Whole School Approach for School Improvement

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Abstract

The Whole School Approach (hereafter WSA) has emerged as one of the effective approaches for the holistic improvement of schools, creating a secure and meaningful learning environment through effective leadership, policy guidelines, continuous professional development, and improving teaching and learning involving all the stakeholders. This thematic review explores and presents an in-depth understanding of the WSA as a holistic and sustainable approach for school improvement. We reviewed articles and policy documents on WSA downloaded from databases and publishers like Scopus, Sage Publications, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, and other influential journals relating to school improvement. Likewise, dissertations from university databases and reports from well-acclaimed organizations in education and leadership were reviewed to explore the deeper layers of WSA and its implementation in whole-school improvement. The research emerged with five major themes relating to whole school improvement: school improvement framework, current trends in education, WSA and its core dimensions, implementation of WSA, benefits, and challenges. This research implies that policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators focus on the multiple aspects of WSA, including teaching and learning, effective leadership, continuous professional development, community involvement, school-based policy guidelines,

creating a positive school culture, monitoring and evaluation, and reflection on the improvement for overall school transformation.

Keywords: whole school approach, school improvement framework, continuous professional development, community involvement, leadership, school culture

Introduction

During the uncertain, unpredictable, complex, and constantly changing times of the 21st century—complexity, globalization, and rapidly increasing knowledge economy—the urgent call for school improvement has been inevitable. Mogren et al. (2019) claim that traditional pedagogical practices cannot foster awareness of the complexities and uncertainty of the surrounding world. Despite the several educational plans and policies executed by the Government of Nepal, placing high priority on educational transformation (Singh & Allison, 2016), the anticipated results have not been so satisfactory. According to the ERO norm and standard, the status of community schools is that only 0.2 percent of schools fall into outstanding schools (ERO, 2020, p. 53), except for some outstanding ones. Therefore, it is urgent to establish high-performing schools to enable learners to address the growing complexity and ever-changing challenges. Generally, school improvement (hereafter SI) refers to a systematic way of making change and development within the school to enhance student achievement through focusing on the teaching and learning process and conditions that support this process (Kalman, 2020). Likewise, Hopkins (2001) defines SI as "a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change" (p. 13). In the words of Koh et al. (2023), school improvement means "fostering students' academic,

social, and emotional growth in keeping [with] ever-changing societal needs" (p. 298), and to achieve this, school needs to engage its stakeholders and work on multi-dimensions, such [as] teacher professional development, resource development, community involvement, etc. Therefore, SI is a systematic, ongoing process and collaborative effort to make the school leaders and teachers more capable of achieving the school's national and local objectives (Bjorkman, 2008).

Various educational programs and activities are instrumental for school improvement, including shared vision, effective leadership, teacher professional development, pedagogical innovation, and students' well-being. In addition, engaging the learners in various meaningful activities, resource management, promoting a positive school culture, and community involvement are also essential. Likewise, leadership practice, availability of resources, stakeholders' participation, and pedagogical practices are other school components that determine the success or failure of the school improvement initiatives (Barber & Mourshed, 2016). The above discussion implies that school improvement initiatives require joint efforts of all stakeholders and focus on the multiple aspects of school life as a framework for whole system redesign, which is associated with sustainable school improvement through holistic, systematic, and reflexive efforts that are collectively introduced by all stakeholders (Tulbury & Galvin, 2022).

However, several efforts in the past show that the central aim of the school improvement program is distracted while focusing on single or partial aspects of the school (Jamtsho, 2015). In such a context, the whole school approach can be one of the practical approaches for holistic and sustainable school improvement. Besides, to meet the

21st-century uncertainty and complexities, today's learners need to be equipped with a broad set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, e.g., collaboration, critical thinking, communication, research and technology, problem-solving, creative thinking, leadership and management, learning to learn and self-regulations, developing social and emotional skills, rather than just knowledge acquisition (OECD, 2018). Therefore, the primary concern of most education institutions today is how effective their education system is in preparing learners and making them competitive in the advanced job market and advanced studies. As there is a close connection between education and economic production, it has grasped the attention of policymakers worldwide (Smith III & Sandvik, 2015). As a result, most competitive educational institutions focus on learners' readiness for the competitive job markets and entering into the best universities in the world for advanced studies.

Therefore, it is necessary to intervene in schools for the whole school transformation, shifting from conventional teaching-learning practices to digitalized individualized learning to address the current trends in education. Moreover, the formation of learning circles for the continuous professional development of all stakeholders and the promotion of a broad set of knowledge and entrepreneurship skills in learners is necessary to prepare the learners for the 21st-century competitive job market and higher education. However, the reality is different.

With the aspiration of improving the quality of education and grasping the pace of recent trends in education, the Government of Nepal has made and implemented several plans and policies: Basic Primary Education Master Plan (BPEMP) (1997–2002), School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009–2015), and the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) (2016/17–2022/23).

However, the students' outcomes, especially in the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) and Basic Education Exam (BEE), show that the anticipated result is not so satisfactory. A school improvement plan requires a variety of activities. Several past efforts show that the school improvement program's central aim is distracted while focusing on single or partial aspects of the school (Jamtsho, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to focus on the whole school approach in school improvement projects and involve all stakeholders—school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and community members—for its sustainability. It is because providing a certain level of responsibility to the stakeholders makes them feel valued and respected, which increases the level of motivation in the workplace (Sauer, 2011).

Despite all these efforts from the government, several studies also show that students' academic performance is below a satisfactory level (Chapagain, 2021), which depends on the existing teaching-learning practices in the country. The GoN (2010), in the *National Framework of Child-Friendly School for Quality Education* (2010), reports that "most of the schools in Nepal are still being run traditionally with teacher-centered, textbook-based, chalk-and-talk method of rote learning. The whole school environment is focused on encouraging children to get text by heart" (p. 7). It indicates that teaching-learning practices are still limited to rote memorization of the contents of the textbooks in the name of preparing for exams and scoring higher grades, which do not ensure developing necessary life skills that are also known as soft skills or 21st-century skills as expected by the curriculum.

Similarly, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP; 2009–2016) has focused on three pillars of access, inclusion, and quality by promoting a child-friendly school

environment. However, the reality is different, which can be realized in the government report on the SSDP (2016/17–2022/23). Despite some exceptions, it reports that most schools still follow traditional methods of rote learning and regurgitation. It further reports that instructional materials provided by the center are the only sources for learning, whereas teaching materials made locally available are hardly used in the classroom. As a result, the Nepalese education system is blamed for adopting conventional pedagogies that are ritualistic, preparing for exams rather than life, and producing educated jobless youths. The report mentioned above clearly implies that educational policies and plans brought into practice to transform the poor quality of education are not adequately materialized.

As a result, the current scenario of educational practices and students' learning achievements raises several questions: Is there a problem with the practices of academic policies and plans? Or is there a problem in leadership practices? Or did the concerned authorities fail to participate with other stakeholders? Or did leadership practices fail to build the commitment and capacity of the different school personnel? Or is it due to the school's lack of management and allocation of adequate resources? We believe all these questions need to be answered, and corrective measures need to be taken as soon as possible to ensure academic improvement and better career opportunities for millions of students by promoting high-quality education in Nepal. However, the question arises regarding how to improve the school or the practical framework for school improvement.

Method

In this thematic paper, we critically reviewed articles, reports, books, and policy documents, focusing on the whole school approach for school improvement and synthesized the central tenets to draw themes. We collected

articles by using keywords and phrases such as "whole school approach and its key dimensions," "school improvement," "teaching-learning practices," "teacher professional development," "positive school culture," "policy guidelines," and "stakeholders' involvement." We searched articles and educational reports, including articles, books, policy documents, dissertations, and reports published by well-acclaimed publishers, universities, and organizations. We also explored books and journal articles from databases such as Scopus, Sage Publications, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, and other influential journals relating to school improvement. Likewise, dissertations and reports from different universities' databases and reports from well-acclaimed organizations in the field of education and leadership were also reviewed. We downloaded articles, dissertations, books, and reports, of which only thematically relevant articles and theses were included for thematic review. Altogether, we reviewed fifty documents, including twenty-six journal articles, twelve reports, six dissertations, four books, and two policy documents. First, we read through those materials, highlighted important lines and paragraphs, and annotated articles. Then, we conducted the thematic synthesis of the findings.

School Improvement Framework

It is the widely accepted idea that every school is unique in terms of its context, administrative structure, vision and mission, level of resources available, school culture, etc., which determine the success or failure of the school improvement activities in the particular school. Regarding the school improvement framework, Hopkins (2001) mentions some parameters comprising leadership, teacher professional development, curriculum, learning environment, vision–mission, resource management, school culture and climate, student engagement, and high standards

expectations. Similarly, Lee and Louis (2019), Newman (2020), and Prenger et al. (2021) highlight the five key factors for school improvement: effective leadership, cultivating learning culture, teacher professional development, learning environment, and vision and mission of the school. The School Sector Development Plan (herein, SSDP) (2016/17–2022/23) also highlights seven cross-cutting themes that include teacher management and professional development, school governance and management, institutional capacity development, disaster risk reduction and school safety, monitoring, evaluation and assessment, examination and accreditation, and application of ICT in education for holistic development of the schools for improving the quality of education (MoE, 2016).

      The above discussion implies that a school improvement project is an ongoing and complex process. It demands a collaborative effort of all the stakeholders to improve all aspects in a parallel way by developing the school as a learning organization. From the above discussion, school improvement discourse revolves around creating a shared vision, effective school leadership, continuous teacher professional development, promoting positive school culture, conducting need analysis, designing and implementing improvement strategy, monitoring and evaluation, and reflecting on the improvement process.

      A shared vision is regarded as one of the integral components of school improvement efforts and the change process that unites the whole school community by providing a common picture of the future (Tikka & Tarnanen, 2024). School vision is normally based on the philosophy or principle on which the school was established that guides school improvement initiatives. Without a well-crafted and compelling shared vision based on the philosophy of the principal on which the school was

founded, school improvement efforts can easily create confusion and dissolve the programs and activities (Tran, 2021). Therefore, the whole school community needs to be engaged in crafting a compelling shared vision that can communicate through different channels, empower all the stakeholders, appeal to them to contribute, and remove the obstacles (Kotter, 2011).

      Research shows that school leadership, as one of the key agents in the school improvement process, has become a priority in school education that plays a vital role in holistic school improvement, such as improving students' academic performance, motivating and empowering stakeholders, as well as creating a learning environment in the school (Pont et al., 2008). So, effective school leadership has long been recognized as crucial to any school improvement process. Effective leaders create and sustain conditions for quality education and drive and lead their schools through cultural change. For successful school improvement, challenging their status quo, as Kirtman and Fullan (2016) argue that influential leaders have a high sense of urgency for improvement, have a commitment to continuous improvement, focus on team over self, build trust through communication and empowerment, set high expectations for change, develop ownership of the plans for success, and build external networks and partnership for holistic school improvement.

      "The quality of education cannot be higher than the quality of teachers" (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015, p. 242). Therefore, there is a common understanding among policymakers, scholars, and educators that enhancing teacher professional development (TPD) is a cornerstone to achieving the goals of school improvement (Desimone et al., 2002). As a result, it is found that several countries around the globe are investing in the continuous learning of their

teachers as a significant engine for the improvement of both teacher competency and student academic success. Therefore, it is necessary to create the conditions for continuous TPD and motivate and empower the entire team of teachers for their life-long learning, which is one of the fundamental requirements of the school improvement process (Niemi, 2015).

It is popularly said that real motivation for improvement comes not from outside but 'within' the school culture, which comprises deep patterns of values, beliefs, traditions, and norms built over time (Matti et al., 2023). Culture at large refers to social and power relationships and emotions, vision and mission statements, open communication, trust, collegial relationships, orientation towards learning, sentiment, and sense of belonging (Schein, 2010). Hinde (2004) compares the importance of hydrogen in water with the school's culture. He argues that as hydrogen is a major ingredient of water, so is the culture in the school, which plays a significant role in shaping the school. Various studies show that healthy and positive school culture is correlated strongly with increased student achievement and motivation (Stolp, 1994), which promotes productivity, improves collegial relationships, building commitment by focusing attention on what is essential and valuable for school (Jerald, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate a child-friendly, home-like, welcoming, and conducive learning culture in the school.

Identifying the areas of improvement is essential to clearly understand where the school is regarding students' achievement, pedagogical practices, availability of resources, effectiveness of leadership, community involvement, etc. Once the baseline areas of improvement are identified, it is also important to set priorities, realistic expectations, and realistic timelines (Tran, 2021) for the

improvement. In addition, it is also important to consult, evaluate, and share the improvement plans with all stakeholders for successful implementation (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE], 2014).

Similarly, based on the data analyzed, it is also necessary to design and implement improvement strategies involving all stakeholders and break (if needed) the priorities into more specific and achievable goals for successful school improvement (Tran, 2021). For successful school improvement, Tran (2021) further suggests monitoring and evaluating the improvement efforts regularly and reflecting on the improvement strategies to identify the challenge that occurred, the impact of the improvement process, and the lessons learned.
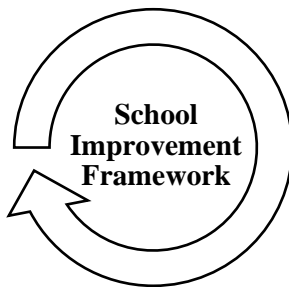
- •Developing a Shared Vision
- •Efective Leadership
- •Teacher Professional Development
- •Promoting Positive School Culture
- •Conducting Need Analysis
- •Design and Implement Improvement Strategies
- •Monitoring & Evaluation
- •Reflection on Improvement Strategies

From the above discussion, it can be understood that school comprises multiple aspects, and the school improvement process is a long-term, non-linear, multilayered, and multidimensional process. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on a holistic approach rather than focus on the partial component for successful school improvement.

Whole School Approach: Core Dimensions

As the whole school approach infers the active and collaborative participation and commitment of all stakeholders, the joint efforts of each member of the school

community—e.g., school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and the local community—are essential in school improvement (Gaillard et al., 2018). There is no uniformity regarding the core dimensions of the whole school approach (WSA). Based on the Council of Europe (2018), it includes teaching and learning, leadership and management, continuous professional development, positive school culture, community involvement, monitoring and evaluation, and policy guidelines as its core dimensions.

Teaching and learning comprise all curricular and extracurricular activities to ensure that each learner gets equal opportunities to cultivate knowledge, skills, and a positive attitude through formal teaching and learning practices. The primary concern of WSA is to promote students' learning (Gericke & Torbjörnsson, 2022) and equip them with broader knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are attained through WSI in a private school in Nepal. Therefore, following the democratic principle and human rights, students' learning is ensured by creating opportunities for learners to participate in their learning—for example, through peer assessment, student-centered learning (Gaillard et al., 2020), forming different group work, promoting student-teacher collaboration as co-learners, and giving equal access to the teaching. It ensures that the classroom is a safe space where learners feel comfortable expressing their views openly by creating an open, participative, and respectful classroom environment that allows all the learners to share their experiences, opinions, and emotions (Council of Europe, 2018).

Under leadership and management, school leaders need to demonstrate themselves as visionary role models who can encourage the participation of all stakeholders; respect human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision-making, and responsible

accountability (Gaillard et al., 2020); to promote community involvement in school improvement activities. Moreover, leadership plays a vital role in encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the review of the whole school environment and its capacity to promote democratic extracurricular activities and school governance through multiple means— e.g., observations, surveys, feedback from multiple stakeholders, and review meetings (Gaillard et al., 2020). Regarding the participation of multi-stakeholders in the school improvement initiative, Cilliers (2002) argues that recursive interactions between the multiple layers of systems improve it. Therefore, organizational/leadership power needs to be distributed among other stakeholders, shifting from single-authoritative to distributed, multiple leadership practices, as there is distributed (network) control rather than centralized, hierarchical control (Keshavarz et al., 2010). Each school community member is considered an essential contributor to overall school improvement. The purpose of education is not merely to deliver subject matter but to prepare learners for their future professional careers as 21st-century citizens who are expected to be active, self-directed, confident, and concerned learners—responsible and cognitively, socially, emotionally, and technically competent (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). This is not achievable through conventional, teacher-centered methods based on rote memorization of content. Since "the quality of education cannot be higher than the quality of teachers" (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015, p. 242), there is a common understanding among policymakers, scholars, and educators that enhancing teacher professional development (TPD) is a cornerstone for achieving the goals of school improvement (Desimone et al., 2002). Therefore, continuous teacher professional development is essential, supported through

various training programs and workshops to meet educational goals.

Moreover, in accordance with democratic principles and human rights, school-based policies, values, beliefs, rules, and regulations should be formulated based on the school's needs to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. It is necessary to foster a non-toxic and welcoming school atmosphere where all staff maintain harmonious and cooperative relationships (Gaillard et al., 2020). Everyone should feel like a valued member of the organization. All stakeholders must be encouraged to work collaboratively in building a positive school culture that promotes equity, democracy, and inclusion—regardless of individual differences.

The sustainability of school improvement initiatives is essential and entails the involvement of the broader community (Filho & Brandli, 2016). Therefore, schools need to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, such as individuals, organizations, businesses, NGOs, and local authorities, to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Strickland, 2016). For the sustainable development of the organization, partnerships with local agents—such as social or volunteer organizations, youth clubs, entrepreneurial groups, corporate entities, media, health professionals, and higher education institutions—are encouraged to support and sustain the school (Gaillard et al., 2020). Sustainability should thus be considered an ongoing process of seeking new and improved solutions rather than a fixed notion of predefined outcomes. The involvement and active participation of multiple stakeholders—including school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents, community members, and local agencies—significantly contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of school improvement efforts

(Nicdao & Ancho, 2019). Therefore, stakeholder involvement is a critical dimension of the Whole School Approach (WSA), as it strengthens mutual relationships and generates reciprocal benefits.

A democratic and positive school culture—where every individual feels part of the organization, their human rights are respected, and they have a meaningful role—is one of the core dimensions of the WSA (Gaillard et al., 2020). Gaillard et al. further explain that the WSA supports the introduction of operational rules within schools that ensure equal treatment and access for all stakeholders, regardless of ethnicity, cultural identity, lifestyle, or ideology. Matti et al. (2023) argue that genuine motivation for improvement originates not from external forces but from within the school culture itself, which consists of deep-seated values, beliefs, traditions, and norms developed over the course of a year-long school improvement initiative. Therefore, the inclusive participation of school administration, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders is essential in fostering collaborative decision-making and formulating context-specific school policy guidelines. Furthermore, in encouraging multi-stakeholder engagement, the WSA promotes youth participation in dialogues on issues that affect their lives, supporting critical reflection and fostering transformative learning and empowerment (Leite et al., 2024).

Preparing and implementing school improvement plans and policies alone is not sufficient; regular monitoring and evaluation are also necessary to ensure that tasks are completed on schedule and that challenges arising during implementation are promptly addressed.

Implementing the Whole School Approach

From the above discussion, we came to understand that WSA is a practical approach to whole school

improvement that emphasizes the democratic participation of all school communities as well as broader community members in the overall aspects of school life. The notion of community involvement in the education of young children is rooted in the distant past. As schools are perceived as active change agents for community development (Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 2020), the role of the community is taken as a vital pillar in shaping, directing, empowering, and strengthening the educational activities of schools.

So, while implementing WSA, various strategies need to be applied to involve the whole school community (Hargreaves, 2008) for sustainable school improvement, where everyone feels respected and valued. Likewise, fostering a shared vision, mutual trust, and participatory leadership is essential for school–community partnership, which motivates all the stakeholders in their collective and valuable contribution to school improvement. In this regard, Minniss and Stewart (2009) state that sharing robust and positive communication, working together, building trust and support for families, and respecting their values contribute to promoting a sense of connectedness between staff and families in the school environment. Therefore, making them feel valued, respected, and recognized for their support is necessary.

Community participation is improved when their voices are heard and their support is praised. The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (2020) reports that stakeholders' involvement develops a sense of ownership among the students, school staff, and parents. As a result, the quality of education is improved by promoting schools to create better teaching and learning processes and enhancing learning outcomes.

According to Gaillard et al. (2020), WSA is guided by five essential principles when implementing WSA. These principles include respecting the local context, empowering stakeholders to develop solutions to challenges, encouraging the participation of all stakeholders, integrating capacity building, and supporting long-term local projects. It indicates that the execution of any new ideas or pedagogical practices and the creation of school-based policy guidelines depend on the school's local context.

Moreover, it is also significant to empower the whole school community, equip them with the required resources, and enable them to participate in the collective decision-making process for school improvement, following democratic participation to create a safe and supportive learning environment for the school's sustainability (Dudu, 2019).

To make it possible, a multi-dynamic, visionary, transformative school leader is required—one who can involve all the concerned stakeholders in decision-making and policy formation and enable them to take ownership of creating a safe learning environment in the school for its sustainability.

Moreover, Gaillard et al. (2020) suggest five stages for successfully applying WSA. These stages include conducting a situation analysis, which is also known as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis, to identify the possible areas of change in terms of school context, availability of resources (human, physical, financial, and informational), effectiveness of leadership, stakeholders' participation, school culture, and the school philosophy and ethos on which the school is founded, and to develop an action plan.

The next steps include executing the action plan involving stakeholders, evaluating progress, assessing the

work's impact, and sharing outcomes with the concerned school community for school improvement initiatives to create a positive learning environment for sustainability.

Opportunities Vs. Challenges

As two sides of the coin, the Whole School Approach (WSA) bears opportunities and challenges in implementing it in the natural context. Various literature shows that WSA is a practical approach to the holistic and sustainable improvement of the school, as it incorporates all dimensions of the school beyond teaching and learning, putting the learners at the center (Haber, 2020). As all the stakeholders share their partnership for school improvement, it promotes their democratic participation—from decision-making to policy development, implementation, and the sharing of outcomes. Haber (2020) further reports that school programs that are integrated and inclusive, in comparison to just informative and class-based programs, are likely to promote better learning and health outcomes. In other words, WSA intends to build a complete school through its holistic improvement—making it more inclusive, improving its physical facilities, empowering stakeholders through continuous professional development, and formulating required school-based policies with democratic participation. In this context, Leite et al. (2024) suggest that the WSA entails the collaboration of various elements and stakeholders within the school system to achieve shared objectives. These include improving student outcomes, establishing a safe and inclusive learning atmosphere, nurturing positive relationships, supporting teacher well-being, and actively involving both students and the community in the educational journey.

Gaillard et al. (2018) highlight the benefits of implementing WSA at the individual, school/classroom, and community levels. At an individual level, WSA helps

increase empathy, improve cooperation among students and teachers, and develop a stronger sense of responsibility, civic-mindedness, and mutual respect. At the school level, teachers feel more confident about applying democratic citizenship and human rights education, using interactive instructional methodology, creating a positive learning environment based on openness and trust, and improving collaboration among students, teachers, administrative staff, parents, and community members. Similarly, at the community level, it helps promote partnerships with various local agents like NGOs, local authorities, corporate and media houses, and youth clubs to provide expert support required for the whole school's improvement. Thus, WSA can provide an experience of how democracy works in practice (Gaillard et al., 2020).

However, some studies also reveal several obstacles and complexities to successfully implementing WSA (Jamstho, 2015). This approach demands active and democratic engagement and the obligation of all stakeholders to manage extra time and resources (Haber, 2020), which are serious matters to address for the effective execution of the WSA. However, having a "sarkari kaam, kahile jala gham" ("Government job is like a pastime.") kind of job mentality among school personnel, the lack of transparency and accountability of stakeholders, and political interference in schools in Nepal—besides some exceptional cases—make it difficult to find dedicated school leaders and teachers in Nepalese schools. Similarly, finding multi-dynamic professional leaders who can create a farsighted shared vision, motivate all the stakeholders, and engage them in the collective effort for school improvement is a serious challenge for leading such a school.

Similarly, in the words of Khan et al. (2011), a lack of professional knowledge and training for empowering

learners in applying interventions, focusing on creating a positive school culture, and promoting community participation can be regarded as distractors for teachers, primarily when they work under pressure to meet the expected educational standards. Further, it requires increased partnerships among school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and the broader community, which demand additional resources, time, and energy to implement the WSA successfully—something very difficult in the Nepalese context. Therefore, the lack of available resources and synergy among school stakeholders can be another problem in the successful execution of WSA.

Conclusion

The spectrum of pedagogical practices has extensively changed due to the growing use of digital technology in education, which significantly impacts educational practices in 21st-century classrooms, making it possible for learners to access lots of information for their learning. The school improvement process is a systematic, ongoing, complex, multidimensional, and multilayered process, which demands a collaborative effort from all the stakeholders to improve all aspects in a parallel way by developing the school as a learning organization. It is necessary to focus on multiple aspects of school life because the central aim of the school improvement program is distracted when focusing on single or partial aspects of the school. In such a context, WSA can be one of the practical approaches for holistic and sustainable school improvement, involving all the members of the school community, like school staff, parents and caregivers, learners, and the broader community that is building and refining a thriving, positive culture so they can feel a sense of belonging. WSA ensures overall aspects of school life, e.g., curricula, instructional methods and resources, leadership and

decision-making processes, policy guidelines, behavior and relationships of the stakeholders, extracurricular activities, and links with the community.

WSA intends to build a complete school through holistic improvement, making it more inclusive, improving its physical facilities, empowering school staff (teaching and non-teaching) through continuous professional development, and formulating required school-based policies with democratic participation. In other words, the school is designed and standardized according to the needs of the learners regarding their particular context, with the collective endeavor of the whole school community. There are several benefits to implementing WSA at individual, school, and community levels that can provide an authentic experience of democratic culture to the whole school community in the workplace.

As WSA is guided by five essential principles that include respecting local context, empowering stakeholders to develop solutions to challenges, encouraging the participation of all stakeholders, integrating capacity building, and supporting long-term local projects, it is essential to focus on these principles when implementing WSA in school improvement initiatives. In addition, it is also crucial to follow the five stages: conducting a situation analysis or SWOC analysis to identify the possible areas of change, executing the action plan involving stakeholders, evaluating progress, assessing the work's impact, and sharing outcomes with the concerned school community to create a positive learning environment for sustainability while implementing WSA in the school improvement project.

However, there may be several obstacles and complexities to successfully implementing WSA. This approach demands active and democratic engagement and

the obligation of all stakeholders to manage extra time and resources, which are serious matters to address for the effective execution of the WSA. Similarly, finding multi-dynamic professional leaders who can create a farsighted, compelling shared vision, motivate all the stakeholders, and engage them in the collective effort for school improvement is a serious challenge for leading such a school. Additionally, a lack of professional knowledge and training for empowering all stakeholders and creating a positive school culture, promoting community participation, a lack of collaboration among the whole school community, and a lack of adequate time, resources, and synergy among the stakeholders can be other possible challenges in the successful implementation of WSA.

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