GLOBAL SCHOOL LEADERS

OUR LEARNINGS
2019
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Global School Leaders (GSL) is a United States-based non-profit organization that increases educational outcomes of students from marginalized communities by improving school leadership. Established in 2016, GSL supports organizations that provide continuous professional development to existing and aspiring school leaders. GSL Partners with organizations in India, Indonesia, Kenya and Malaysia, and intends to work in 10 countries by 2023.

GSL supports Partner Organizations with technical and strategic inputs that place the school leader at the center of their intervention. GSL also connects these organizations together in a network to share learning, collaborate, and build a collective voice on school leadership development as a pathway to improving outcomes for students.

**THEORY OF ACTION**

GSL’s Theory of Action, which is presented below, provides the pathway through which we envision school leaders, as the agent of change, impact students.

In addition, GSL aims to improve the quality of school leadership by contributing to global policy, advocacy, and knowledge regarding the importance and impact of school leadership.

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**GSL ACTIVITY**

If GSL provides **support for Partner Organizations**

Then **Partners will provide quality training programs**

Then **Participants leadership practices will improve**

Then **school and teaching practices will improve**

Then **student outcomes will improve**
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH PARTNER ORGANIZATION

**India School Leadership Institute (ISLI), India**

Since its inception in 2013, ISLI worked with over 3,000 school leaders impacting 650,000 students. ISLI had two program models. The first was a City Fellowship model in which it served cohorts of government and low-fee private school leaders over two years. School leaders participated in training workshops as well as personalized in-school support through a coach every alternate month. The second model was large scale government partnerships that utilized a ‘train the trainer’ approach. Trainers were provided professional development through workshops but not personalized school support.

**PEMIMPIN GSL, Malaysia**

PEMIMPIN began training school leaders in 2017. Their first two-year cohort included 48 school leader representatives from 22 government schools across three regions in Malaysia. The cohort comprised of 14 school principals and 34 senior administrators. School leaders participated in workshops six to eight times a year followed by personalized in-school coaching to contextualize the learnings. In addition, PEMIMPIN worked with another set of 25 schools that were in a school improvement program run by the PINTAR Foundation, where the school leaders only participated in workshops. In their second cohort, PEMIMPIN plans to work with 45 schools and 90 school leaders.

**Dignitas Ustadi School Leadership Institute, Kenya**

Dignitas is a Kenyan non-profit organization implementing education leadership professional development programs. GSL partnered with Dignitas and the Africa Educational Trust (AET) to implement a 6-month pilot school leadership training program in Nairobi and Laikipia North in 2019. Dignitas implemented the professional training program for 54 school leaders from 27 low-fee private schools in urban Nairobi, and AET implemented the program for 27 government school leaders in rural Laikipia North. Dignitas used the workshop-school coaching model and now plans to scale up the Ustadi program to serve 50 government schools through a two-year program in Machakos County in 2020.

**INSPIRASI, Indonesia**

INSPIRASI launched its pilot program in July 2019 serving 25 schools in Karawang district in Indonesia. These consist of 20 government primary schools and 5 Madrassa schools. The INSPIRASI program is 18 months long and in line with the core GSL model follows the workshop - school visit - workshop model. INSPIRASI will simultaneously run a second cohort of 90 schools from July 2020.

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1 ISLI ceased operations at the end of 2019 and is undergoing a re-organizational process that will launch in 2020 with new partnerships. The learnings showcased by this report remain unaffected by this development.

2 PEMIMPIN GSL operated as GSL Malaysia until January 2020.
INTRODUCTION

Despite tremendous progress in ensuring wider and more equitable access to schools, with more children in school than ever, 25% of young people in low-income countries are unable to read a sentence fluently. The 2018 World Development Report outlines four main reasons for the low levels of learning in developing countries: students who enter school without adequate support, lack of qualified and motivated teachers, ineffective school management, and ineffective use of resources.\(^5\)

At the same time, research suggests that school leaders can be a lever of change to improve student outcomes. While school systems in the Global South traditionally have not focused on leadership as a key initiative for improvement, preliminary results from emerging school leader professional development programs have shown positive results, strengthening the case for increased investment.

ABOUT THE REPORT

Most research on the importance of school leadership and need for school leadership professional development programs is based on the Global North. This report contributes to the existing literature by sharing evidence of impact and lessons learned from Global School Leaders' (GSL) work on improving school leadership in the Global South. The report addresses the following topics:

- Importance of school leadership and impact of our programs
- Defining effective school leadership
- Designing learning experiences for school leaders
- Implications for the field of school leadership - policymakers & practitioners

Policymakers and practitioners can utilize this report to a) design school leadership professional development programs; b) identify important traits of school leaders to build during pre-service programs; c) contribute to advocacy towards school-related policy concerns; and d) design policies to create systems of support for school leaders.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY INSIGHTS

School Leader Mindsets are Shifting

Partner Organizations across multiple countries observed a change in the school leaders’ mindsets, especially in terms of developing a growth mindset, adopting distributed leadership practices, and viewing themselves as instructional leaders. Further, they noted changes in school leaders’ behaviour, such as a greater proportion spent more time on activities such as conducting observations, facilitating school walkthroughs, and providing feedback to teachers.

Changes in Classroom Practices are Inconsistent

While Partners focused on improving classroom practices, data revealed that changes in classroom practices were inconsistent. For example, in Kenya, while a greater proportion of teachers adopted more recommended student engagement strategies in the endline compared to the baseline in Nairobi, the data showed the opposite trend in Laikipia North. On the other hand, in Malaysia, the data showed that teachers’ capacity to facilitate key quality instructional practices changed based on the time of observations - in particular, teacher ratings dropped during exam periods. Leaving aside the exam cycles, the data showed limited improvements in these ratings.

Positive Impact on Student Learning is Emerging

India’s school leadership program is showing early signs of positive impact on student learning, but some Partners are struggling to measure this. These challenges ranged from logistics (difficulty in measuring students twice a year) to methodological (not having strong enough samples or a rigorous design) to ethical (the number of times students were being tested).

Instructional Leadership is Key

Partner Organizations had consensus around the importance of instructional leadership and the need for school leaders to be able to provide quality feedback to teachers and manage relationships with the teachers. They also highlighted a number of other skills that school leaders need such as being visible outside administrative structures, planning, and data-driven decision-making.

Effective Workshops and Coaching are Relevant and Engaging

Partners highlighted several aspects of designing an effective workshop or coaching session for school leaders. Based on the feedback from school leaders which indicated high levels of user engagement and satisfaction, and their observations, Partners felt that effective workshops require time for modelling, practice, and specific sections on contextualizing concepts to the school leaders’ situations. They also expressed a strong need for goal-oriented and customizable coaching.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further research is required to better understand the specific challenges facing school leaders in the Global South.

GSL and Partner Organizations need to develop a strong, robust, and relevant school leadership framework to guide their programs and measure the impact.

GSL and Partner Organizations need to identify stronger ways of measuring teacher practices and student outcomes.

GSL needs to work with Partner Organizations to identify an effective way to implement scalable coaching models.

GSL and Partner Organizations need to develop a stronger network with a culture of collaboration.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE LEARNING CRISIS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Countries in the Global South are in the midst of a learning crisis. Despite tremendous progress in ensuring wider and more equitable access to schools, with more children in school than ever, 25% of young people in low-income countries are unable to read a sentence fluently. The 2018 World Development Report outlines four main reasons for the low levels of learning in developing countries: students who enter school without adequate support, lack of qualified and motivated teachers, ineffective school management, and ineffective use of resources.

INVESTING IN SCHOOL LEADERS

Research suggests that school leaders can be a lever of change to improve student outcomes. Studies show that school leaders influence students through mechanisms such as improving classroom practices, creating a positive culture in the school, and forming strong relationships with the parents and community. Currently, research regarding school leadership is based predominantly in the Global North. However, early adopters of structured school leadership development programs from the Global South have also shown positive results for school leaders, teachers, and students. This research makes a strong case for further investment in school leadership in the Global South.

REPORT CONTRIBUTION

This report shares evidence of impact and lessons learned from GSL’s work on improving school leadership in India, Indonesia, Kenya and Malaysia in 2019.

REPORT OUTLINE

The report is organized around four main research questions. The second chapter provides a brief overview on the research on the importance of school leadership. The third chapter provides findings on the impact that GSL Partners have had on school leaders, teachers, and students, and our learnings based on these findings. The fourth chapter provides an overview of the Partners’ perceptions of the skills needed by school leaders in the Global South. The fifth chapter looks at the type of learning experiences which have been most effective for the school leaders. The final chapter then assimilates our understanding of the implications of this report for GSL’s work and the larger field of school leadership in the Global South.

METHODOLOGY

GSL utilized program evaluation methodology to test assumptions underlying its Theory of Action. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What is GSL learning about the importance of school leadership? Is there any evidence of impact of the Partner programs for schools, teacher practice, and students?
2. What is GSL learning about the practices of strong school leaders? What are the most important things for strong leaders to know and be able to do?
3. What kinds of learning experiences are the most effective for developing participants’ knowledge and skills?
4. What implications do our learnings have on GSL’s work in 2020? How does this affect our longer-term design and strategy? What does this mean for policymakers and practitioners in the larger education space?

GSL collected data from all four Partner Organizations that included interviews of staff members, artifacts and program data. GSL asked staff members questions regarding their perspectives of:

• impact of the programs on school leaders, teachers, and students
• skills that school leaders need to be effective
• learnings from designing and implementing the program
• challenges and barriers faced in implementing the program
• types of learning experiences that were most effective

Partner Organizations provided data that they collected on changes in school leader practices, classroom instruction, and student learning outcomes as well as data on the engagement levels of the school leaders. GSL then facilitated internal meetings to synthesize the learnings from the interviews and the data collected. The report, therefore, is a reflection of the views of the Partner Organizations, data collected by them, and a collection of learnings gathered by the GSL team.

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[8] UN defines young people as those between the ages of 15-24 years
CHAPTER 2
THE NEED FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This chapter provides a brief overview of the existing research on school leadership. It is divided into three parts:
1. Relationship between school leadership and student learning outcomes
2. Nature of effective school leadership
3. Effectiveness of school leadership training programs

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

An early study on the impact of school leaders on student outcomes came from Leithwood et al. (2004). A follow up study by the authors in 2010 backed their original findings, further highlighting specific ways leaders influence teachers to improve student achievement. The study found that school leaders who are particularly effective in improving student learning outcomes maintain strong ties to the classrooms, have a high level of instructional expertise, and maintain positive relationships with teachers, community members and districts.

Nick Bloom and his colleagues explored the role played by management practices in 1,800 schools across eight countries. Constructing a management index from 20 parameters, they found that “higher management scores are positively correlated with better pupil outcomes.”

Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin studied the differential effect of quality management and found that principals at the top layer of quality are able to bring about greater student improvements than the average set of school principals. The study also backed the popular hypothesis that quality principals are most needed in schools with disadvantaged students.

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11Leithwood et al., 2004 & 2010
12Bloom, Lemos, Sadun, & Reenan, 2015
13Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012
NATURE OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

GSL focuses its efforts on improving four domains of leadership that influence student learning outcomes. The research presented below aligns with these domains.

Leading Learning

Leading a school where quality teaching and learning takes place requires a strong instructional leader who supports teachers in improving their instructional practices. McKinsey & Company’s 2010 review that surveyed 1,850 school leaders worldwide highlighted specific practices and mindsets shared by effective school leaders. One of the main characteristics of effective leaders was their focus on instructional leadership and ability to prioritize improvements in teaching and learning.

The Wallace Foundation identified five key practices that play an important role in school leadership, one of which was improving teachers’ instructional practices. Dobbie and Fryer also examined leadership through the lens of specific management practices in 39 charter schools in New York City reporting that practices such as “frequent teacher feedback, data driven instruction, high-dosage tutoring, increased instructional time, and a relentless focus on academic achievement – explains roughly half of the variation in school effectiveness [defined as improvements in student learning outcomes]”.

However, a study covering 100 school leaders in Miami-Dade County showed that organizations need to spend more time understanding the relative effectiveness of different instructional practices. The study documented the time spent by school leaders on different activities including coaching, curriculum development, teacher professional development and evaluation and school walkthroughs. The study found that while spending time on specific tasks like coaching or classroom evaluations was positively associated with student achievement, time spent on walkthroughs showed negative outcomes. The authors attributed this to school leaders not using data from walkthroughs to inform other strategic plans.

Leading People

School leaders need to be effective in recruiting and retaining teachers. A school’s ability to retain teachers is the result of its working environment; teachers’ ability to access relevant, personalized professional and leadership development opportunities; and an institutional culture of support and mentoring.

McKinsey & Company’s review placed people management as the central skill needed to be an effective school leader. People management skills include supporting staff development and prioritizing interactions with staff, students, and community.

The Wallace Foundation examined the role that the relationship between school leaders and teachers plays in leading effective schools. This research found that strong school leaders shared responsibilities with teachers and other staff members in a culture of distributed leadership. Given the low levels of teacher motivation in many developing countries, school leaders play a critical role in improving teacher motivation levels.
Leading for Equity - Leadership for Underserved Communities

School leaders can make a difference in disadvantaged and poverty-stricken areas. Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin's research found the impact of quality school leadership on student outcomes to be even more significant in schools serving students from low-income families.

Bryk and colleagues studied the Chicago School Reform movement to understand the reasons behind the different trajectories experienced by schools in the same region. They identified five essential supports for school improvement, one of which was quality leadership. The study highlighted that all five areas of support need to work in tandem for a school to actually improve, especially in districts that are the furthest behind.

Leading School Improvement

Effective school leaders lead by obtaining buy-in for their school vision. School leaders who adopt a process to co-create this vision with their stakeholders are likely to be more successful than others.

The process school leaders take to operationalize their vision also matters. Grissom and Loeb's Miami-Dade County study found that a principal's managerial capabilities matter as much as their instructional capabilities as a predictor of student achievement. One key component of this is their ability to set tangible and clear goals, and then design strategic plans to meet those goals. A school leader's ability to manage change also depends on their time management and delegation skills.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

There is emerging evidence of positive impacts of school leadership training programs. Fryer looked at the results of a school principal training program in Texas and found statistically significant improvement in learning outcomes in the first year of the intervention. This training program covered more than 300 hours of support in “three levers of school management-instructional planning, data driven instruction, and observation and feedback.”

An evaluation of the United States-based New Leaders program by RAND in 2019 found a direct link between school leaders and student achievement. This school leadership training program focused on supporting inexperienced principals. The study showed that students being led by school leaders who were part of the New Leaders program outperformed students led by other school leaders in English Language Acquisition (ELA) and Math three years after the school leaders were placed in their respective schools, with the difference in primary grades being 3.26 to 3.55 percentile points in Math and 1.81 to 2.77 percentile points in ELA.

While much of the research on methods to improve school leadership have occurred in the Global North, evidence of the importance of school leadership is also growing in the Global South. A prominent example is from Jamaica, where the National College for Education Leadership (NCEL) runs the Effective Principals' Training Program for current school leaders. This cohort-based in-service program identified under-performing school leaders and provided them with two rounds of training and engaged them in a “field-based project” to contextualize their learnings.

An evaluation of the Jamaica program in 2016 showed an increase in the time spent by school leaders on instructional elements such as observation of classrooms, providing teachers with feedback, designing professional development for their teachers, data-driven instruction and planning, and monitoring school progress. These schools showed gains in primary grade literacy scores as well as increases in the Caribbean Secondary Examinations (CSEC) in English, Math, and Matriculation. While student outcomes could not be directly attributed to the training program, they are promising.

Although the positive impacts of school leadership documented in the Global North are relevant in the Global South, there has been limited investment in school leadership in the latter to date. Among GSL Partner countries, only Malaysia has an existing compulsory pre-service school leadership training program. While many countries have begun investment in their teachers through both pre-service and in-service programs, school leaders often receive little or no support. To strengthen school leadership support, GSL needs to invest more in programs accompanied by rigorous evaluation to understand what works in different country contexts.

27Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin, 2012
28Bryk, 2010
29Leithwood et al., 2004; McKinsey & Co. 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2012
30Leithwood & Sun, 2012
31Griscom & Loeb, 2011
32Bloom et al, 2015; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008
33Griscom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015
34Fryer, 2017
35Gates, Baird, Master & Chavez-Herrerias, 2019
36Nannyonga, 2017
This chapter provides emerging evidence gathered on the impact of GSL’s programs on school leaders, teachers, and students. It addresses shifts in school leaders’ mindsets and practices and examines the extent to which leadership practices influenced classroom practices and student learning across schools.

CHANGES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Immediate shifts in school leader mindsets

Partner Organizations reported the following shifts in the mindsets of school leaders:

- understanding of their role as instructional leaders
- willingness to trust teachers and involve them in leadership
- openness to change, self-awareness, and a growth mindset
- willingness to proactively take steps to positively change schooling experiences of students

All Partner Organizations reported that school leaders had a shift in their perception of leadership and began understanding their role as instructional leaders. School leaders were more willing to see themselves as leaders, and not just administrators. For example, when ISLI did a survey with Alumni, they found that the principals were using the term “school leadership” to reflect their responsibilities. Partners observed that school leaders were more prepared to take responsibility for student outcomes and learning.

School leaders became more willing to trust teachers and involve teachers and staff members in leadership responsibilities.

For example, in Kenya, Dignitas cited the school leaders’ willingness to share their learnings with the teachers as a sign of increasing trust. At least 80% of school leaders conducted debrief sessions to share their learnings with their teachers.

In other countries, school leaders were seen to be more receptive to feedback and meaningfully engaged their teachers in other responsibilities. In Malaysia, school leaders proactively asked the teachers for their input. In India, staff members spoke about how school leaders recognized that they did not have to control everything. For example, one of the school leaders wanted the students to become more conversant in English. They specifically implemented a vision alignment exercise with the teachers and the students to ensure that all the stakeholders in the school were aware of the vision and bought into it. Further, school leaders were also seen delegating work streams such as conducting the school walkthroughs to others.

PEMIMPIN expressed that school leaders had become more open to the possibility of change. For example, one of the school leaders specifically reached out to students to understand their perspective of the school needs when the school leader moved to a new school.

INSPIRASI measured the school leaders’ mindsets during their baseline exercise and found that none of the school leaders had an extreme growth mindset. 60% had a moderate growth mindset and over 33% had a moderate fixed mindset. This data suggests the need to focus on mindsets in the beginning of the program. However, it is important to note that there is no data to measure the impact of the program on mindsets as yet.

CASE STUDY

IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADER MINDSET

In India, the impact that a school leader’s mindset has on students is clearly seen through the case of Mrs. Pinki Gupta, the principal of Nivyug School, Darbhanga House. Her inclusive leadership and vision to ensure that all students are respected transformed the schooling experience of two students in the school. Mrs. Gupta spent time with two students, Jatin and Abhishek to understand the issues that both students were facing in the school. Jatin was an extremely quiet and non-communicative student who spent three years in the same class. He was also bullied by other students. Mrs. Gupta took an active role to speak to his mother, spent exclusive time with Jatin to provide him with a strong sense of self, and spread awareness to other students. Similarly, with Abhishek who was isolated because of a skin condition, she repeated the same steps and also modelled an example to the teachers who then realized their own culpability in the situation. The school leader’s mindset and resolve to be more inclusive had clear repercussion on the other stakeholders’ behaviours.37

37Gupta & Sen, 2018
School leaders spent greater amounts of time in classrooms providing teachers with feedback

Facilitating observations and providing quality feedback to the teachers are a significant part of the programs in all four countries. Partners from Kenya, Malaysia, and India reported that school leaders were spending more time on this leadership practice. While the program in Indonesia does focus on observation and feedback, it is too early to see evidence of change.

In India, 29 school leaders were assessed on eight skills in the course of a year. On average, school leaders were observed to have made the most progress in coaching and feedback. On average, school leaders were rated 1 out of 4 at the beginning of the year, this improved to 2.7 out of 4 at the end of the year. It is important to note that this skill growth was observed in a small sample of school leaders.

It is important to note that this skill growth was observed in a small sample of school leaders.

In Kenya, school leaders also reported an increase with respect to the frequency of school walkthroughs. While 0% and 8% of school leaders from Nairobi and Laikipia respectively, reported to conducting school walkthroughs at the beginning of the program (February 2019), this increased to 64% and 88% of school leaders at the last month of intervention (July 2019). In Malaysia, 86% of school leaders conducted lesson observations. A total of 1,562 classroom walkthroughs were also conducted, which comes out to an average of 70 observations per school over the two years.

Limited changes in other leadership skills

Partners reported limited evidence of change in school leaders’ ability to make data-driven decisions, implement based on their plans, sustain changes beyond the program, and bring about changes in school vision.

For example, our Partner Organizations in Kenya and Malaysia experienced difficulty incorporating a culture of data-driven instruction in schools. In Kenya, Dignitas reported that school leaders were collecting and reviewing data but were unable to utilize the data in decision-making. In Malaysia, PEMIMPIN reported that they were able to track certain types of leadership practices such as 77% of leaders being able to set SMART goals. However, the school leaders struggled to make decisions based on this data. One reason for this could be a compliance mindset among the school leaders. School leaders typically collected data or compiled documentation to fulfill direct government regulations as opposed to using the data they collected to improve the quality of instruction. While the school leaders were able to set school goals, they were unable to bring about an equity focus through this process.

A second skill that Partners struggled to bring about was concrete changes in school vision. For example, PEMIMPIN spoke about how there has been a recent change in the government’s approach towards school vision. Until recently, all schools in Malaysia had to adopt a central vision. Schools are now allowed to adopt an independent vision. However, school leaders have been reluctant to create and adopt a vision that’s contextually relevant for their own circumstances since they had never done this before and did not have the necessary skill set or motivation to define their own school vision.

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28Sen & Rajagopalan, 2019
29Sen & Rajagopalan, 2019
In India, a study of 29 school leaders in Delhi and Pune showed that the skill that school leaders made least progress in was ‘implementation’. ISLI measured this skill based on whether school leaders consistently followed up on action tasks in their plans and successfully built a culture of accountability through consistency in practices. At the beginning of the year, school leaders were rated 1.6 out of a 4 point scale on their ability to execute their plans completely. This improved to 2 at the end of the year, an improvement of 0.5. A school leader with a rating of 2 out 4 is typically able to begin implementing the action steps which they have designed. However, a level 2 school leader is unable to follow through with the execution throughout the year. There is no accountability mechanism to support the school leaders.

Additionally, ISLI spoke about the challenge in maintaining the sustainability of the interventions once the program finished. They highlighted that the school leaders are often unable to hire individuals with the high skill levels needed to maintain these changes in practices after the program ended.

**Differing views on factors that influenced the school leaders’ adoption of high-quality leadership practices**

Partners observed factors that affected the rate of change in practice by school leaders, but as they had not yet disaggregated their data by these factors they did not have any direct data to support these claims. These observations were based on the Partners’ experiences during the school visits or through anecdotes.

ISLI and Dignitas, the only two Partners to work with private school leaders, emphasized differences between private and public school leaders. ISLI felt that it was easier to bring about changes with private school leaders in India because they had greater autonomy in managing their teachers and bringing in new initiatives. Government school leaders have to work within regulations and existing systems that made changes harder for them. The difference in the level of accountability between government and private school leaders was also a factor that influenced the uptake of the program.

Partners also hypothesized gender and age as an important factor. Dignitas and PEMIMPIN observed faster and better uptake of recommended practices by female school leaders. Further, PEMIMPIN also reported that four of the five schools which they selected as the top schools from the first cohort were led by women.

Partners in India and Indonesia felt that younger school leaders were more likely to bring about changes in their schools as they were more open to new ideas and external suggestions. During the baseline assessment, INSPIRASI found that there was a correlation between experience and mindsets. School leaders with more experience were more likely to have less of a growth mindset.

**Changes in classroom instruction**

Partners are committed to improving the quality of teaching practices but highlighted challenges in measuring quality of teacher practices consistently.

A core focus of all four GSL Partners is an improvement in the quality of instruction through workshops and individualized support. Program staff consistently observed classrooms during their school visits along with the school leaders.

The Partners identified two pathways that school leaders can undertake to improve classroom practice:

- designing effective and personalized teacher professional development
- bringing about greater collaboration among teachers

In Kenya, program staff conducted observations to measure lesson quality through a number of parameters including effective lesson planning, use of more effective behaviour management strategies, and use of classroom engagement strategies. The data indicated mixed results and a variation between the two locations. For example, while the data showed that greater proportion of teachers in Nairobi were using recommended classroom strategies between the baseline and the endline, the data also showed declining numbers in Laikipia. One of the reasons for this could be the different sets of individuals conducting these observations in both locations. The proportion of teachers using varied methods to engage different types of learners in Laikipia and Nairobi increase by 8 and 13 percentage points respectively. Similarly, the proportion of teachers using formative assessments in the classroom improved from 66% to 92% in Nairobi.

The data also showed mixed results with respect to instructional quality in Malaysia. While there was an upward trend in terms of increasing adoption of group work in classrooms from cycle 1 to 4, this dropped in cycle 5. With respect to the learning environment, the average rating at cycle 1 was 2.56 which increased to 2.72 in cycle 2, declined 1.9 in cycle 3, improved to 2.51 in cycle 4 and once again declined to 2.19 in cycle 5. A very similar trend was observed with respect to their ratings on teaching and learning.

Staff members felt that this was because of the heavy exam season in cycle 3 and 5. The staff members also pointed out that they did not have a steady sample of classroom observations and that their data could reflect methodological challenges as well.

They felt that they observed better classroom practices in terms of simple things such as the presence of learning objectives in the classroom but not on practices such as incorporation of group work, using differentiated instruction, using appropriate pedagogy or inculcating 21st century skills in the classroom. All Partners found consistency in measuring teacher practices to be a challenge given the minimal amount of time they spend at school. The primary challenge they faced was in getting a strong...
overview of the quality of teaching effectiveness during the short visits, especially compared to the other priorities that they had with the school leaders. This suggests the need for greater investment in identifying how Partners can observe changes in the classrooms.

**CHANGES IN STUDENT LEARNING**

_Evidence on impact on student learning outcomes from India*

The ISLI student learning evaluation, led by Educational Initiatives, a third-party provider, included random selection of schools and students from Grades 3, 5, and 7 at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. In 2018-2019, they sampled 6,796 students in all three grades in five cities and compared their results to the average performance data collected by the third-party agency. The percentage of students in the ISLI schools performing better than the typical government student improved from the baseline to the endline in English & Math across all grades. For example, the percentage of students in the ISLI schools from Grade 3 outperforming the typical government student improved from 27% in the baseline to 36% in the endline. Similar gains are also observed in Mathematics as well, especially in Grades 3 and 5 (14.11 percentage point and 6.06 percentage point improvement respectively).

Grey Matters India conducted an independent evaluation of the impact of the ISLI program for the 2017-2018 cohort. Students in Grades 3 and 5 were followed through 2017-2019. A total of 1,273 students in 25 schools were assessed for three consecutive years. The results were compared to a control group of over 5,000 students who were assessed in other Grey Matters India studies over these years. The studies showed a small positive growth in student scores in both English and Math. Overall, in English, there was a 9% improvement in scale scores over 3 years for students in Grade 3 and a 5% improvement in scale scores in Grade 5. In math, there was 8% growth in the scale scores for students in Grades 3 and 5. Compared to the performance of students in the control group, this improvement for students in ISLI intervention schools was statistically significant for students in Grade 5, although the effect size was very small. Further, the extent of growth in the scaled scores was also more during the intervention compared to the post-intervention year. For example, in Grade 3, the average score in English improved from 89 to 98 from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 during the intervention and then reduced to 97 in 2019-2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of students scoring above the average government student benchmark</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 5</th>
<th>Class 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>35.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endline</td>
<td>35.47</td>
<td>34.57</td>
<td>38.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MATH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of students scoring above the average government student benchmark</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 5</th>
<th>Class 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>20.18</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>46.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endline</td>
<td>40.36</td>
<td>34.57</td>
<td>46.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*GSL is planning an ISLI specific report to share the impact of the organization.*
Partners find measuring the impact of their program through student learning outcomes challenging

Partners highlighted challenges they faced in measuring student learning ranging from logistics to evaluation design to ethical struggles. Despite data on student learning showing an upward trend, ISLI was hesitant to link the results to the intervention directly or generalize these results due to the intervention. They highlighted that their program required customization and they did not have data yet on isolating effective practices from ineffective ones. For example, the data showed that students in Grade 5 showed faster improvements than other grades but there was no specific reason to explain this differential change. Further, conducting third party evaluations twice a year was logistically demanding.

Some Partners found it impossible to implement third party assessments. Dignitas highlighted the difficulties in identifying existing reliable third party assessments that measure specific student competencies beyond basic literacy and numeracy. Further, given that the pilot in Kenya was a six-month program, it was logistically difficult to conduct systematic third party assessments.

PEMIMPIN stated that measuring student learning outcomes is difficult in the absence of standardized government examinations. In some cases, using government test data to measure changes in student learning itself was seen as unreliable. For example, the changes in the student learning could be due to the high-pressure of these examinations, external tutoring, or just the pressure to ‘teach to the test.’

Current policy environments also pose ethical questions on introducing another test for students. For example, the Kenyan government recently introduced a competency-based curriculum where emphasis was given to 21st century skills such as communication, critical thinking, and collaboration. However, frameworks to empirically measure these have yet to be introduced. In this climate, Dignitas felt it would not be fair to introduce an additional test on students as this could over-test students and further emphasize exam results as the only parameter to measure the students’ knowledge base and/or further reduce existing instructional time.

CHANGE IN OTHER STUDENT OUTCOMES

Partners expressed the need to move towards broader definitions of improved student outcomes beyond academic learning. Changes in student social-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes was not systematically captured, but two Partners show early impact on different areas including reduced incidences of corporal punishment and increasing opportunities for student leadership.

While there are no systems in place to measure specific social and emotional skills, ISLI and PEMIMPIN spoke about this in terms of two aspects - reduced corporal punishment and increased opportunities for student leadership.

ISLI highlighted the use of 30-day challenges to motivate school leaders in different aspects by connecting them with their peers via WhatsApp messaging services. A 30-day challenge refers to any issue that school leaders address continuously for a month. ISLI staff members and school leaders shared strategies through WhatsApp for 30 days. An example of the 30-day challenge was sharing alternative behaviour management strategies to imposing corporal punishment on students. ISLI also shared examples of greater opportunities for student leadership including the formation of student councils in various schools.

PEMIMPIN highlighted that some schools purely focused on increased student leadership as part of their school improvement and development plans, despite this not being a core focus of the program. An example of student leadership was a school where the teachers left the responsibility of organizing school events such as sports day and teachers day with the students while providing them with minimal support.
This chapter examines how Partners are defining their goal of effective school leadership. A school leadership effectiveness framework outlines the skills and competencies that school leaders need to be successful and effect change in schools, teachers, and students.

There was strong agreement among Partner Organizations around instructional leadership and the need for school leaders to be able to provide quality feedback to teachers and manage relationships with the teachers. They also highlighted a number of other skills that school leaders need such as being visible outside administrative structures, planning, and being data-driven in their strategic planning and decision-making.
Consensus with Partners around the need to develop our school leaders into instructional leaders

The most common skills highlighted across Partner Organizations were providing quality feedback to teachers and managing relationships with the teachers.

One reason Partners highlighted was that many school leaders lacked an instructional background or strong teaching experience. As a result, school leaders first needed to understand effective teaching and learning and then they could transfer this knowledge to the teachers in order to influence the quality of instruction provided to the students.

Partners reported that conducting observations and providing feedback was important for school leaders to realize that academic supervision was a key aspect of their role. They highlighted the need to provide feedback to teachers in a manner that did not make them defensive because they typically only received criticism as feedback.

Further, Partners emphasized that leaders needed to learn to establish positive relationships of trust with their teachers, to delegate more leadership responsibilities, and to build collaboration among the teachers.

Partners also highlighted challenges with the instructional leadership approach. Dignitas shared that low-fee private school leaders often avoid investing in teachers due to the fear of them leaving once they attain a certain level of expertise. INSPIRASI highlighted that academic supervision is often unaddressed despite featuring in the government’s framework for school leaders because of the administrative burden on school leaders and the lack of emphasis on the instructional leadership aspect of the role.

Partners included non-instructional leadership modules in their training, but the skills emphasized varied by country

In addition to instructional leadership, Partner Organizations also highlighted the need for other types of skills as well. The specific skills were identified typically based on school observations and needs assessments of school leaders. PEMIMPIN was deliberate in aligning with the needs identified by the Malaysian School Leadership Framework (SKPMG2).

ISLI and PEMIMPIN, in particular, felt that it was important for the school leader to be visible and present outside their administrative offices to interact with stakeholders including the parents, community, and the students. One of the staff members shared a story of a school leader in India who also included students in their school walkthroughs. Students were able to spot infrastructural challenges and raise these issues with the school leaders, giving them a sense of empowerment.

Another common skill highlighted by ISLI and Dignitas was long-term vision-setting and planning. ISLI reported that school leaders often get caught up in day-to-day needs, thereby ignoring setting a long-term vision for the school and planning the schools’ needs around that larger vision.

Dignitas also spoke about the need for school leaders to be data-driven, in terms of their ability to use data to improve classroom instruction. During the pilot, the data showed that school leaders reported reviewing data with teachers more often but it was unclear how the school leaders were utilizing these data reviews. Other Partner Organizations also felt that this was a challenging skill for school leaders to adopt.
Partners highlighted several aspects of designing effective professional development for school leaders. They felt that effective workshops require time for modelling, practice, and specific sections on contextualizing concepts to the school leaders’ situations. They also expressed a strong need for goal-oriented and customizable coaching.

*Strong levels of user engagement and attendance revealed school leaders’ valuation of the program*

### INDIA

ISLI reported high levels of attendance in their workshops (average of 85% and above) and feedback ratings of 4 out of 5 indicating a high level of engagement throughout the year.

### MALAYSIA

School leaders had an average satisfaction rate of 97% through the two years of the program.

### KENYA

On average, more than 90% of school leaders gave a satisfaction rating of at least 8 out of 10 for the program.

### INDONESIA

In the first six months of the INSPIRASI program, workshop and coaching feedback trends suggest that school leaders are consistently challenged and motivated to attend the program. 93% of school leaders reported that they were even more excited to attend future workshops by the INSPIRASI team after the third workshop.
Effective workshops include practice time for participants to model and implement action steps in their schools

Partner Organizations emphasized the need for workshops to build in practice time to ensure more timely uptake of the recommended practices. For example, Dignitas reported that school leaders were unable to implement concepts that they didn’t have the chance to practice during the workshop or the school visits. They shared that school leaders did not cascade their learnings from the session on differentiated instruction and the coaches attributed this to the fact that the school leaders could not test this out during the workshops.

PEMIMPIN highlighted the importance of active learning and time to practice during the workshops for school leaders. Further, school leaders found workshop topics which they could immediately implement in their schools to be more helpful. They also enjoyed and learned more through hands-on activities. For example, in one workshop facilitators have the school leaders bake a muffin to showcase the importance of designing activities which had explicit learning outcomes. INSPIRASI highlighted that school leaders learn at different paces hence contextualizing workshop content becomes paramount.

Similarly, all Partners agreed that workshops and coaching needed to culminate in a set of specific action items for the school leaders to take back to their schools.

Effective coaching is goal-oriented and has a specific agenda that is customized to the needs of the school leader

All Partners believed strongly that coaching was the most crucial differentiating factor in their program. Partners also emphasized the need for goal-oriented and personalized coaching. ISLI and INSPIRASI reported that it was important for coaches to understand where school leaders were in their growth trajectory to decide the school visit agendas instead of imposing a common agenda for all school leaders. PEMIMPIN and Dignitas shared the need to keep refocusing the school leaders, thereby raising the need for strong goal-oriented conversations.

Providing a space for school leaders to share their successes among peers was important

ISLI and PEMIMPIN highlighted the importance of asking school leaders to share their successes with peers either during the workshops or through technology/messaging services. They reported that other school leaders appreciated hearing from their peers, and this continued to motivate them. School leaders felt more confident to make changes in their school after having heard from others who were in similar circumstances.

Continuous reflection by staff on quality and testing improvements strengthens programs

Partners reflected on key areas of learning to carry forward in 2020. These include:

- Ensuring manageable amount of content so that the school leaders can absorb the information and make changes in the school (Malaysia and India)
- Direct alignment with government priorities (Malaysia)
- Longer program to meet the needs of school leaders (Kenya)
- Alternative ways of engaging with the school leaders such as the existing government forums or group coaching (Indonesia)
- Designing coaching frameworks (Kenya and Malaysia)
The previous chapters summarize the key learnings from GSL's Partner Organizations, synthesize their impact, and highlight their future direction. These learnings have implications for GSL as an organization and for policymakers and practitioners working on school leadership. Given below are a few key areas that GSL will focus on in 2020. 

**Further research is required to better understand the specific challenges facing school leaders in the Global South.**

While Partner Organizations have clearly identified instructional leadership as a core focus of the program, school leaders in the Global South face a myriad of challenges including administrative and financial issues. GSL intends to learn more about the needs of school leaders from different circumstances so that we can directly contribute to strong program and policy design.

**GSL and Partner Organizations need to develop a strong, robust, and relevant school leadership framework to guide their programs and measure the impact.**

The report clearly highlights the need for a binding framework to serve as a base for the programs moving forward. A clear framework ensures that Partners have a strong set of focus outcomes for school leaders. Further, a set of skills and competencies on which to focus provides school leaders an opportunity to be more self-reflective and a benchmark to work towards. Such a framework also serves as a foundation for them to build a strong monitoring and evaluation system to measure the program’s impact on school leadership practices and mindsets.

**GSL and Partner Organizations need to identify stronger ways of measuring teacher practices and student outcomes.**

GSL's Partner Organizations are moving towards stronger data points to monitor the progress made by school leaders. There is a need for greater understanding of classroom level changes. Knowing more about the quality of instruction in classrooms can feed directly into improving the curriculum and design of the program. Finding simple but relevant tools to measure classroom quality would be extremely helpful for the Partners.

Potential solutions to these challenges facing Partners regarding measuring student learning outcomes include:

1. Providing a range of options in measuring student learning outcomes in terms of increasing complexity including a pro-con analysis of each approach
2. Working with government officials to understand how best to approach this as a systematic intervention and not just another test
3. Measuring basic literacy and numeracy through existing assessments
4. Using existing student reports as a tool of coaching for school leaders so that school leaders also invest in this process

**GSL needs to work with Partner Organizations to identify an effective way to implement scalable coaching models.**

All Partners felt that the in-school support was one of the most helpful components of the program for the school leaders. This structure allowed them to get personalized support and also served as an accountability mechanism. However, scaling a coaching model is difficult especially in the case of large-scale government partnerships. Sustaining practices is also a challenge with this model since the school leaders have limited incentive to continue these practices once the school visits end. Given this, GSL and Partner Organizations need to collaborate to design and pilot other ways to scale coaching, especially in remote locations.

**GSL and Partner Organizations need to develop a stronger network with a culture of collaboration.**

GSL's interactions with our Partner Organizations shows the importance of an international network where members bring in a strong level of localized knowledge. GSL will be working with our Partners to identify stronger ways of ensuring direct collaboration to solve shared problems and designing more effective programs.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


