving forward; however, it is important that such leaders are equipped with excellent communication skills in order for the communicated purpose to be powerful, motivating, engaging, and clear.

2.4.4. **Idealized Influence:** Transformational leaders believe in having followers who idealize their leadership as a role model for achievements, high standards of behavior, thus in turn, instilling mutual trust and respect between the leader and the team. According to Marzano, Walters & McNulty (2005), "Idealized influence is characterized by modeling behavior through exemplary personal achievements, character, and behavior".

2.5. Instructional Leadership

Although it is important for a school leader to have qualities mentioned above to undertake whole-school transformation; however, the basic two functions in the school are teaching and learning. If the school leadership is not equipped with the ability to improve instruction at its core, it is impossible for school to improve. Managing people, data, resources, and processed is just one aspect of school leadership, but it is critical that principals are equipped with appropriate knowledge of curriculum, assessment, student-achievement trends and instructional processes within their schools.

Stein and D'Amico (2000) are of the view that it is just as important for leaders to have knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy as it is for teachers in the classroom. They think that there is an undue focus on educational leadership in terms of policy and organizational structure and very little attention is paid to "instructional theory and instructional practice". Teachers value feedback given by the leaders regarding their instructional practices and assessment. Additionally, it is critical for school principals to make sound decisions regarding curriculum and assessment practices in their schools. Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) refer to "involvement in curriculum, assessment, and instruction" as one of the 21 responsibilities of a school leader. They argue that school leader should directly engage in designing the curricular activities and addressing assessment and instructional issues by supporting teachers in these processes. However, it is

important to note that it is not possible for a school leader to show engagement in the instructional processes in the school unless they have a strong knowledge base for best instructional practices. According to Elmore (2000), "the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance". He stresses upon the importance of "a direct relationship between the work that the leaders should be doing and the core function of the organization". He goes on to explain that in order for learning organizations to grow, it is important for school leaders to model good instructional practice. Accordingly, he argues, "if learning, individual and collective, is the central responsibility of leaders, then they must be able to model the learning they expect of others". Similarly, Reeves (2004) believes that it is important for school leaders to have an extensive knowledge of instructional best practices in order to mentor others.

2.6. A Hybrid Approach

In the above discussion, so far we have established that the leaders in the school need to possess not only the characteristics of a transformational leader; but that they should also possess extensive knowledge of effective instructional, curricular, and assessment practices in order to provide teachers with the required conceptual guidance in order to improve their daily classroom instruction and practice. However, the question is if just having sound knowledge of instruction and qualities of a transformational leader is enough for a school leader to be successful or is there a need for a more hybrid approach for school leaders to exhibit complete efficacy. In order to explore this further, we will go back to the famous work of Goleman (2000) who suggests that the most effective leaders don't just rely on one type of leadership style, rather they "use a collection of distinct leadership styles - each in the right measure, at just the right time". However, he also believes that leaders should possess primary ability of emotional intelligence which consists of four fundamental capabilities:

1. **Self-Awareness:** leader's ability to read and understand his own emotions, strengths and weaknesses, and a positive sense of self-worth.

2. **Self- Management:** leader's ability to manage and control his own emotions while displaying honesty and integrity. Additionally, leader should be able to manage his plethora of responsibilities with flexibility and initiative.

3. **Social Awareness:** Leader's ability to show empathy towards his employees' emotions, his thorough understanding of organizational life, and the ability to meet the needs of employees and customers alike.

4. **Social Skill:** The leader should be able to carry out the organization's vision with a positive influence on his employees while ensuring to develop others in the process. Such an ability demands from the leader a consistent display of strong communication, conflict management, and collaboration skills.

Goleman (2000) identifies six distinct leadership styles for executives to use. Each of these leadership styles make use of the above mentioned four capabilities in different combinations. The best leaders, accordingly switch flexibly between different leadership styles as demanded by the circumstances. According to Goleman, "Leaders who have mastered four or more – especially authoritative, democratic, affiliative, and coaching styles – have the best climate and business performance".

1. **Coercive** – when the leader demands compliance but according to Goleman, executives should only use it in a "turnaround situation or when working with problem-employees". In a situation where the leader runs out of all other options in the face of severe resistance during the process of transformation, this style might come in handy. However, it should be noted that this style of leadership will rob employees of their motivation since it basically demands compliance without rationale.

2. **Authoritative** – when the leader presents a vision and gives employees a choice in how they want to achieve the common goal. According to Goleman, this type of leadership urges the employees to commit to the goals of the organization by "framing the individual tasks within the grand vision … authoritative leaders give people the freedom to innovate, experiment, and take calculated risks".

3. **Affiliative** – this type of leaders put the emotional needs of people first and create an environment where the leader tries to keep his employees happy and invests into the value of building harmonious relationships. This kind of leaders allow employees to feel inspired by their leaders and in turn offer fierce loyalty. Affiliative leaders openly praise effort and hard work; however, Goleman also advises not to use this type of leadership alone because its focus on building relationship and empathy can lead to poor performance on employees' part.

4. **Democratic** – this style of leadership allows employees to have a say in the decision-making process. In this way, the leader builds trust with the employees. Leader drives flexibility and responsibility by allowing the employees to choose the goals and the way they work. This style of leadership is most effective when the leader himself is in need of direction and needs guidance from his capable workforce.

5. **Pacesetting** – A pacesetting leader leads his workforce by setting high standards of performance. This type of leadership demands from the employees to do as the leader does. However, this type of leadership can often leave employees with poor motivation and morale. Because employees are asked to comply with the high demands of performance, they feel overwhelmed and there is very little value placed on individual ideas and innovative thinking. There is no focus on responsibility and flexibility as the employees are used to getting told by the "expert leader" what to do.

6. **Coaching** – Coaching leaders recognize that in order to build employees for the future, they may need to put up with temporary failures and develop long-term learning. Such leaders help their employees in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Coaching leaders provide useful feedback, delegate, and give their employees challenging tasks to accomplish, but are also aware of the fact that all tasks may not get accomplished quickly. This type of leadership has the most impact on building an overall positive climate in the organization.

From the above discussion, we have established that school leaders need a variety of leadership skills depending on the situation. Now, we will look at some challenges posed by school transformation and how can the school leaders enable their teams to cope with the challenges effectively.

2.7. Change Management Process in Schools

"Change" is an imminent process which needs to take place as the societies grow and reform. Most often, when the social and economic goals for improvement change, it automatically influences policies in educational system. Change is always accompanied by uncertainty, complexity, contradictions, and management challenges for school leadership. It is extremely important to have a strong sense of purpose and direction when schools are going through the process of adapting to change. Leaders need to make sense of the reforms and have a clear sense of direction in order to separate facts from fads. The bigger challenge for leaders is to initiate school change that doesn't cause confusion, uncertainty, and distrust. Employees need clear sense of direction and purpose. School teams need to understand what they are doing and exactly why are they doing things differently. If there is no clear sense of purpose, trust among the leaders and the teams starts to fizzle away which can cause chaos and confusion accompanied by distrust. Such an environment is not healthy and can keep school leaders from achieving transformation of the school. In this

section, we will discuss what are some key factors that impact "change process" in schools, and what can school leaders do to skillfully navigate them.

School leaders must be aware of the fact that the process of transforming schools is neither easy nor quick. The process of implementing impactful change in schools is slow, as defined by Sizer (1985), "a good school does not emerge like a pre-packaged frozen dinner stuck for 15 minutes in a radar range; it develops from the slow simmering of carefully blended ingredients". With this in mind, we will explore, what is educational change and how do school leaders implement it successfully in their schools. We will also explore some key factors that impact the process of managing change in the schools and how can school leaders understand how to implement change effectively. For that, we need to understand what is truly meant by educational change.

2.7.1. What is Educational Change?

The terms educational 'change' 'reform' and 'transformation' are often used alternatively. According to Tyack & Cuban (2001) school reforms are, "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems". However; they believe that change doesn't have to mean progress. They believe that teachers should be able to make a judgment on which reforms will really make a difference in their teaching practice and where it is important for them to preserve good practice when challenged.

According to Alvy (2017), reform means "stakeholders partnering to address the academic, social, economic, and health inequities that many students face inside and outside of school". It is important to note that Alvy doesn't think the responsibility to reform schools entirely lies upon the school leadership or teachers in this case. School reform is a process that involves all stakeholders to create either new or improve already existing systems for students' academic, social, economic, mental and physical development. The central focus is on students and all stakeholders are held

responsible. Alvy calls educational reform "a moral enterprise" that requires collaborative effort from all community members inside and outside the school.

Unfortunately, too many reforms are conceived at the political level and are not fully actualized in the classrooms because such reforms may be disengaged from the reality within the individual schools. Often, such changes are not properly funded or come with appropriate professional development for teachers to properly utilize them at classroom level. Sirotnik (1999) calls the process of educational change as "renewal". He points out that the process of renewal is continuous. According to him, "renewal is not about a point in time; it is about all points in time – it is about continuous, critical inquiry into current practices and principled innovation that might improve education".

If we look a little bit closer into this definition of educational change, it is important for teachers and school leaders to make sense of meaningful innovations, changes, and/or reforms and understand what will truly impact the teaching practice in the classroom and what is just another fad.

2.5.2 Enduring Ideas v/s Fads

It is important for educators to distinguish fads from enduring ideas. We often come across innovations and popular ideas in education that gain popularity for the time being and are often based on the idea of bringing "quick fixes" to improve teaching and learning process. The question is, "can learning and teaching be treated with a quick fix/immediate cure?". This kind of come and go kind of trends can be called "fads" according to Alvy (2017). He wants educators to dig deeper into the nature of new trends and not just get emotionally invested into just another popular trend everyone is trying. Interventions must be meaningful when introduced and should be well suited to the needs of the students. Fads are like popular diets that gain popularity all of sudden, peak at

a point, and suddenly die down until there is something new to try. This kind of innovations do not yield long-lasting and significant results.

On the other hand, we have also experienced some critical reforms in education that have not only significantly impacted student learning and teaching strategies in the classroom, but they also are long lasting. One such example, according to Schmoker (2011) is, Madeline Hunter's concept of checking for understanding. This concept is highly associated with Hunter's lesson design concept where she urges teachers to regularly check for students' understanding during the instruction. Teachers have since used the concept of checking for understanding; albeit in modified forms; but essentially, it still remains an important part of lesson design. Teachers may use modified versions of lesson design, but student voice and recognition of deep conceptual understanding on students' part remains an integral part of effective instruction process.

Similarly, according to Fullan (2001), "change process is less about innovation and more about innovativeness. It is less about strategy and more about strategizing". Such is the nature of true educational change. It is often unclear, contradictory, and complicated. There are no clear answers, straight-forward strategies, or ready-made solutions that will suddenly and magically boost student-achievement and impact teaching strategies at the same time. School leadership needs to come up with strategies prescriptively, keeping in mind their specific student population, teaching expertise, the needs of all school community, and challenges within their respective schools. Hence, it is important for school leaders to be innovative and strategic in their approach when deciding between what's just another shiny bright new idea that will fade away and what's really going to impact student-learning and in turn will yield that much-needed achievement boost.

The dilemma here is that management books are full of advice and the amount of reforms the school leaders are required to execute in their schools is overwhelming; so the process of change becomes confusing. In this instance, school leaders need to take a closer look at the needs of their

respective schools and sift through what innovations need to be implemented almost as expertly as a doctor would prescribe according to individual needs of their patients only after conducting a thorough examination. In other words, there is no one reform or a new idea that can be implemented in all schools with the expectation of same consequences. What may be a good innovation or reform for one school may not bear the same results in another school. So the school leaders need to be deeply aware of what is an "enduring idea" that will yield the desired impact in their respective schools with their specific set of challenges. It really depends on what the school leadership is trying to fix and exactly what are the priorities for the school. Different schools can have different priorities and that is what defines what are "enduring ideas" for different schools. It is important to note that Alvy (1996), talks about how teachers behind their classroom doors, make decisions based on student needs and their own personal expertise which is exactly what's needed from school leaders: to pay attention to their respective student needs and teachers' expertise while deciding on reforms. So Alvy (2017) advises, "if we consider what we already know about good schools – and keep these ideas in the forefront of our thinking – we are less likely to accept reforms that may do more harm than good".

2.5.3. So What Should be the Focus of School Reform?

From the above discussion, the question is after all, what should be the focus of school reform. We can't just launch reforms not knowing what is being targeted. School leaders must be able to diagnose problems in order to come up with enduring solutions. This is the key to zoning in on the right problem and coining up effective and long-lasting solutions. Carter (2014) advises school leaders to "get the questions right". He also reminds us to be "careful about developing solutions based on misdiagnosed problems". In order to focus on the right reforms, it is essential to ask right questions. We have established earlier that school leadership's focus should be defined by the

challenges that are faced by school community and the solutions should be focused on improving teaching strategies and learning outcomes.

Both teaching and learning are complex processes. At the same time, teaching and learning are very different in terms of complexity from school to school. You can't guarantee that what's labeled as successful teaching practice can be implemented in all educational settings with the same degree of success. We have already established that too many reforms or new ideas are simply not the answer to all of the problems that need to be cured within a school setting; that the solutions must be prescriptive to the needs of the school and its community; and so should be the reforms or innovations. School change will always focus on the two basic but the most complex processes within the school namely teaching and learning. However, exactly what reforms need to be implemented, entirely depends on "what is the school leader trying to accomplish"? For example, on school's focus may be improving students' reading skills while another school may be working on numeracy while reading may not be the area of focus. So the reforms that will need to be implemented will look very different according to the priorities set by the school leadership. Let's assume that a school's current area of focus is providing effective inclusive education within the classrooms, and so they might need to strengthen teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction that reaches all learners. In this situation, it is required of school leaders to look for reforms that will cater to this area of need. They also need to look at how to do things differently or may also need to ask some critical questions such as, "why is inclusive education not successful at our school?"; "what are other school doing differently that is supporting their initiatives of inclusive education in the classrooms?"; "what are some of the practices that can be adopted by our school and will these practices really work with our student population?"; "are our teachers ready to adopt such practices in terms of their level of expertise or will they need more upskilling and prescriptive development before they are able to take on such a task?" This is what Carter

(2014) called asking the right and critical questions before coming up with a solution. The context and challenges of the school are extremely important when deciding on what reforms are needed. From the above discussion, we can conclude that school leaders can focus on three basic principles when deciding on effective reforms.

- Will this reform create opportunities for and eventually benefit students in my school?

- Is this reform innovative and simultaneously capable of yielding enduring outcomes?

- Is this reform well-thought out?

- Do we have room for improving the process of implementation with honest feedback from the teachers?

2.6.   Importance of Collaborative Learning Communities and Distributed Leadership

Educational change cannot be effectively implemented without appropriate dissemination of knowledge within the school community. According to Kershner & Mcquillan (2016), it is important to recognize the importance of these three important factors when thinking about school change:

- Generating a common school culture whereby learning communities are committed to success for all students

- Cultivating leadership in others

- Instructional leadership focused on improving teaching practice in the school

Similarly, The Wallace Foundation (2011), while recognizing principals as the central leaders of the schools, still emphasized on the need for collaborative learning communities in the schools as well as cultivating leadership in other people. According to their report, "principals play a major role in developing a professional community of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction". As already emphasized above, teaching and learning are complex processes and as

such cannot be improved with the efforts carried out by a central leader alone. It is important for school leadership to invest in building "collaborative learning communities" and provide more opportunities for "distributed leadership" for effective dissemination of knowledge school-wide.

2.7.1. Developing A Collaborative Learning Culture

One thing that most educational researchers I studied while working on my research, agree on is the fact that building a collaborative learning culture in the school is at the core of student achievement. For example, The Wallace Foundation (2011) emphasizes on the fact that effective principals know the value of preparing both adults and children in "putting learning at the center of daily activities". Marzano, Walters & McNulty (2005) call this process "intellectual stimulation" whereby school leaders ensure that their staff are abreast of most effective curriculum and teaching practices. They argue that such school leadership makes sure that discussions about effective pedagogical and curriculum theories are an integral part of school's culture.

However just learning about effective pedagogy is not enough; it is also important that school community engages in the dissemination and sharing of the newly-acquired knowledge in healthy and meaningful ways. Supovitz (2002) thinks that this characteristic is a distinctive feature of an effective school leadership that engages their faculty in meaningful discussions on research, theory and practice. Fullan (2001) calls this process "knowledge building, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and knowledge management". He believes that knowledge "only becomes valuable in a social context – and leading in a culture of change does not mean placing changed individuals into unchanged environments". In order for effective change to happen, school leaders must create situations that are conducive to the practice and sharing of the new learning. According to Fullan, however, sharing of knowledge is codependent on fostering good relationships in any organization. Marzano, Walters & McNulty (2005) also consider good relationships to be one of the 21 responsibilities of a school leader.

In such a collaborative culture of learning, teaching faculty learns to trust the expertise of their fellow teachers because essentially, it is not only coming from the top management. When the teachers are able to see that many of their colleagues are working on the same core beliefs, strategies, researches, and pedagogical approaches as the school leadership, it fosters a sense of trust and collaboration which is essential for knowledge building and sharing. Leana (2011) is of the view that teachers often go to other teachers to seek advice or get information. They rarely consult experts in the field or go to their school leaders for consultation. She describes such interactions among faculty in a school "social capital" and greatly advises school leaders to take advantage of that. In her words, "when the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction – that is, when social capital is strong – student achievement scores improve". Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Kershner & McQuillan (2016) refer to the same concept using the term "relational trust". Bryk and Schneider are of the view that where such high levels of trust are found among teachers, it should be easier to initiate and follow-through with school-wide improvement efforts. Such a school culture is important to engage teachers in discussion about curriculum, modifying lessons, data-analysis, and in general improving their practice.

Alvy (2017), in his book, narrates examples of Singapore, Finland, and Canada where school teachers feel trusted and hence show high levels of commitment to their professions compared to teachers in the U.S. where teachers quit their profession within the first five years of their service. He argues that one big reason for this is less collaboration among teachers which ultimately builds distrust among teachers. Where teachers are given the opportunities to collaborate and share their practice with each other, student achievement becomes imminent owing to the levels of teacher engagement in the process of school-wide improvement.

2.7.2. Distributed Leadership Opportunities

Just as much as developing a collaborative learning culture for school-wide improvement, it is equally important to note that successful leaders alone cannot do it all. Additionally, successful leaders know that once they are able to foster effective relationships among their staff members, there is an opportunity to entrust people with leadership responsibilities. Principals have over-inundated number of responsibilities, and it is impossible for principals to meet every expectation while working alone. Effective principals know that they need a trusted team of confidants and leaders who can support them in their efforts to move the instructional process in their schools in the desired direction. Kathleen Martin (2004) believes that distributing leadership is only logical because, "… network of relationships creates new capacities that work to enhance individual freedom while simultaneously expanding organizational responsibilities". Hence, in order to fulfill the purpose of the group or organization, and to ensure sustainability of newly created systems, it is important for leaders to recognize and endorse leadership potential in others.

According to The Wallace Foundation (2011), distributing leadership responsibilities in staff creates a greater degree of teacher motivation and organizational commitment. When both of these factors see a positive surge, their direct impact can be seen within the classroom instruction which indirectly impacts the improvement in student scores. Additionally, distributive leadership opportunities lead to better and collective decision-making in schools which leads to more ownership owing to a collaborative decision-making process because stake-holders feel confident about the outcomes. In other words, effective leaders encourage collaboration, collective decision-making, cultivating leadership in others, developing professional communities focused on improving instruction, developing strong relational trust among colleagues, and empowering people with proper tools and resources to actualize their leadership potential.

De Pree (1989) calls this characteristic of effective leadership as "participative management". According to him, "Everyone has the right and the duty to influence decision-making and to understand the results. Participative management guarantees that decisions will not be arbitrary, secret, or closed to questioning".

2.8. Challenges in the Implementation of Change

Perhaps the most daunting task is to ensure that not only change is implemented in an organization but also that through this implementation, desired outcomes are achieved. Change is a multidimensional process and it cannot be seen as a fluid process. This becomes even more complex when change involves transformation of teaching and learning: two most complex acts in the daily life of an educational organization. Leaders must be able to anticipate implementation challenges that they will face in the implementation process. It is important for school leaders to distinguish between the type of change that will cause disequilibrium and the kind that will go smoothly without causing much disruption. Essentially, leaders might find disruptions where the process of transformation requires people to change their beliefs or equip themselves with new skills in order to be compatible with the process of change.

Fullan (2001) refers to the challenges in implementation process as "implementation dip" and is of the view that almost all successful organizations are bound to face such a dip at some point in time during the process of implementation of change. According to him, transformation calls for people to change their beliefs, their ways of doing things, their confidence levels, and eventually a change in their performance levels even if the team is fully on board with the change process. Change is meant to disrupt the status-quo which needs to be managed and supported skillfully by the leaders.

In this process, employees are asked to equip themselves with new skills and leave behind what they know. This can be a stressful process for most. It is difficult when you are asked to do

something new and you need new skills to achieve the new tasks, and you are sill in the process of acquiring those or do not yet feel confident in yourself. This kind of experience can push your limits and cause frustration in the process. Effective leaders recognize this and are sensitive to the challenges that are accompanied by change. According to Fullan (2001), "They (effective leaders) don't panic when things don't go smoothly during the first year of undertaking a major innovation or new direction". Effective leaders understand the anxiety attached to undertaking new tasks. At the same time, they are also aware that some may not see eye to eye with them as they are trying to transform the school's existing culture. They are well aware of resistance that is also another factor in the successful implementation of change.

Resistance to change is ultimately a result of two factors:

1.   Feeling not prepared or quite up to the challenges

2.   Fear or anxiety associated to the process of change itself.

The question is how a leader should navigate these factors. Earlier, we looked at the factor of being sensitive to the process of change. Fullan (2001) suggests that an effective leader should be equipped with different leadership styles to engage people in the desired outcomes. He must be authoritative when needed and supportive at the same time. Sometimes, a leader may be required to act as coach, and at other times as an affiliate who is capable of creating harmony and balance. He also argues that successful organizational leaders know how to look at dissent as a healthy thing in the process of growth and improvement. The biggest factor in all of this is not to view disequilibrium as something negative but to make the best out of such turbulence by reminding their teams of the common moral purpose behind the transformation. This way, employees learn to respect the process of change and welcome the new learning that comes along. An effective leader also invests into strong relationships among their teams in order to stay true to the process

of implementation. Relational trust among teams plays an important role in the process of transformation of schools.

Additionally, for change to be successful, it must be stabilized at the bottom while amply supported at the top. School leaders need to invest in the stability of change implementation by ensuring that their teachers feel secure in carrying it out. Leana (2011) argues, "… in trying to improve public schools, we are overselling the role of human capital and innovation from the top, while greatly undervaluing the benefits of social capital and stability at the bottom". Here, if we dig a little deeper, the case for both distributed leadership opportunities and collaborative culture comes into focus once again. Successful implementation of change is impossible if it is not supported with distributed leadership or actualized in collaborative learning communities.

In addition to building successful relational trust and learning communities, it is also important that leadership in schools also pay attention to the complexities of the process of change. It is important to upskill people in order for them to feel comfortable with the change process. A rigorous focus on professional development programs is just as essential in the implementation process because teachers will likely need to make sense of new skills required of them. Moreover, provision of appropriate resources to actualize the demands of change is another factor that needs support from the top. While the teachers work collaboratively to ensure that school's new goals are achieved, they can't do that unless they are provided with appropriate materials and resources to make it all happen. For example, school leadership leading a specific school through digital transformation will not only need to develop their teachers' skills and comfort level to carry out digital instruction, but also ensure to provide digital resources required for successfully changing the instruction in the classrooms.

Alvy (2017) reminds leaders of the importance of patience and time during the process of change. Teachers need time to practice newly acquired skills or knowledge and leaders need to be patient

with this process. As discussed earlier, change is not a quick-fix to an existing issue. It is, in fact, a long and to some degree, quite a frustrating process, so time and patience are key when navigating through this process. Essentially, effective change has taken place when it shows in the improved classroom practice of learning and teaching. Learning and teaching cannot be cured with quick fixes. They require time and practice to evolve over time and effective leaders are well aware of this factor. As we discuss the complexities of the process of implementation, it is important to also note that trusting teachers who are essentially the carriers of change, is a major factor in the successful implementation of change. According to Fullan (2011), "All of the successful school systems have come to trust and respect teachers". Fullan stresses that leaders must trust teachers in order for teachers to trust them. You can't ask to be trusted if you don't reciprocate the same feelings. He identifies "the focus on accountability" as the wrong driver for change and instead calls for a "focus on capacity building". He identified four right drivers for change and four wrong drivers for change which sums up our above discussion.

Fullan's Four Right Drivers for Change	Fullan's Four Wrong Drivers for Change
A Focus on Capacity Building: supported by continuous rigorous professional development for teachers to improve instruction	**A Focus on Accountability:** A system of punishment or rewards based on students' performance
Group Work Building collaborative learning communities and effective use of social capital by combining skills and learning together – team invested in the student growth together.	**Individual Teacher Success** Leadership is more invested in the individual efforts of teachers than emphasizing on the benefits of the social capital and pooling of skills.

A Focus on Instruction	A Focus on Technology
Pedagogy and instruction remain at the core of all improvement efforts and in turn, the core of all decisions taken toward school transformation	Where technology becomes the center of all transformation efforts and is at the core of decision making process.
Interconnected Systematic Action	**Fragmented Action**
School systems are interconnected and leaders recognize that all systems and new initiatives must work together for the improvement of a common goal – better instruction.	Where tons of new initiatives are being taken; however, there is no binding force or coherence in the initiatives.

Table 1: Fullan's Four Drivers of Change (Adapted from Fullan 2011)

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on two major themes, what skills does a strong transformational leader must possess to bring about change in an educational organization; and what does transformation look like in an educational organization. A wide variety of literature on both transformational leadership and educational change suggests that school leaders must have a wide variety of skills and abilities in their arsenal of expertise to use as the situation demands. Educational change is complex and slow because the main purpose of such change is to transform classroom teaching and learning processes. Such transformation cannot be accomplished overnight. School leaders must be focused and skilled at what they are trying to accomplish; but at the same time, an effective school transformation demands leaders to be patient with the slow but steady progress which is inherent to the nature of this process.

One thing is certain from the above discussion that the leaders cannot bring about a complete change in their educational organizations single-handedly and without developing their employees. This is why most of the literature cited above suggests the importance of building learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities. Educational leaders can create a

mutual vision for the organization; but in truth, they cannot accomplish everything on their own unless teachers have bought into their vision and are ready to move in the same direction as their leader envisions. In the following chapter, we will look at the research design and methodology that was adopted to carry out the case-study for this project.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

4.3. Introduction

This chapter defines the methodology adopted by the researcher with a comprehensive explanation of the research process undertaken to support the data-analysis in the next chapter. The focus of this chapter is to explain the rationale behind the selection of the subject, site of research, and the research tools.

While selecting the topic of research, a great deal of thought and discussion with peers and the dissertation coordinator suggested the fact that in order to properly achieve the intended objectives of this study, a mixed-methods approach should be adopted which is why, the research project will be called a case-study.

3.1.1. A Case-study

According to Gerring (2007), "a case connotes a unit observed at a single point in time or over some period of time. It may be a political unit (e.g. empire, nation-state, region, municipality), organization (e.g. firm, non-governmental organization, political party, school), social group (as defined e.g. by ethnicity, race, age, class, gender, or sexuality), event (e.g. foreign policy crisis, revolution, democratic transition, decision point), or individual (e.g. a biography, case history)…
A case study is an intensive, observational study of a single case or a small number of cases which also promises to shed light on a larger population of cases." Similarly, Creswell (2009) terms case study as "a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals".

Accordingly, the study undertaken by the researcher aimed to identify the uniqueness of the topic of research within the particular context of a school, thus allowing for a deep investigation of the research questions within a topic-appropriate and culturally-relevant context. This method of

investigation allowed me to observe closely the relationship between the research questions and their real-life application in a school based in the UAE going through the complicated process of transformation. It also allowed me to collect and analyze relevant data from both leadership and teachers' perspective. It also enabled me to employ different research instruments such as observations, survey, and interview to arrive at an in-depth conclusion about the research questions.

3.1.2. Research Design – A Mixed-methods Approach

As discussed above, appropriate to the nature of the study, the research design adopted is a mixed-methods approach. In order to understand the challenges faced by school leaders in the complex change process, in-depth structured observation process was employed to arrive at certain conclusions that also helped me in formulating the questions for interview with the school superintendent, and survey questions for the school teachers. Cresswell (2009) explains that a mixed-method approach, "involves the use of both methods in tandem so that the overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research".

According to Marlow (2010), "the quantitative researcher uses a deductive approach to build knowledge. Deductive reasoning involves conclusion from the general to the particular". The quantitative research aspect in this study was used to gather information from a number of teachers using the survey questionnaire as the research instrument. The data collected from the survey was particularly analyzed to understand the role of school leadership in decision-making during the change process, in the overall improvement of instructional process, and in the improvement of pedagogical practice of the teachers as relevant to the research questions.

The qualitative process, according to Patton (1980) provides "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interaction, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts". The qualitative aspect of this research was employed

during the interview with the school superintendent to understand the role that school leadership plays in the management of the change process, the challenges faced by the school leadership, the process that was used by the school superintendent to face these challenges, the provision of opportunities for distributive leadership and knowledge dissemination while ensuring that the impact of all innovative efforts is directly seen with in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Additionally, working as school's director of curriculum and academic standards allowed me to be a part of school's innovation committee which particularly enabled me to observe the impact of innovations employed in the school on the overall instruction process and the relationship of these innovations with the students' achievement overtime. Additionally, in line with my job-relevant duties, I was also able to observe the direct impact of change-process on classroom instruction and pedagogical practice of the teachers.

3.1.3. Rationale for the Selection of Research Site

The school chosen for this research project is a private school, located in Dubai, UAE. I work at the school as the director of curriculum and academic standards, a senior leadership position. Senior leadership team at the school is called PLT (pedagogical leadership team) and includes 8 positions in total. School superintendent heads the pedagogical leadership team. Other positions on the PLT include deputy superintendent, director of assessments, director of teaching and learning, director of curriculum and academic standards, middle and high school principal, elementary principal, and primary principal. PLT is responsible for academic and non-academic decisions.

AKNS (Al Khaleej National School) is an American school licensed by KHDA to teach American curriculum from K-12. School is currently rated "good" by KHDA and holds NEASC/CIE accreditation for American curriculum.

Main reason why I chose AKNS as my research site is because not only the scope of research falls in line with my job-relevant duties, but it also allows me a greater access to a wealth of information which I will not be able to avail, had I chosen a different site for my study. In order to study the management of change process thoroughly, I needed to choose a site which would allow me to experience change process in practice with an opportunity to evaluate it through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Additionally, AKNS is located in Dubai and falls under the jurisdiction of KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority) which is a pioneer in the country in bringing about educational reforms. KHDA is invested in a progressive and student-focused education system for all students in the UAE. Consequently, the development of a thorough inspection system which holds schools responsible for student achievement is one of the examples of KHDA's expectations of formal schooling system.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the school was rated "acceptable" for 9 years before finally being recognized as "good" in academic year 2017-2018. As a part of school's senior leadership team, I had the privilege to observe the process of school transformation including small wins and big achievements. Moreover, since the experience of school transformation is more of a personal experience, I am able to narrate it with confidence and depth of information.

3.1.4. Research Participants

This research would not have been possible without the participants who willingly helped my study to be objective and relevant. For the qualitative side of research, I used my own observations and the interview conducted with the school superintendent to draw conclusions about the leadership's role in the change-management process in line with the questions set forth for the research. For the quantitative research, I surveyed teachers in the school to draw conclusions about the role of leadership in improving instruction and pedagogical skills of the teachers. For the quantitative

analysis, the method of random sampling was employed in order to arrive at objective and comprehensive conclusions against the survey questions.

According to Oppong (2013) sampling is "a process of selecting subjects to take part in a research investigation on the ground they provide information considered relevant to the research problem", whereas Marlow (2010) is of the view that "the quantitative approach requires studying large numbers of subjects, because a central concern is that one should be able to generalize the results of the research to as large a group as possible". Accordingly, for the survey, I sampled as many opinions of teachers as possible in order to ensure the objectivity and reliability of the research instrument was maintained. See reference table for the number of research participants.

Research Instrument	Number of Male Participants	Number of Female Participants
Observations	-	1 (Researcher)
Interview Questions	-	1 (School Superintendent)
Survey Questionnaire for Teachers	14 (24.1%)	44 (75.9%)

Table 2: Number of Research Participants

4.4. Rationale for Selecting the Research Instruments

The main focus of my research as evident in the research questions listed above is to find out the what is transformational leadership in the context of a school based in the UAE. In order to find out exactly what transformational leadership looks like in practice, the researcher started with studying the history of the school and came up with a pattern of observations against the parameters discussed in the literature review above. To add significance to the study, an interview was conducted with the superintendent of the school in order to back-up or negate the conclusions formulated during observations. To further understand the challenges faced by school leadership,

I used a combination of personal observations as a school leader and the interview with the school superintendent. The interview gave me a deep insight into the thought-process employed by the school principal in combating the challenges that she faced in the process of school transformation. The interview also helped me in understanding the role of distributed leadership in the school-wide improvement and I was able to understand why it is necessary to invest in building leadership potential in order for the transformation process to be successful.

To understand the role of collaborative learning communities and impact of innovations on the teaching and learning process, I again used a combination of personal observations and the conclusions drawn by the survey conducted with the teachers in school. As a leader for school-wide professional development, I was able to study the impact of learning communities in the school and then subsequently validate or negate my observations with the results of the survey. According to Sheppard (2004), "the function of the questionnaire is measurement. We seek to measure, on an individual level, what it is that the individual wants, what their views are, or some facets of their situation". I created a survey questionnaire using a 5-point likert-scale whereby participants were asked to share their opinions using strongly agree, partially agree, neutral, partially disagree, and strongly disagree.

As emphasized by Wegner(1993), special attention was paid to designing the questions, the order of the questions, their wording, and intentional focus was laid on designing certain repeatedly asked questions in both the survey questionnaire and the interview. Interview was designed with a total of 15 questions and the teachers' survey consisted of 10 questions. However, during the interview, the discussion flow was natural and the discussion diverted to some aspects that may not have been directly related to the outcomes intended from the research; however, these diversions only helped me in understanding the process better. That is why, I would prefer to call this instrument a semi-structured interview as explained by Glense (2006), "questions may emerge

in the course of interviewing and may add to or replace the pre-established ones; this process of question formation is the more likely and the more ideal one in qualitative inquiry". Both the survey questionnaire and the interview questions were vetted by the deputy-superintendent of the school and my dissertation coordinator for quality assurance and in order to validate the suitability of both research instruments in order to elicit the intended data.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

As a part of ethical considerations for the research, the study was approved by the school authorities. A consent form was signed by the deputy-superintendent of the school to authorize me in carrying out the survey. She also vetted the survey and interview questions to ensure the reliability of the data used for the study. Additionally, both survey and interview questions were reviewed by the dissertation supervisor in order to authenticate their suitability for the purpose of data-collection for this study. Prior to conducting the survey, participants were informed in writing that their anonymity will be maintained completely. In order to do that, participants were asked to only share their gender as personal information because I wanted to ensure that there is some balanced participation on the survey from both male and female teachers. Survey participation was completely voluntary. Similarly, the anonymity of the school superintendent will also be maintained in the discussion of the interview questions in chapter 4.

4.6. Research Limitations and Scope for Further Research

This study is conducted in a private school in Dubai and does not include the impact of similar practices in other schools in UAE. Hence the study is not broad enough for a wider context to be established about the transformational process employed by the school principals in the UAE schools. The results of this study are relevant to the school where the research was conducted, so it is limited in many ways. The results of this study cannot be applied to other schools or similar contexts since the researcher looked at the practices of one school superintendent in bringing about

change within the context of her particular school. Similar practices can be different in different schools and may vary in the context of the school. In other words, the priorities for school improvement may greatly differ from school to school and school principals might take very different steps to address the same according to their own unique set of skills and experience. Additionally, while the focus of my study was to see the impact of transformational leadership on improving teaching and learning process within a school by employing effective innovations, creating a culture of collaborative learning in the school, and providing opportunities of distributed leadership to the staff members, there are many other aspects of school improvement that were not discussed or included in the study. School transformation can also be discussed in terms of the effective management of staff motivation. Similarly, other areas of school change may include the inclusion of students in the academic process, parental engagement for effective school improvement, and managerial change which doesn't necessarily include the instructional process in the school. All of these areas of school improvement have ample scope for further research and can yield very different results form this study or add to the conclusions drawn in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the research methods adopted by the researcher and the rationale behind designing the research instruments. It also included rationale behind the selection of site and the ethical considerations for the study conducted. Study limitations and scope for further research are also discussed in this chapter. The following chapter will discuss in detail the results of data-analysis and formulate conclusions about the research questions.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Results of Data-Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected using the research instruments discussed in chapter three. The data from both the interview conducted with the school superintendent, personal observations, and the survey questionnaire will be discussed at length in order to arrive at certain conclusions in keeping with the research questions. The findings of the data-analysis will be organized in the following sequence: the findings from my personal observations will be discussed first in order to connect to the research questions. The responses from the interview questions with the school superintendent will be discussed and interpreted in keeping with the research themes followed by a thorough statistical analysis of the survey questionnaire for the teachers.

Chapter two focused on the relevant literature to answer research questions from a theoretical perspective and research instruments were designed following the same questions. If we delve deeper into research questions, following themes can be generated.

2. Using an array of appropriate leadership skills including transformational and instructional leadership in the process of school transformation

3. Challenges faced by leaders in school-transformation and how they choose to combat these challenges

4. Role of collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in school transformation

5. Managing the use of meaningful innovations in the process of school transformation

The aim of the study is to investigate how leaders can successfully lead their schools through a transformation process without losing focus of the desired outcomes. I will use qualitative analysis to analyze the results of personal observations and the interview questions while a more precise

quantitative analysis of the survey questionnaire will be used to analyze the impact of the strategies used by school leaders in the improvement of teaching and learning in the classrooms.

4.3. Data-Analysis Process

The following process was followed while analyzing data. Questions were reviewed and the data-findings were inserted into SPSS. Once the results were collated using SPSS, they were used to create charts that will be used in the discussion of this chapter to analyze the results. Survey questions were organized according to the themes of study to arrive at precise results. Survey questions 1, 3, 5, and 8 directly corresponded to research question number 1 which will analyze the efforts employed by school leadership in school transformation and the impact of such efforts on the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Survey questions 2, 7, and 10 correspond to research question number 3 and will support the analysis for the role of collaborative learning communities in school-transformation. Similarly, survey questions 4, 6, and 9 correspond to research question number 4 and will help in understanding the role of innovations that transform classroom practice of learning and pedagogy.

To answer research question number 2, interview questions and personal observations will be used to arrive at a concise conclusion for the challenges faced by the school leaders and the strategies they can use to navigate these challenges. A more qualitative analysis of research questions was also done using the responses from the interview questions. Interview questions were also studied in relation to the research questions, similar to the survey questions to arrive at more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Interview questions 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 correspond to research question 1 and will help support the analysis of transformational leadership and other leadership styles in the school improvement process from a school leader's perspective. Interview questions 3, 4, and 11 correspond to research question 2 and will analyze a school leader's understanding of challenges faced in the school transformation process and will also

analyze some strategies used by the school superintendent in navigating these challenges. Interview questions 5, 6, 12, and 13 correspond to research question 3 and support the analysis of the role that collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities play in the process of school transformation. Interview questions 10, 14, and 15 correspond to research question 4 and analyze the impact of innovations introduced by the school leader in the transformation of the school in focus.

4.4. Analyzing Interview

As discussed earlier, interview questions correspond to the research questions set out for this study, hence I will analyze the answers to the questions under each relevant theme.

Theme 1: Using an array of appropriate leadership types including transformational leadership in the process of school transformation

While answering questions about using transformational leadership and other types of leadership, the interviewee made many references to the transformation of schools being pushed as a bigger agenda against UAE inspection framework for schools. The framework impacts the decisions of school leadership in many ways and shapes the vision of school leaders in terms of what needs to be prioritized for school improvement. School inspection framework has led the school leaders to focus on student achievement data with a renewed interest, hence all efforts for school transformation gear towards one common goal: improved student attainment and progress.

The interviewee focused on the fact that in order to achieve improved student attainment and progress, what must change is the teaching practice of the teaching staff and learning skills of the students. The interviewee made some references to the relevant sections of the schools-inspection framework that provide clear benchmarks for the school leaders to attain this goal. While there are clear goals and benchmarks for the school leaders to follow, how changes will be carried out in the school requires the school leaders to be extremely careful. "School leaders," according to the

interviewee, "require a set of leadership skills, not just transformational leadership. If your goal is to motivate your teaching staff to work on a particular skill, you would be using coercing, coaching, and such. However, if your goal is to challenge the resistance you face in the process, you would be using a completely different approach". The interviewee alluded to the fact that every decision you make as a school leader has an impact, and for your decisions to bear the right result, you need to approach every situation with a different set of skills and look at every situation with a different lens. Each situation demands a different strategy, so you really can't use the same strategy every time.

Additionally, interviewee focused on the school transformation process in the UAE as an ever-changing and evolutionary process. Every academic year is bringing new challenges and new legislative changes are being implemented at the government level which impact all schools. School leaders are left to comply with these changes and make the best of every situation within the context of their schools. One such change, for example, is the current legislative reform for teachers' licensing which is left to the school leaders to disseminate to the teachers. It is a sensitive issue and will require school principals to be very patient and empathetic toward their teaching staff who are feeling quite anxious with the process. At the same time, school leaders have to plan strategically, knowing that this reform might have negative implications on hiring and staffing processes within the school. UAE educational scene is challenging since it is evolving and shifting with the demands of economic growth, hence the challenges are reflected within an individual school setting. This requires school leaders to be extra-careful in how they choose to handle different circumstances.

When asked if the interviewee preferred a certain style of leadership, she referred to Goleman's theory for leadership which encourages leaders to practice different leadership skills in different situations. When asked about her areas of focus in school transformation, she mentioned teaching

and learning to be the main focus of improvement which eventually leads to improved student achievement.

Theme 2: Challenges faced by leaders in school-transformation and how they choose to combat these challenges

When answering questions about the challenges that the interviewee faced to bring about a complete school transformation, she emphasized on "upskilling the teachers" in terms of their pedagogy and "finding appropriate ways to meet the needs of her teachers' individualized professional development needs". She referred to the fact that it might make sense to the leaders when changes are being made but disseminating the same changes to the teaching faculty is a challenging job in itself. They may not be able to understand the rationale behind such changes or may not be equipped professionally to deal with the "new things" that are required of them.

When asked what was her strategy in dealing with this particular challenge, the interviewee referred to rigorous and extremely carefully thought-out professional development that catered to many issues at one time. She related some examples in terms of effective lesson planning, effective provision of feedback to the students, effective management of technology during instruction. Interviewee referred to the fact that in order for teaching and learning to improve in her school, she focused on building a school-wide culture of meaningful instruction and effective pedagogy. All improvement efforts are focused on delivering effective lessons. It took her three long years to get her teachers in a space where all had a common understanding of what a good lesson must include, but that was only made possible by keeping the focus on the one common goal: delivering effective lessons where students' interaction is at the core.

When asked about whether school's long-standing culture proved to be a challenge in her efforts to bring about change, the interviewee referred to the fact that culture always plays a role in the life of a school where things are shifting and changing rapidly; but well-thought out and timely

moves can save you a lot of headache. According to the interviewee, "if you stick to your guns and state your purpose clearly with a broad and appealing vision, people usually come around. It might take them longer to trust your vision, but once they see the positive results, even those who resist, will find a way to agree with the leader". She also referred to the fact that there will always be some who wouldn't want to change with changing times, and those are the situations that a leader must tackle carefully in order to maintain the trust with the overall school community.

"A good leader", according to the interviewee, "always pays attention to the staff motivation and often this motivation, in most private schools, is linked to the monetary or financial benefits. If the teaching staff is satisfied with the outcome of their efforts, they will find a way to agree with the changes being implemented and align themselves with the bigger vision". That was a special area of focus for the interviewee. She reviewed the pay-scales of her employees and structured it in a systematic manner which allowed for more productivity and commitment from her teaching staff.

Theme 3: Role of collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in school transformation

Interview questions 5, 6, 12, and 13 were posed to understand the role played by collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in the process of school transformation. The questions posed to the interviewee specifically spoke to collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities at the school. When answering questions about collaborative learning communities at the school, it was clarified by the interviewee that while the school has developed a rigorous and multi-faceted professional development system, there is still a need for the development of PLCs (professional learning communities). School supports its teaching staff in gaining appropriate teaching qualification which in turn impacts their pedagogical skills as well as their school commitment to promoting professional growth. Teachers are also provided with regular in-house professional development which keeps them in tune with

the new pedagogical approaches and aligned with the aspirations and vision of school leadership. The interviewee emphasized on the need for rigorous but focused professional development in the UAE schools.

According to the interviewee, the school has put in place multiple procedures such as peer-observations, peer lesson and unit planning, peer feedback and review of lessons that helps teachers learn from each other. This also helps in dissemination of new knowledge especially in cases where teachers are supported by the school to gain their professional qualifications, they are required to carry out trainings and development sessions in the school to support their peers in the process. From my personal observations, having PLCs in the school will further enhance engagement of teachers in collaborative learning opportunities. The interviewee attributes the success that the school has seen in the recent years to the rigorous and meaningful professional development opportunities followed by strategic and instructional leadership. She alluded to the fact that she has, during her observations, over the course of 3 years, seen better pedagogy in the classrooms because of school's focus on the provision of collaborative learning opportunities.

When answering questions about distributed leadership opportunities, the interviewee emphasized that being a school leader also means ensuring that appropriate procedures for leadership growth are in place. School leader alone cannot achieve the objectives unless a team of expert leaders are there to support school improvement efforts. Interviewee has a team of leaders who are invested in the growth of pedagogy in the school. Although her team of leaders lead in their own fields, yet work quite collaboratively on important aspects of school life such as assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning, phase pastoral management, and professional development. Interviewee has also invested in the growth of middle-leaders such as subject-leaders and ensures that all of her team members including her teachers know what is at stake. The interviewee emphasized on the

need for good succession planning in the school which is also a reason why she wants to develop people in her organization.

Theme 4: Managing the use of meaningful innovations in the process of school transformation

When answering questions about the effective management of innovations in her school, the interviewee focused on the rationale behind innovative pedagogy. According to her, it is important for educators to step outside of the traditional way of just delivering information to the students. She believes that any innovative endeavor that is not in line with the goal of improving instruction at its core will only be a one-off effort. During the course of the interview, the interviewee referred to the importance of understanding the impact of change on classroom instruction and learning process. She emphasized that many times, school leaders get carried away with the over-powering notion of technology or digital-take over in their schools, but the reality is that if it doesn't impact student-achievement, it's just not relevant. She thoroughly reviews the innovations in her school that will impact the teaching and learning process. At the same time, she believes in the importance of "in with the new", but believes that innovative ideas should improve the existing systems and procedures, not completely replace them. She is of the view that there is a lot of good, many countries have seen with the technology take-over in schools, but the change needs to be accompanied by compassion. The interviewee reflected that in UAE's context the consideration of digital transformation and other innovations has to be thought out after taking into consideration the population, the school community is serving. The interview suggested that these cultural considerations with parental education helps the schools advance steadily and the changes are not too sudden.

When answering questions about some innovative examples in her school, she referred to the use of data to inform instruction and pedagogical leadership. She believes that all new things, when

introduced in a school, must impact the teaching and learning process. If that is not the case, it's a useless effort because "if the instruction doesn't improve, student achievement will stay the same".

4.5. Analyzing Surveys

Although the qualitative analysis above gives us a good understanding of the school transformation process that took place in the school under study; however, it doesn't quite yield tangible results of statistical analysis. Below we will discuss the survey results conducted with the teachers which will help us understand the point of view of the teachers in the school about how school transformation process impacted them. A total of 58 teachers participated in the survey. 44 Female (75.9%) and 14 male (24.1%) participants voluntarily in the survey.

Theme 1: Using an array of appropriate leadership types including transformational leadership in the process of school transformation

Questions 1, 3, 5, and 8 correspond to research question number 1. These questions were related to school leadership's efforts in creating a vision for school improvement and having teachers on board with this vision. The questions related to theme 1 also asked teachers to assess whether or not they feel supported by the school leadership in the process of school improvement.

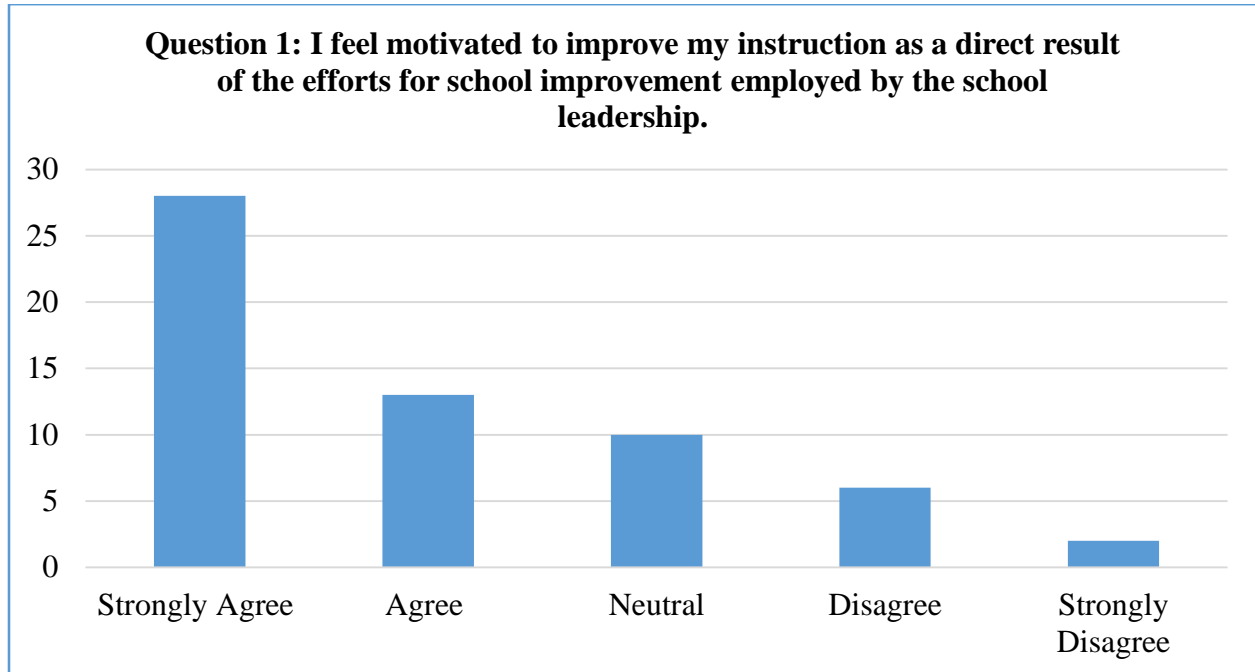| **Question 1: I feel motivated to improve my instruction as a direct result of the efforts for school improvement employed by the school leadership.**	Strongly Agree	28 (47.5%)
	Agree	13 (22%)
	Neutral	10 (16.9%)
	Disagree	6 (10.2%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (3.4%)

Figure 1

The results for survey question 1 indicate that 41 participants (69.5%) agree or strongly agree that school leadership's efforts to improve school have motivated the teachers to improve their instruction. 16. 9% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 13.6% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

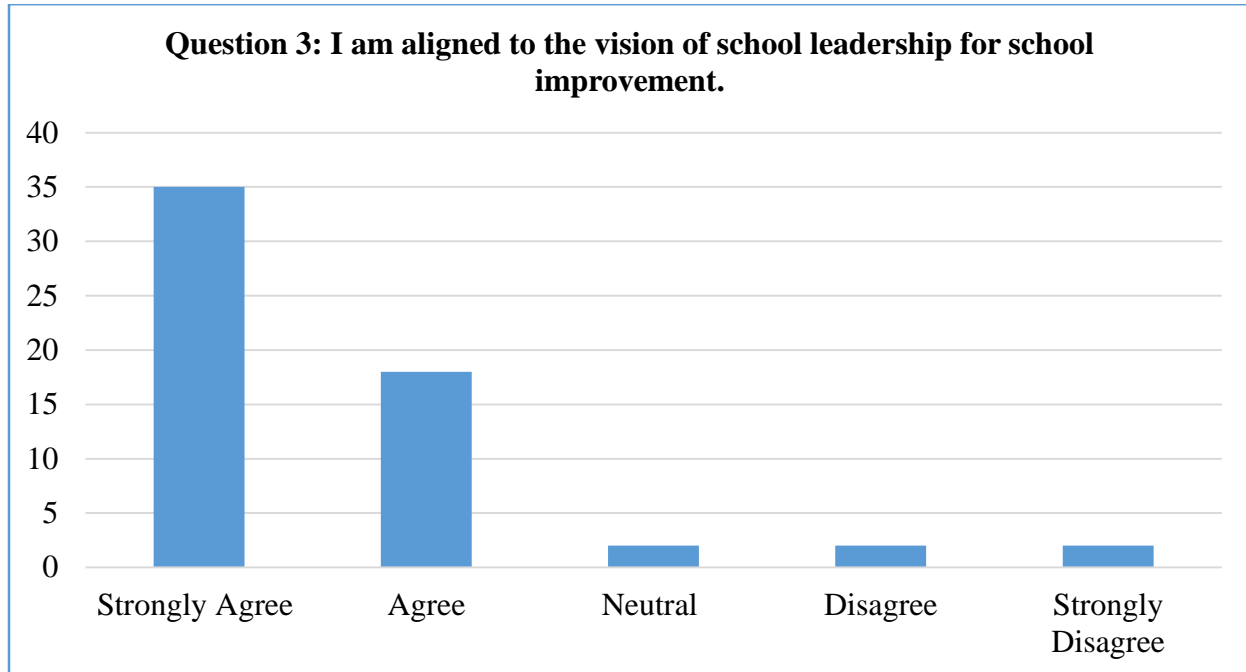| Question 3: I am aligned to the vision of school leadership for school improvement.	Strongly Agree	35 (59.3%)
	Agree	18 (30.5%)
	Neutral	2 (3.4%)
	Disagree	2 (3.4%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (3.4%)

Figure 2

The results for survey question 3 indicate that 53 participants (89.8%) agree or strongly agree that they are aligned to the vision of school improvement or that school leadership is able to create a buy-in from the school teachers in terms of their vision for school improvement. 3.4% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 6.8% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

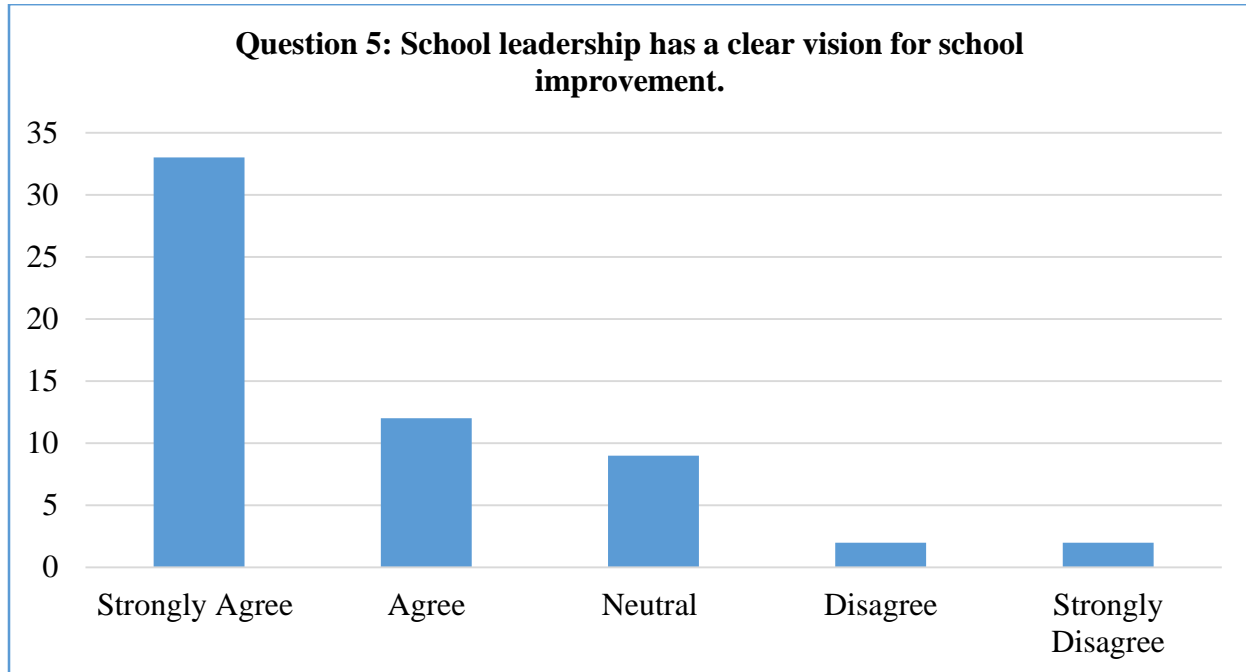| **Question 5: School leadership has a clear vision for school improvement.**	Strongly Agree	33 (55.9%)
	Agree	12 (20.3%)
	Neutral	9 (15.3%)
	Disagree	2 (3.4%)
	Strongly Disagree	3 (5.1%)

Figure 3

The results for survey question 5 indicate that 45 participants (76.2%) agree or strongly agree that school leadership has a clear vision for school improvement. 15.3% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 8.5% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

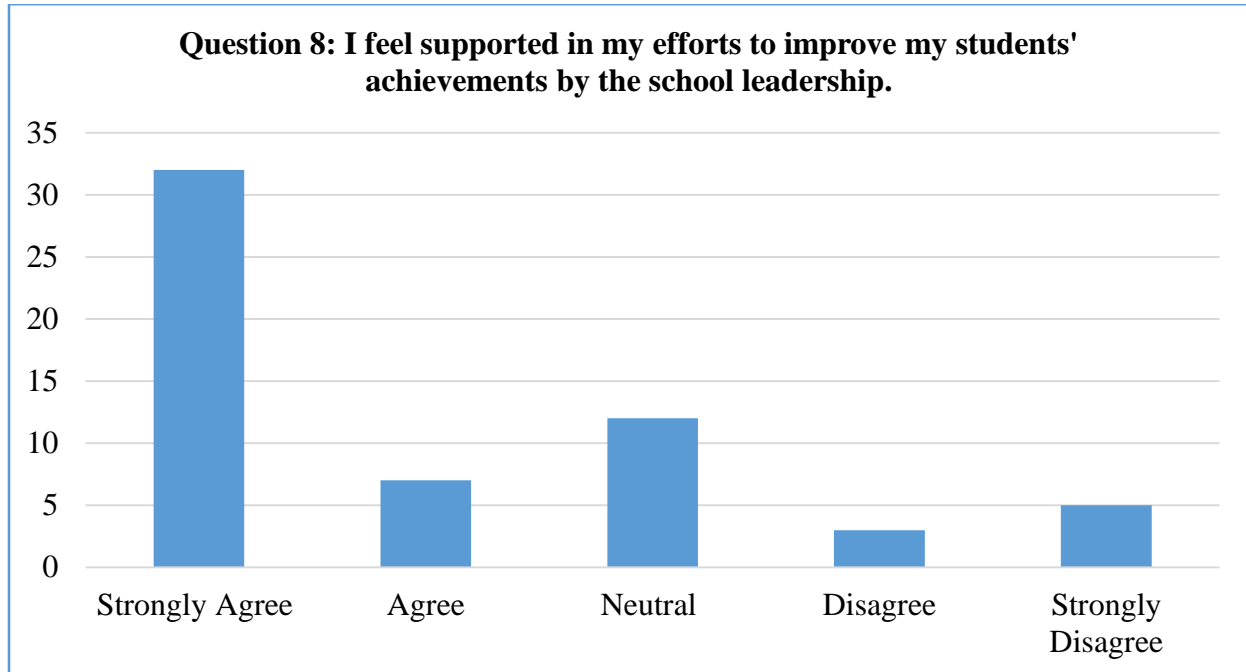| **Question 8: I feel supported in my efforts to improve my students' achievements by the school leadership.**	Strongly Agree	32 (54.2%)
	Agree	7 (11.9%)
	Neutral	12 (20.3%)
	Disagree	3 (5.1%)
	Strongly Disagree	5 (8.5%)

Figure 4

The results for survey question 8 indicate that 39 participants (66.1%) agree or strongly agree that they feel supported in their efforts to improve their students' achievements by the school leadership. 12 participants or 20.3% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 13.6% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

Theme 3: Role of collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in school transformation

Questions 2, 7 and 10 correspond to research question number 3. These questions were related to school leadership's efforts in creating a collaborative learning environment and providing teachers with opportunities for professional development that supported them in improving their instructional strategies in the classroom. Additionally, these questions also investigate the trust that the school leadership puts in the efforts of the teachers and provides them with opportunities for leadership within their own practice.

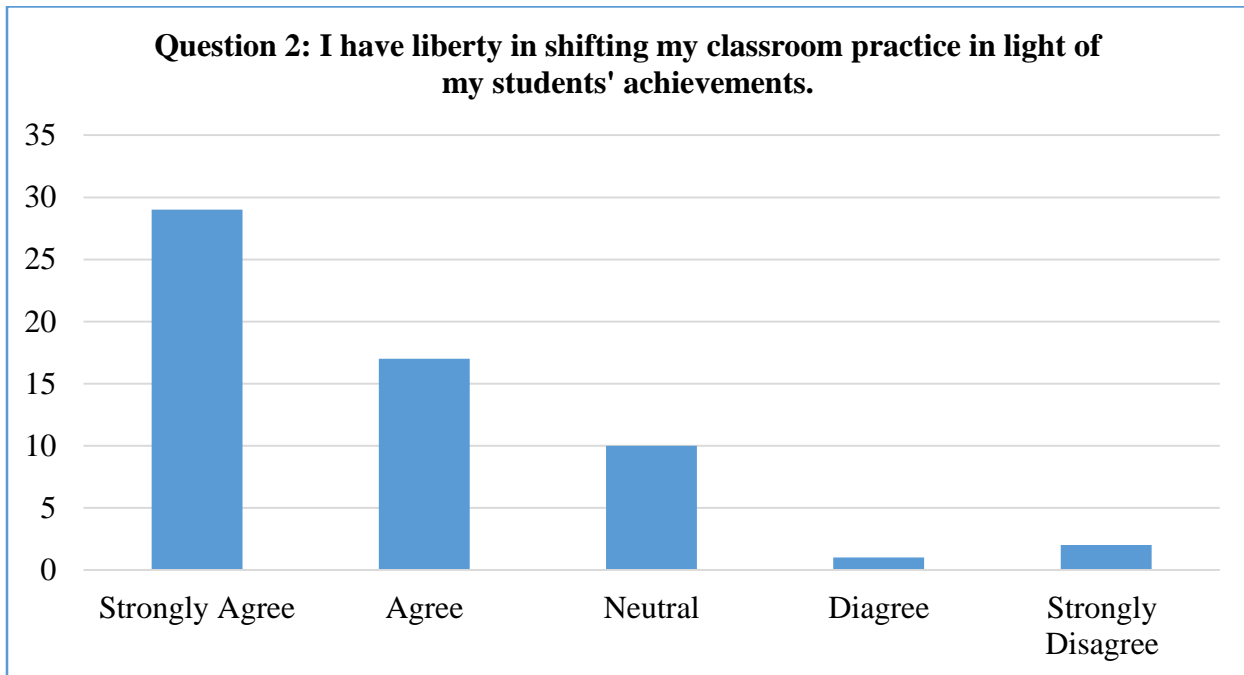| Question 2: I have liberty in shifting my classroom practice in light of my students' achievements.	Strongly Agree	29 (49.2%)
	Agree	17 (28.8%)
	Neutral	10 (16.9%)
	Disagree	1 (1.7%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (3.4%)

Figure 5

The results for survey question 2 indicate that 46 participants (78%) agree or strongly agree that they have liberty in shifting their classroom practice in light of their understanding of their students' achievements. 10 participants or 16.9% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 5.1% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

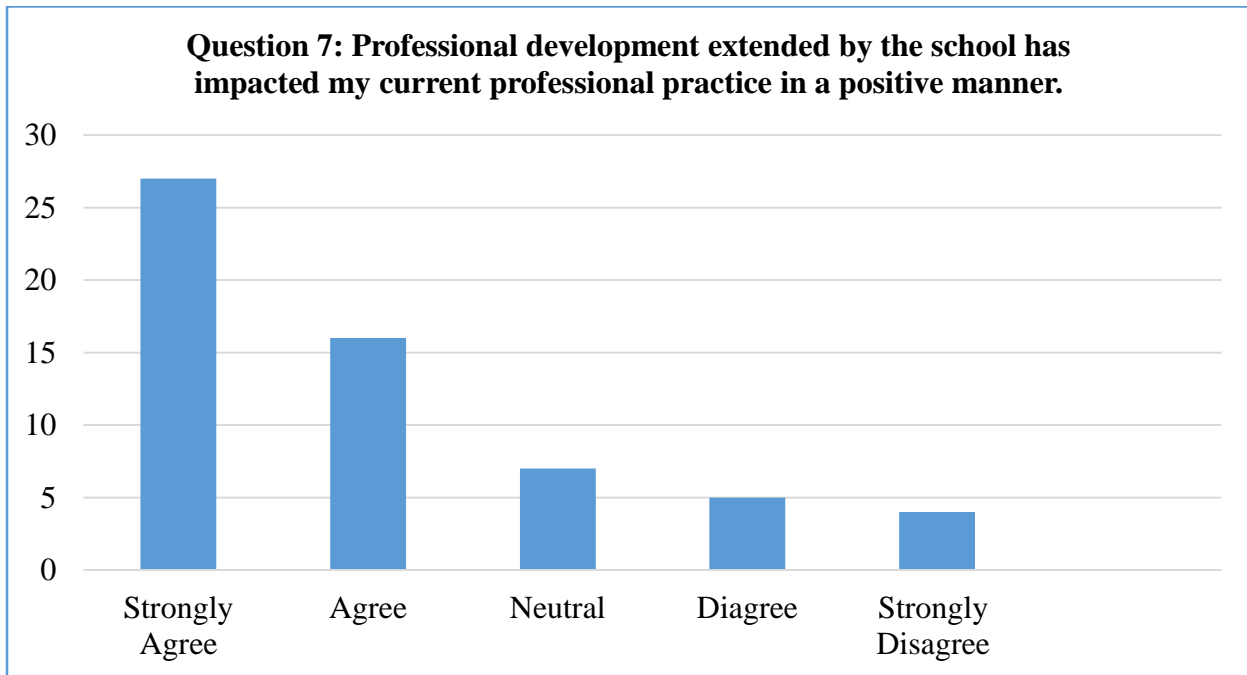| Question 7: Professional development extended by the school has impacted my current professional practice in a positive manner.	Strongly Agree	27 (45.8%)
	Agree	16 (27.1%)
	Neutral	7 (11.9%)
	Disagree	5 (8.5%)
	Strongly Disagree	4 (6.8%)

Figure 6

The results for survey question 7 indicate that 43 participants (72.9%) agree or strongly agree that professional development extended by the school has impacted their professional practice in a positive manner. 7 participants or 11.9% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 15.3% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

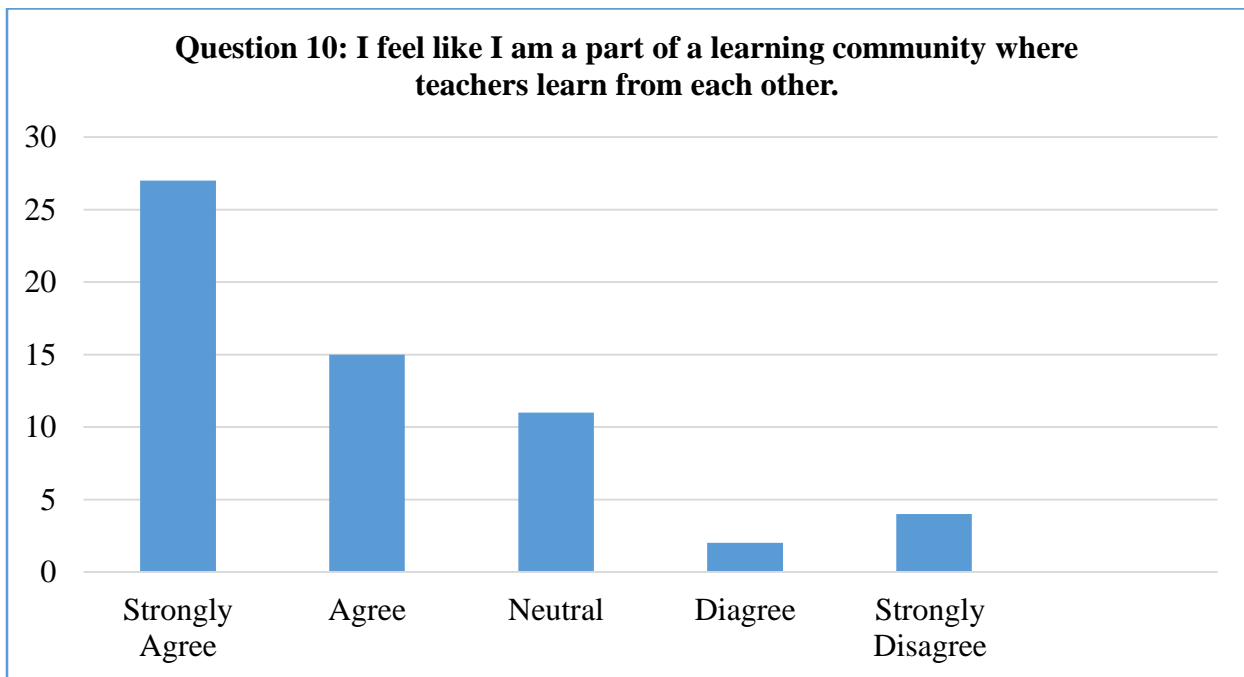| Question 10: I feel like I am a part of a learning community where teachers learn from each other.	Strongly Agree	27 (45.8%)
	Agree	15 (25.4%)
	Neutral	11 (18.6%)
	Disagree	2 (3.4%)
	Strongly Disagree	4 (6.8%)

Figure 7

The results for survey question 10 indicate that 42 participants (71.2%) agree or strongly agree that they are a part of a learning community where teachers learn from each other. 11 participants or 18.6% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 10.2% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

Theme 4: Managing the use of meaningful innovations in the process of school transformation

Questions 4, 6 and 9 correspond to research question number 4. These questions were related to school leadership's management of innovative school improvement efforts through the dissemination of new pedagogical skills which in turn should positively impact teachers' professional practice in the classroom.

Question 4: School-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted my professional practice.	Strongly Agree	28 (47.5%)
	Agree	18 (30.5%)
	Neutral	9 (15.3%)
	Disagree	2 (3.4%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (3.4%)

Question 4: School-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted my professional practice.
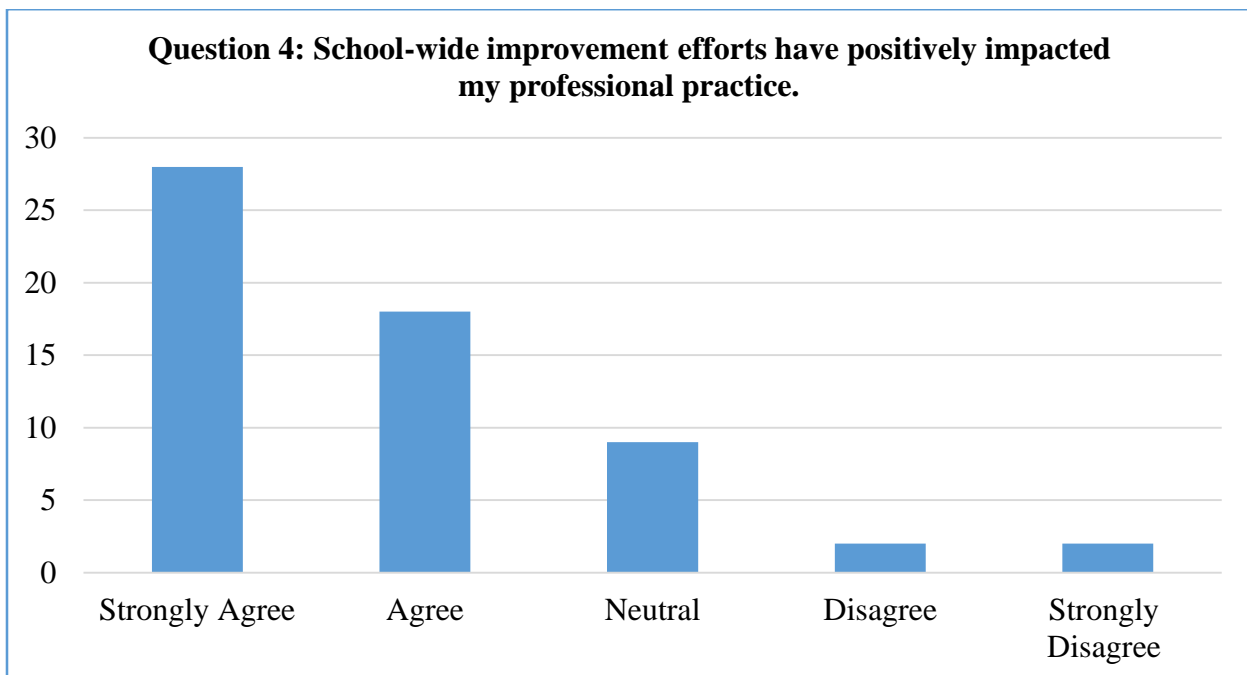
Figure 8

The results for survey question 4 indicate that 46 participants (78%) agree or strongly agree that school-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted their professional practice. 9

participants or 15.3% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 6.8% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

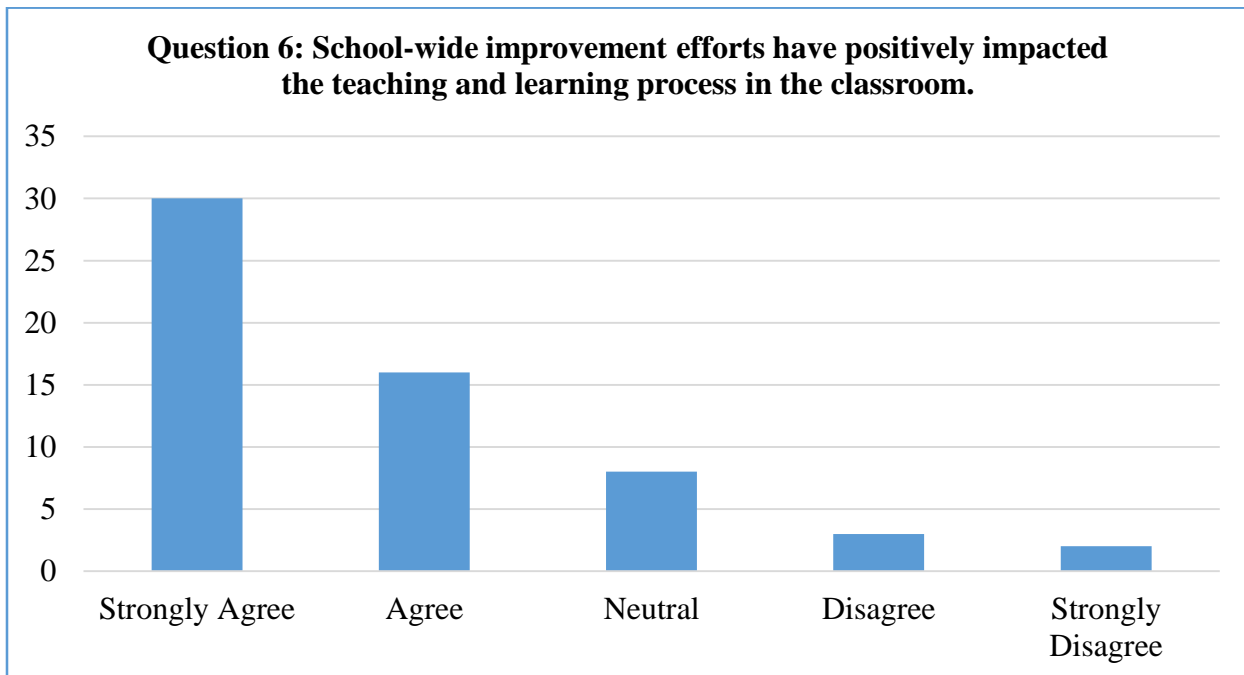| **Question 6: School-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted the teaching and learning process in the classroom.**	Strongly Agree	30 (50.8%)
	Agree	16 (27.1%)
	Neutral	8 (13.6%)
	Disagree	3 (5.1%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (3.4%)

Figure 9

The results for survey question 6 indicate that 46 participants (77.9%) agree or strongly agree that school-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted the teaching and learning process in the classroom. 8 participants or 13.6% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 8.5% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

Question 9: School leadership ensures that teachers are regularly familiarized with sustainable new techniques in pedagogy.	Strongly Agree	31 (52.5%)
	Agree	12 (20.3%)
	Neutral	8 (13.6%)
	Disagree	4 (6.8%)
	Strongly Disagree	4 (6.8%)

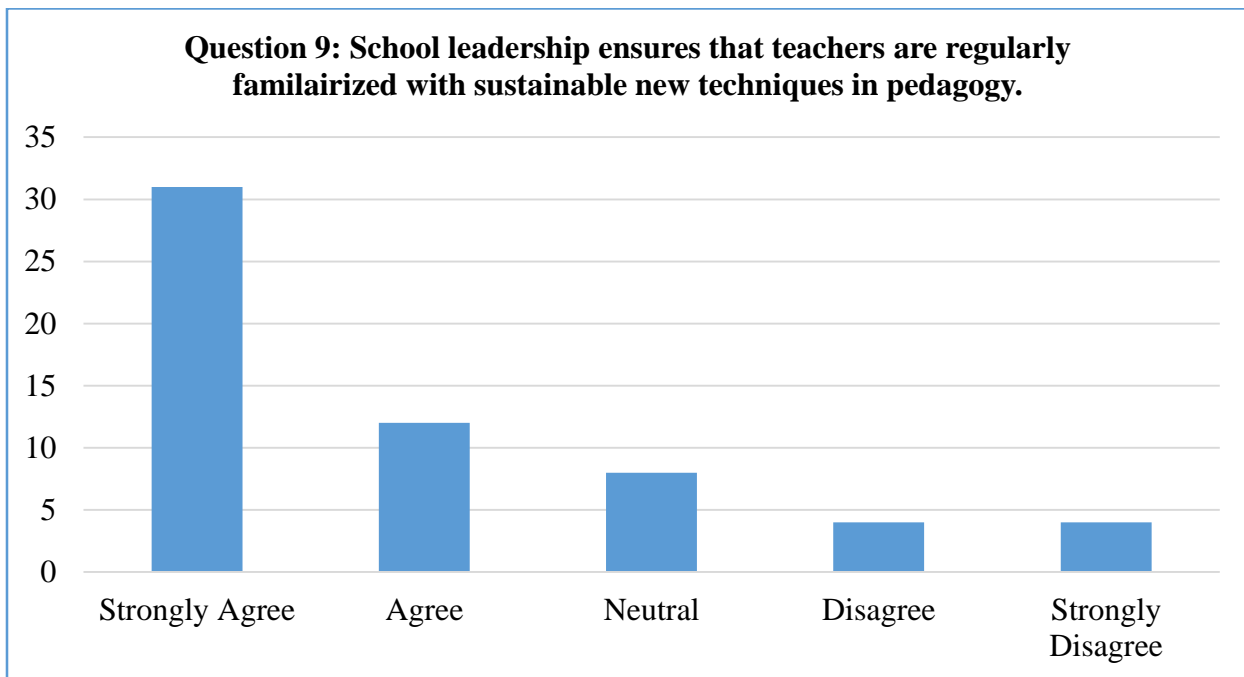
Figure 10

The results for survey question 6 indicate that 43 participants (72.8%) agree or strongly agree that school leadership ensures that teachers are regularly familiarized with sustainable new techniques in pedagogy. 8 participants or 13.6% of the participants felt neutral about the question posed. On the other hand, a total of 13.6% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

Chapter Summary

The responses to interview questions and the data acquired from the survey questionnaire combined with my personal observations indicates that the school leadership has a clear vision for school transformation. The school leadership has been able to create a buy-in from most school teachers where they believe in the efforts put in by school leaders during the process of school transformation. School leadership's investment into developing systems to support staff learning and dissemination of new learning are also recognized by the school staff. Not only do the school teachers recognize these efforts but recent accomplishments of the school (securing a "good" rating during inspection process and successfully securing accreditation with NEASC) are a testament to the efforts of school leadership.

The following chapter will be used to draw conclusions in light of the data analysis against the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Further Recommendations

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter will be used to draw conclusions in light of the data-analysis collected against research questions and make suggestions for school leaders in the UAE schools. The aim of the study is to investigate the role school leaders play in managing change through school transformation in particular to the context of school transformation process in the UAE. The study investigated the role of school leaders in the transformation process and whether or not an educational leader needs a variety of approaches to bring about school transformation. In addition, the study also investigated how school leaders navigate the challenges they face in the process of change. The study also looked into the impact of collaborative learning communities, distributed leadership, and the effective management of innovations on school-wide improvement process.

United Arab Emirates, in the last decade, has invested into a rigorous system of educational reform through introducing many new systems such as a uniform inspection system, inclusion policy and reform, and teaching-licensure program. All of these reforms are meant to make a significant difference and to bring some sort of harmony among the different systems of schooling that exist in the UAE. It is more important than ever that school leaders think strategically about how they will lead the school improvement process in their respective schools. It is important for school leaders in the UAE to steer their schools in the right direction in these times of complex change. Schools cannot afford to be at a status quo when reforms are happening at a rapid pace. School leaders will need to ensure that their teaching faculty is ready to tackle such changes without creating chaos. Although the literature consulted to formulate the theoretical framework of this study were all conducted in very different contexts from what school leaders are facing in the UAE, it is important to note that the basics for school transformation stay the same.

As a school leader, you cannot afford to leave your teams behind in the process of transformation. It has to be a school-wide effort. School principals or superintendent cannot do it alone. They must create a sense of community in their schools to be able to successfully move pedagogy and student learning toward achieving desired outcomes. School leaders also need to ensure that when innovations are introduced in the existing school system, they are meaningful and relevant to the teaching and learning process in the school. Let us look closely at the findings against the research questions.

5.1.1. Research Question 1: Do school leaders need just transformational leadership or a hybrid approach to be successful in their endeavors of school-wide transformation?

In light of the literature review in chapter 2, and against the data collected from the interview questions and survey questionnaire, I can conclude that school leaders need a variety of leadership skills during school transformation process depending on the situation. A school leader has to act as a visionary, as a motivator and up-lifter, a planner, a strategist, a guide, a coach, and a facilitator all at the same time or adopt a certain role as demanded by the situation. School leaders are constantly working under pressure from diverse sources and every situation demands a different and unique set of skills. If we look at the school under study, for example, it is important for the school leader to retain good teachers in the school, and in order to do that, school superintendent needs to ensure that while it is important for her respective school to improve, it is even more important for teachers to have a complete understanding of the process. A good school leader ensures that the teaching staff is on-board with the vision of school leadership so everyone in the school community feels proud of the achievements in the process and the entire school community moves in harmony to achieve the desired outcomes. Cotton (2003) identified 25characteristics for a good school leader. Some of these characteristics are a focus of my study for example:

-      Vision and goals focused on high level of students' learning

- Visibility and accessibility

- Positive and supportive climate

- Communication and interaction

- Emotional and interpersonal support

- Collaboration

- Norm of continuous improvement

- Collaborative learning environment

- Support of teachers' autonomy and risk-taking

Each of these characteristic demands from the school leader to exhibit a unique leadership skill which is why it is important for school leaders to strategically think about their course of action in every situation.

5.1.2. Research Question 2: How can school leaders skillfully navigate the challenges they face in the school transformation process?

Challenges are a vital part of school transformation process especially if the school has a long-standing culture. School leaders face different kids of challenges particular to their unique context: lack of motivation from the teachers, resistance, community support, poor student performance on standardized assessments etc. However, every school has its own unique context. In the school under study, the biggest challenge that the school leadership faced is having teaching staff that is not formally qualified with a teacher-preparation program. This needed a specific and rigorous professional development program that supported teachers in their pursuit of earning a professional qualification. Teachers not only needed to be enrolled in formal teacher-preparation programs but the school leaders also needed to look into creating a systematic approach to improve pedagogy in line with the leadership's vision of school improvement. It took school leadership 3 years to get the foundational teaching and learning process in a good place where teachers understand the

common parameters for delivering effective lessons. Cuban (2013) compares schools to "complex organizations" with "hundreds of moving parts" and so he is of the view that such complex systems need "mission control that runs all these different parts within ever-changing political, economic, and societal surroundings". In light of the above-detailed data-analysis in chapter 4 and according to the literature review in chapter 2, I can conclude that once the school leaders were able to create a common vision for the school community, facing challenges became somewhat easier as it was seen as a whole-school endeavor to improve school and not only a leader's agenda.

5.1.3. Research Question 3: What role is played by collaborative learning communities and distributed leadership opportunities in school transformation?

According to Van Maanen and Barley (1985), true collaborative cultures in organizations should reflect the following characteristics:

- Regular interactions between the members of the community

- Shared understanding of the problems

- Action based on the collective understanding of the group about community problems

In a school's setting, it becomes even more important because learning is at the core of everything. Schools are learning communities where continuous learning is the most important thing for both the teaching staff and the students. In order for the teachers to learn and grow, a collaborative learning culture is the most important thing. Teachers learn to refine their practice from their peers, and school leaders who are able to create such a collaborative learning culture reap the benefit of their teachers practicing common pedagogical skills in their schools that are in line with the vision of school improvement. Similarly, the superintendent in the school under study created an instructional leadership team to disseminate the leadership opportunities and to distribute a common vision of leadership among her teaching staff. The rationale behind this decision was to support the improvement process in all areas with strong leadership with a common vision. To

conclude, it is important for school leaders to invest in opportunities for teachers to participate in learning opportunities that are supported by their peers. This way, teachers feel supported in their effort to improve instruction and have guidance available when necessary. It is also important to have distributed leadership opportunities available for teachers to participate in, because this creates a common vision for school improvement and a shared understanding of the challenges. This way, school leaders are not the only ones responsible, but the responsibility for school improvement is shared between all.

5.1.4. Research Question 4: How can school leaders ensure that impactful innovations are employed in the process of school transformation without losing focus of the desired outcomes?

Should schools get on board with every intervention that gains popularity? This is a dilemma faced by all school leaders. Meaningful interventions and innovations need to impact the focused outcomes of the change process. Before a certain innovation is launched, the school leader needs to ask the essential questions such as:

- How does this intervention fall in line with the vision for our school improvement?

- How does this innovation impact the teaching and learning process in my school?

- Is this innovation really going to bear the desired results in my school within its specific context or is it just another fad?

Essentially, all school improvement efforts should lead to an improved teaching and learning process; hence improving student-achievement. I can safely conclude that well-thought-out and meaningful innovations bear the right results, if the implementation procedure starts with an end in mind. Not all innovations will, as promised, raise students' achievement scores, if that is not the intended goal. Additionally, school leaders should not just blindly follow whatever is popular, but assess the impact of introducing something new with a desired outcome in mind. Otherwise, as

Alvy (2017) calls it, "a reform overload" will only result in overwhelming the teachers in the classrooms. In his words, "Educators may not know whether a reform will succeed, but making thoughtful piloting decisions, reading relevant research, and talking with practitioners will certainly increase the chances that it will".

5.4. Further Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

My research is not conclusive and there is a lot of scope for further investigation especially at a wider scale within the UAE schools. There is certainly still much to be said about the research questions that I posed and I am sure that many school leaders will find variable answers to same questions, depending on their own unique context of the school. However, I can confidently say that almost all school leaders can benefit from investing in equipping themselves with a diverse variety of leadership skills which will help them in finding solutions while working with their own unique set of challenges. You can never go wrong with looking at every situation with a different lens. I am also sure that establishing a culture of shared responsibility in the school can only benefit the school leaders in improving their schools in one direction with their teams understanding what is at stake. This can really only be done when the schools leaders invest in a culture of collaborative learning and collaborative decision-making. There is a plethora of research that suggests that creating a community feel in the schools leads to impactful decision-making and improved student-outcomes. I can also suggest that school leaders in the UAE should look at the impact that a certain innovation will carry before launching it.

There is a need for school leaders to create a dialogue with each other and understand the challenges of school transformation process in different schools in the UAE. When peer-leaders discuss their challenges and how they were able to navigate them, it only gives you a better insight into how to handle something similar in your own school. I suggest that KHDA and DSIB invest into creating such a collaboration among school leaders to navigate the challenges that are faced

by the UAE school leaders together. It is my hope that this study will enlighten the school leaders and help them in finding solutions to challenges that they are facing within their respective schools in some meaningful way. I would like to conclude my study with some words of wisdom from Burns (1978), "transformational leaders form a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents". At the end of the day, the transformation process in a school eventually becomes a process of transforming lives in many ways and that is why I chose to study "transformational leadership" as the main focus of my study.

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Appendix 1: Research Intention

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The British University in Dubai

www.buid.ac.ae

11/19/2017

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that Ms.Asma Tabassum with Student ID number 2016101082 is a registered part-time student in the Master of Education offered by The British University in Dubai since January 2016.

Ms. Tabassum is currently collecting data for her project (Transforming School: Role of School Leadership in Managing Educational Change and Innovation Process - A Case-Study of An American School in Dubai).

She is required to gather data through conducting face-to-face interviews and surveys that will help her in writing the final project. Your permission to conduct her research in your organisation is hereby requested. Further support provided to her in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Any information given will be used solely for academic purposes.

This letter is issued on Ms.Tabassum's request.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Amer Alaya
Head of Academic and Student Administration

approved

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Appendix 2: Interview Questions for The School Superintendent

1. Can you briefly describe your experience about the educational reform being carried out in UAE and how has it impacted your efforts of school transformation?

2. What does it mean to transform a school in the UAE context according to your experience?

3. Briefly describe your challenges in bringing about a complete school transformation and your strategy in dealing with these challenges?

4. What did you find most challenging in the process of bringing about change in your school?

5. How important is it for a school leader to develop teachers in the process of school transformation?

6. How important is it for a school leader to invest in developing distributive leadership opportunities and why?

7. What skills and abilities must a school leader possess in order to improve instruction at its core?

8. What style of leadership did you find the most effective in the process of school transformation?

9. What were some of your areas of focus for school transformation and why did you pick these particular areas to focus on?

10. Can you shed some light on some of the most effective changes in your school? Also please elaborate on the process that went into ensuring the successful implementation of these changes.

11. What role did school's long-standing culture play in school transformation, if any?

12. How did you engage all stake-holders in the school transformation process?

13. How do you ensure that your teachers are engaged in gaining and disseminating new knowledge across the school and why do you think this is important in the development of your school?

14. What were some innovations that you thought appropriate in school transformation process and what was your rationale behind employing them?

15. What is your desired outcome from the changes that you introduced in your school? What are you trying to achieve? Give some examples.

Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaire for Teachers

1. I feel motivated to improve my instruction as a direct result of the efforts for school improvement employed by school leadership.

2. I have the liberty in shifting my classroom practice in light of my students' achievement.

3. I am aligned to the vision of school leadership for school improvement.

4. School-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted my professional practice.

5. School leadership has a clear vision for school improvement.

6. School-wide improvement efforts have positively impacted the teaching and learning process inside the classroom.

7. Professional development extended by the school has impacted my current professional practice in a positive manner.

8. I feel supported in my efforts to improve my students' achievements by the school leadership.

9. School leadership ensures that teachers are regularly familiarized with sustainable new techniques in pedagogy.

10. I feel like I am a part of a learning community where teachers learn from each other.