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.

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.

1UN defines young people as those between the ages of 15-24 years
2UNESCO, 2014; World Bank, 2017
3World Development Report, 2018
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.