

# Post-pandemic National Educational Investments: School Leadership Development through Innovative Learning Designs



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Educational Investments:**  
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by Shelby Cosner and Asmaa Alfadala

# Introduction



As educational systems throughout the globe grapple with educating students following multiple years of disruption to education, key observations can be made. First, focused attention to strengthening student learning will have positive consequences for children in school, their overall life outcomes, as well as for societies more generally (Education Commission, 2016). Stated simply, education is recognized as life-saving especially for the most vulnerable children, as well as for the economic recovery, development and success of nations (Brewer et al., 2007; General Secretariat for Development Planning [GSDP], 2011; Reuge et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2013). Second, school principals will be increasingly at the center of efforts within schools to develop, guide, and accelerate student learning.

Our understanding of the importance of principals has deepened over the last 20 years. Noteworthy evidence of the impact of principals on student learning has been advanced in the United States from a growing body of research on the impacts of school leadership using improved, more robust research methods (Grissom et al., 2021). These findings led this research team to conclude that “principals have a large effect on student learning, approaching even the effects of individual teachers” (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 4). The importance of school principals to student learning has also been documented in settings beyond the US to include contexts not affiliated with the Organization for Educational Cooperation and Development (OECD) (e.g., Beycioglu and Kondakci, 2014; Bloom et al., 2015; Leaver, Lemos, and Scur, 2019).

We also now know that school leaders have a notable, though, indirect impact on student achievement and other valued schooling outcomes. We understand that principal impacts within schools can be wide ranging. Leaders shape the organizational features of the school broadly, such as school policies or cultures, in ways that support student learning (Leithwood et al., 2020). Their work also shapes organizational conditions that directly support the school

learning environment (Day et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Heck and Hallinger, 2014). Through this mediating role, principals can also impact a wide range of teacher and instructional outcomes (e.g., instructional quality, teacher job attitudes and retention) (Grissom, et al., 2021). Leithwood and colleagues (2020) describe leaders as developing the efficacy and dispositions of teachers, which influence student outcomes. For example, leaders can engage teachers in professional learning to enhance teachers’ knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy (Hendriks and Scheerens, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008). Some of the teacher-related outcomes of leadership practice include enhancing teaching time, strengthening job satisfaction and retention, promoting high expectations for students, improving teacher instruction and increases in teacher competency, and creating a more supportive disciplinary climate within and across classrooms (Boyd et al., 2011; Chin, 2007; Grissom et al., 2021; Hendriks and Scheerens, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2008). Considering this scope of principal impacts, Grissom and his team (2021) concluded that “the effectiveness of the principal is more important than the effectiveness of any single teacher” (p. 40).

With these issues in mind, the widely-recognized lack of highly skilled school leaders creates an imperative for action. This need is amplified in countries that have not historically required or have more emergent and less well developed compulsory, specific qualifications and development for school leaders (Molina and Wilichowski, 2018, World Bank Publications, 2018). Thus, without focused attention on school leadership development, many nations--particularly those that have largely overlooked or have directed somewhat weak policy attention on school leaders and their development--are likely to struggle to support and accelerate student learning as they work to step away from the long shadow of the pandemic. This brief offers insights for nations and organizations seeking to develop educational recovery strategies that impact student learning now and in the coming years.

# The Urgent Need for School Leader Development Investment and Programs

Education ministries, as central actors in national recovery strategies, must now identify and implement investment strategies to support and accelerate student learning. Recent global research suggests that investment that targets teacher learning and instructional improvement is one area vital to educational improvement efforts in a variety of national contexts (Angrist et al., 2020). In this brief we argue that educational recovery strategies will be enhanced and their impact amplified through multifaceted approaches in which school leader development also figures into a broader recovery strategy. On the one hand, as we noted above, principals can play a vital role in promoting teacher learning and instructional improvement throughout an entire school (Grissom et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2008). Additionally, as Grissom and his colleagues (2021) conclude, school leader development is “likely the most efficient way to affect student achievement” (p. 40). In fact, their research led them to suggest that such investments are likely to have “higher ceilings on potential return” (p. 43) than other types of education improvement investment. Thus, knowledge that can inform the design and deployment of leadership development programs is of value.

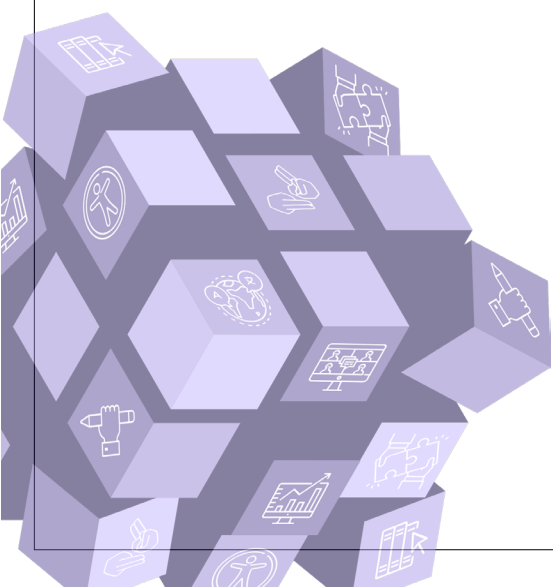
For education ministries to successfully advance more multifaceted recovery strategies that include programs for leadership development, greater attention will likely be needed in cultivating the kinds of public-private partnerships that can support such programs, and insights will be needed about the design of more productive leadership development programs. Over the last several decades research has pointed to the value and importance of partnerships, or “inter-organizational work” (Gomez and Biag, 2023, p. 2) as supports for various educational aims (Hentschke, 2007; Robertosn et al., 2012). Given the financial pressures inflicted on the education sector related to the global pandemic, partnerships are likely to be increasingly vital for generating additional investment funds for educational improvement efforts (Lennox et al., 2021; Reuge, et al., 2021).

In addition to financial resources, public-private partnerships allow for the pooling of “strengths and expertise” across multiple organizations (Twinomuhwezi and Herman, 2020, p. 134). Although there is a growing body of literature on partnerships that support educational leadership development in OECD contexts (see Gomez et al., 2023, for example, for elaborations of a collection of university-school district partnerships that support educational leader development in the United States), less is known about public-private partnerships that have given rise to school leadership development programs in non-OECD settings. Thus, we focus this brief to foreground this issue. We also share insights about the design of development for school leaders because of the relative scarcity of more detailed elaborations of school leader learning designs from non-OECD national contexts.

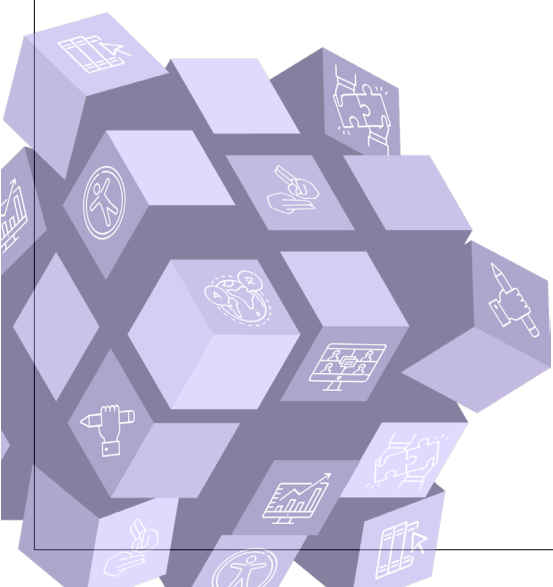
We write this report for an international audience, particularly in non-OECD contexts in the Global South and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) regions. Our goal is to provide insights of value to education ministries and other public and private educational organizations that work in partnership to improve student learning in these regions.

To accomplish these interests, we explore a public-private partnership formed in Qatar, between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) and WISE, an initiative of Qatar Foundation. Over the last seven years, this public-private collaboration has supported the design, implementation, and ongoing refinement of a school leadership development program for school leadership teams. Each year this program provided development to an identified group of Qatari school leaders beyond any development provided more generally to Qatari school leaders. We begin by describing the educational context of Qatar. Next, we describe the partnership and discuss its formation and evolution over a multi-year period. We share key roles within both organizations that have been engaged in this work, key contributions to this work from both organizations, and factors

## Our Audience and Focus



## Setting the Stage: Qatar’s Leadership Development Context as a Non-OECD Example

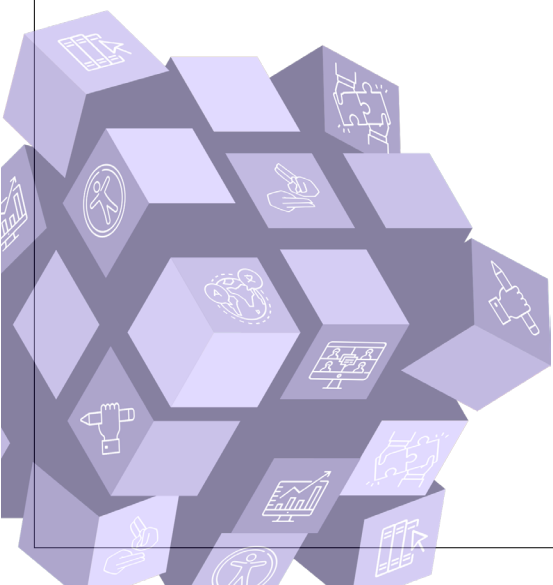


that shaped and deepened the partnership over time—a partnership that proved durable throughout the pandemic. Given the need for more detailed accountings of development programs for school leaders in non-OECD settings, we also share key elements of the initial leader development program provided through this partnership, and we identify key evolutions in the program as experienced most recently in 2021. We also share impacts from that program provided to school leadership teams during 2021. Reflecting on the experiences of the most recent program implementation, we conclude by sharing recommendations of value to our audience.

Qatar’s national education context provides an important backdrop to the work that we present. Deeper discussions of Qatar’s current education context can be found elsewhere (e.g, Romanowski, et al., 2020). Broadly, Qatar is one of 16 countries in the MENA region, all of whom are not affiliated with the OECD. Importantly, Qatar recognizes education as a key element in the country’s development and a national priority (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Thus, there is a strong national commitment to providing “students with a first-rate education, comparable to that offered elsewhere in the world” (GSDP, 2008, p. 13). Since 2016, Qatar’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education has had the formal responsibility for overseeing K-12 schooling (Fadlelmula and Koc, 2016). As of 2013-2014, just under 100,000 students attended schools in Qatar across four school levels: (a) kindergarten, (b) primary, (c) preparatory, and (d) secondary (Alfadala, 2019)]. Just under half of these students are non-Qatari by nationality (Romanowski et al., 2020). Data collected over the last decade suggest that a large percentage of Qatar’s teaching workforce (roughly 75 percent) comes from other Arab countries (Ellili-Cherif and Romanowski, 2013), and nearly 30 percent of teachers lack formal teacher training (Supreme Education Council [SEC], 2011). The principal workforce in Qatar is largely comprised of individuals of Qatari nationality (Romanowski et al., 2019). Since Qatar’s Education for a New Era (ENE) reform, which began in 2002-2004, curricular standards have been adopted in grades K-12 in key content areas of (Alfadala, 2019; Fadlelmula and Koc, 2016).



# Examining the Partnership that Fueled and Sustained Leadership Development in Qatar



Qatar's policy context as it relates to school principals is one that could be characterized as emergent in nature. In 2007, Qatar adopted professional standards for school principals (Qatar National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders [QNPSTSL], 2007); which have been updated several times since then, most recently in 2019 (QNPSTSL, 2019). The introduction of these standards prompted a national process for registering and licensing practicing school leaders (Romanowski et al., 2019). Beyond this licensing that school leaders may elect to pursue, Qatar has begun to engage individuals seeking school leader positions with some basic preparation programming and to require practicing school leaders to complete a somewhat limited scope development program with provisions for some ongoing learning (see Romanowski et al., 2019 and 2020 for more elaboration).

Here we provide a brief discussion of the a public-private partnership for school leader development formed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and WISE, Qatar Foundation. We focus our attention on the work of the last seven years during which time the partnership was established and strengthened. The partnership focused on the design and deployment of a more intensive, year-long leadership development program for targeted groups of school leaders; a program that would compliment and extend existing developmental opportunities provided by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The partnership has largely proven durable, even as the pandemic posed unprecedented challenges to the education sector.

In 2015, Dr. Alfadala (co-author of this brief) joined the WISE team as a new leader. Among other roles, she was tasked with supporting local schools, a central element of the WISE mission. For nearly a year she engaged in conversations with leaders within one Ministry division about the potential for partnership. The discussions revealed areas where private support for public education would be of high value to the nation. Supporting schools through leadership development emerged as an area of mutual interest. Early conversations also

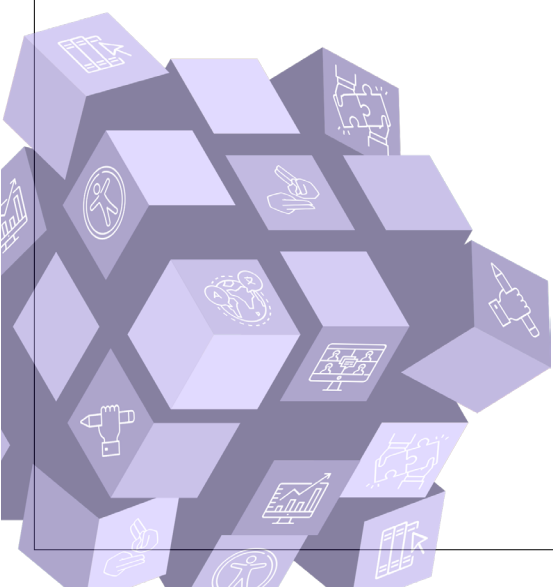


generated important insight about the historical landscape of school leadership development in Qatar, and experiences that had resulted. Most of prior leader learning experiences, for example, were reported as largely isolated events (e.g., individual sessions of two to three hours in length). There were few examples of more sustained development experiences for school leaders.

These interests and understandings shaped the first school leader development programs and workshops provided by WISE beginning in 2016. Given the limited collaboration between the two organizations, for the first development series WISE opted to target a small subset of schools within the Ministry of Education's portfolio of schools—a set founded by Qatar Foundation. This series provided learning, and by design, drew in two to three leaders from each of the participating schools. Through ongoing collaboration between the Ministry and WISE, the partnership has sustained and extended its leader development series. A testament to the partnership is that it has supported four, one-year programs over this period. Although successive programs have continued to engage small teams of leaders from schools, they have expanded to engage a broader assortment of schools beyond those founded by Qatar Foundation. To date, teams of leaders from roughly 40 schools have participated in leadership development programs. The most recent yearlong program ran throughout 2021, and was noteworthy in several ways. Perhaps most importantly, it began when schools were

largely closed to in-person learning, during a year of pervasive pandemic-related disruption to education. This program is the primary focus of our brief as it includes a variety of enhancements, some of which resulted through deeper levels of collaboration across the partnership.

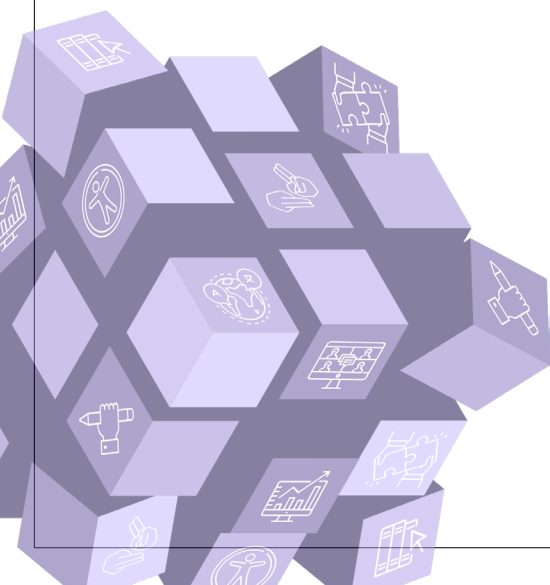
Looking back on the partnership formation and evolution over the seven-year timeframe and considering these observations in the context of existing literature on educational partnership/public-private partnerships (e.g., Goldring and Sims, 2005; Gomez and Biag, 2023; Penuel and DeBarger, 2016), we can now identify some of the key factors that supported partnership formation and sustainability in Qatar. Below we draw attention to a small set of key contributors to partnership formation and sustainability and we reveal details about each factor within the context of this partnership.



# Key Factors that Shaped the Partnership Formation and Sustainability

- The presence of an initial champion inside at least one of the organizations (WISE; Director of Research and Content Development) who took the lead in making partnership connections and cultivating relationships
- Steps taken to develop goal congruence between the two organizations and use of this goal to establish a shared vision: Cultivated through a series of conversations between WISE and Ministry)
- Over time, the presence of an internal champion inside both organizations (WISE and Ministry); Multiple departments, individuals, and points of connection inside both organizations; key individuals included: Director of Training and Educational Development Center (Ministry), Senior Training Program Planning Specialist (Ministry), Director of Research and Content Development (WISE), Manager of Research and Content Dissemination (WISE); establishment/ dissemination of roles and responsibilities for each of these individuals related to planning and enactment of the development program
- Initial and ongoing attention to the cultivation of relationships and trust between the organizations and their members; ongoing communication (WISE and Ministry across all four roles)
- Steps taken to support collaborative planning for program development between the two organizations to ensure shared understandings, commitment and contributions; related to the 2021 program, this was led by an external leadership development expert (one of the co-authors of this brief not affiliated with either partner organization) who engaged a more formalized planning team including leaders from both organizations (WISE and Ministry; four leaders noted above, plus a professional translator responsible for translating and interpreting program materials and content)

# Examining Key Elements of the Initial Leader Development Program



- Ongoing distribution of key contributions critical to the program implementation made by both organizations (WISE and Ministry); from the Ministry related to the 2021 program these included: selection and initial engagement of schools and school leadership teams; provision of space for large group learning sessions, participation in all learning experiences, provision of all translation and interpreter support in relation to (a) program materials, (b) delivery, (c) completed leader work tasks (artifacts of leader practice) that were shared with the expert leadership developer as well as the written feedback and resources that this developer provided to individual leadership teams; from WISE related to the 2021 program these included and provision of funding for all costs associated with expert leadership developer and participation in all learning sessions with particular support for in-person, within-school learning experiences

Below we share key elements of the initial leader development program, named Empowering Leaders of Learning (ELL). This name that has been sustained as the program has evolved over time.

## Elements of Initial Leader Development Programs: Empowering Leaders of Learning (ELL)

- Schools selected by the Ministry; small teams of leaders (two to three individuals covering several leadership roles) participated from each school
- An external expert collaborated with the Ministry and WISE in designing and facilitating the programs
- Year-long program that included roughly one large group learning session per quarter
- Large group learning sessions that included both large group presentations, discussions, and small group sharing; short reading materials were used as appropriate

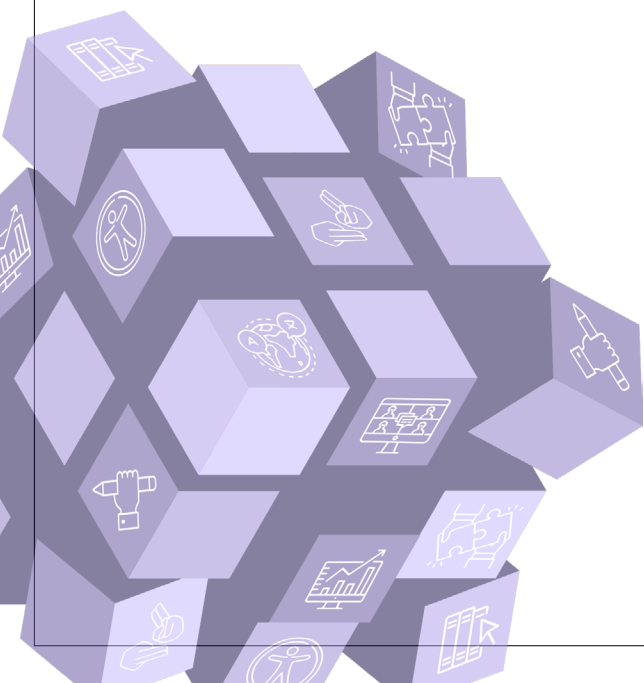
# Strengthening ELL: Beginning by Deepening Responsiveness to Context and Leaders

Literature suggests that more robust leader learning designs are responsive to national and local contexts (Eacott and Asuga, 2014; Okoko, 2020), as well as to the unique needs of individual leaders (Korach and Cosner, 2017). This broad understanding served as the primary orienting concept for strengthening the initial leader learning design program enacted in 2021. Accordingly, Dr. Cosner, co-author of this brief and the leadership development expert engaged for this project, studied Qatar's schools and educational context, and the work of Qatari school leaders over a period of several months to gain insights that would inform the developmental experience. This learning occurred through multiple approaches and from varied sources. Cosner reviewed a variety of published resources, including those of the following: Alfadala, 2019; Brewer et al., 2007; Ellili-Cherif et al., 2017; Fadlemula and Koc, 2016; Romanowski, 2013. She also reviewed QNPSTSL (2019). Using virtual platforms for interaction, colleagues from MOEHE and from WISE met individually and in small groups with Cosner to share personal insights on public schooling in Qatar, about the work of school leaders, and existing leader learning accessible to school leaders. Importantly, Cosner administered a survey to a sample of school principals, and organized a focus group of school leaders who interacted virtually with her. Through surveys and focus groups, Cosner called on principals to elaborate key information about public education in Qatar. This included providing deeper insight into the overall structure for students and the typical workday for teachers. She also inquired about:

- attributes of school culture generally common in Qatar schools
- typical work tasks of key school leaders including principal, academic vice principal, and subject coordinators and
- challenges school principals face in their daily work

Once the schools were selected for participation, Cosner reviewed documents from the individual schools and leaders to learn about each school and the unique developmental needs of the school leaders. School evaluation reports were shared with Cosner, as were several key work samples (artifacts of leader practice) completed by each principal during the last year. These included school improvement plans, teacher team and teacher development plans, classroom observation tools and de-identified classroom observations.

Cosner met with leaders who would be participating in the program to discuss these documents. Through these processes, Cosner gained critical insights about challenges within individual schools and edges of growth specific to each school and each individual in their work as instructionally-focused learning leaders. These understandings were used to develop an initial learning plan. The planning team, which included several leaders from the Ministry and from WISE, produced cycles of feedback that were drawn upon by Cosner to shape the final version of the initial learning plan.



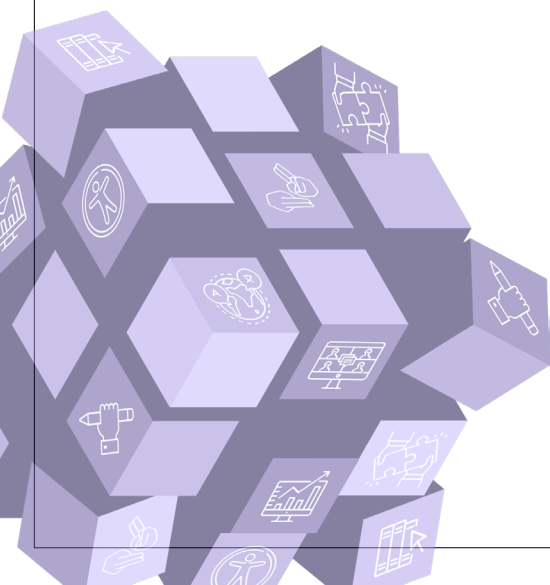
# Examining 2021 ELL Leader Development Program

## Program Participants

To provide more granular insights about this leadership development program as enacted in 2021, below we share details about the program's: participants, development goals, content and objectives, learning structure and format, learning project designed to support leadership practice development, and use of formative data collection to inform ongoing refinements to learning content/experiences. We also discuss approaches for supporting: (a) virtual learning experiences that required language translation/interpretation, and (b) in-person and within-school learning experiences that used the school as an important learning resource (Cosner et al., 2018). We also share information about the program's impact.

Qatar schools have several formal leadership roles. These include principal, academic vice principal, and various subject areas coordinators. Unlike the earlier versions of the ELL program that targeted several leaders from each school as program participants, the most recent program targeted the entire team of leaders from each school.

There is a growing body of scholarship that points to the utility of team learning designs (e.g., Korach and Cosner, 2017; Spillane et al., 2009). We saw this as a particularly critical feature of the learning design given that few Qatar school leaders, regardless of role, have had deep leadership development experience. Thus, a team learning experience would allow leaders to learn with, and from, their own school colleagues. Given that these leadership roles have typically been established without focused attention on collaboration and teamwork, we noticed a clear advantage for improved collaboration toward a more effective, collective school leadership team.



# Program Development Goals

Broadly, the program designed for Qatar school leaders focused on professionalizing the role of the school leader. In part, this meant supporting the shift of the leadership role from an emphasis on management to one of instructional leadership, teacher learning, and student learning. Such considerations have been noted by others as important in national settings that do not require formal leadership development training and experience (Bush, 2011; Pont et al., 2008). Development goals were also aligned with the Qatar Professional Standards for School Leaders (with emphasis on Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4).

## Key Program Content and Objectives

The year-long program focused on cultivating stronger instructionally-focused collaboration across the team of school leaders. The developmental program targeted a set of collaborative routines focused on strengthening instruction and student learning. Leadership teams engaged in the:

collaborative development of an instructional vision in an area relevant to the school's most recent evaluation report

**A**

**B** collaborative learning about the use of cycles of inquiry for finding and solving instructional root causes to student learning challenges

collaborative design of instructional data collection aligned with their created instructional vision

**C**

**D** collaborative collection of instructional data (classroom observation, lesson plan, unit plan)

collaborative identification of key next edges of growth in teaching/ instructional practice by reviewing instructional data and using understandings to consider teachers' learning needs

**E**

**F** the facilitation of collaborative learning routines for teachers to support teacher learning and development

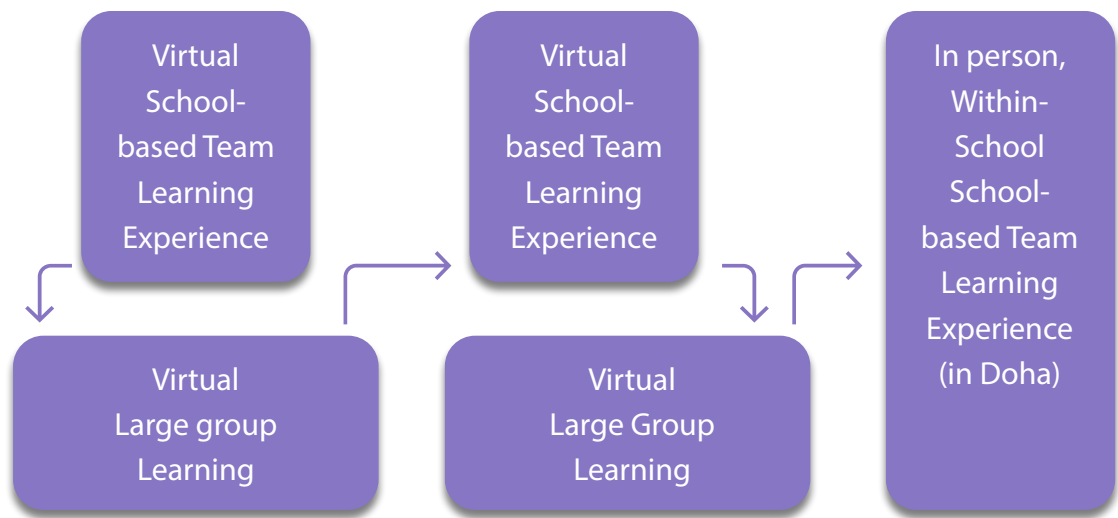


# Learning Structure and a Hybrid Learning Format

The yearlong development program provided a series of learning experiences that began in January and continued through November. The program's structure combined three types of learning experiences:

- A. virtual large group experiences of roughly three to four hours that brought together all of the leadership teams and where practice sharing occurred among teams
- B. virtual small group learning experiences of roughly one to two hours provided to individual teams and tailored to each team's unique learning needs ; oftentimes places for coaching of the leadership team to support their application of learning in their school.
- C. an in-person learning experience situated within each of the schools over a full day that used the school as an important learning resource for practice-based team learning experiences

**Figure 1**      **Illustrating the ELL Learning Sequence**



Principal participation in the large group virtual learning experiences occurred through three formats based on the everchanging circumstances of the pandemic. In each case, Cosner led these sessions from the United States using Zoom. These three formats were used at different points in time as guidelines for social distancing shifted. One format:

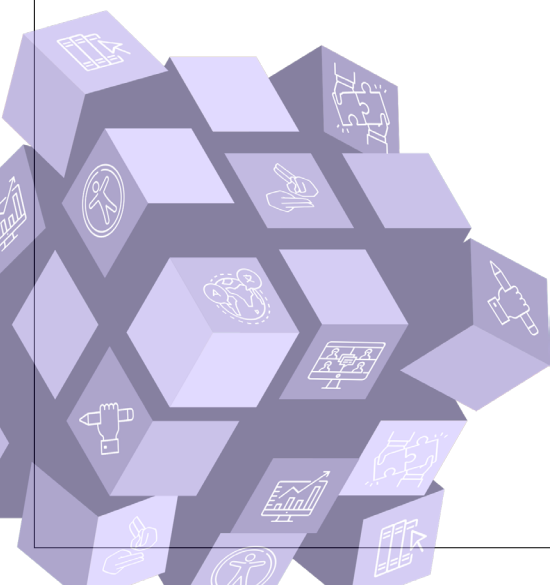
A. brought all participants to one central location in Qatar



B. brought all participants to their respective schools to collectively participate from this setting as a leadership team

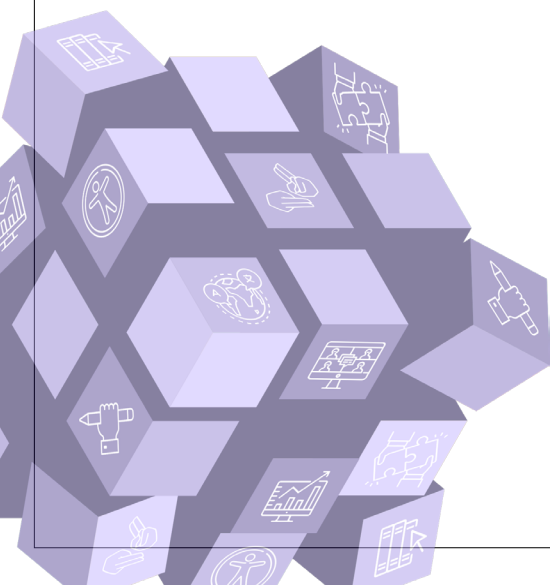


C. engaged each participant from her home



# Anchoring Learning to an Action-oriented Team Project as a Mechanism Active Learning and Leadership Practice Development

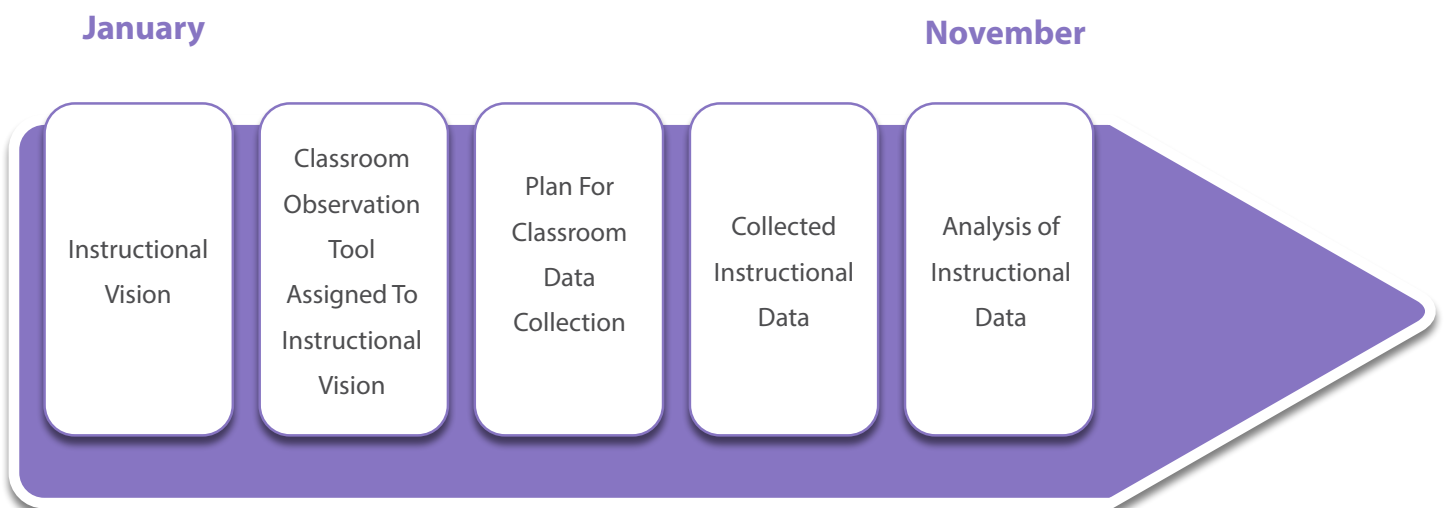
Literature suggests that importance of more active learning experiences that prompt leaders to apply what they are learning to their actual practice (Cosner et al., 2018; Cosner, 2020; Garrett et al., 2001). With this in mind, the year-long learning experiences were designed to support each leadership team's engagement with an action-oriented, team-based project that spanned the length of the program. To frame their project, each school leadership team used their school's most recent evaluation report to identify a student learning problem for their team's collective attention. The project provided each team with the opportunity to investigate and better understand the problem, and take leadership actions to address it within their actual school context. At the conclusion of each learning session teams engaged in planning protocols to encourage them to identify and develop a written plan for their next areas of collaborative leadership work that would be enacted in their schools as they acted to apply program learning. These plans were translated from Arabic to English and shared with Cosner. In turn, Cosner provided cycles of feedback (translated into Arabic) and resources with each team.



# Using Formative Data to Inform Subsequent Learning Experiences

In addition to the team-based written plans that were developed near the end of each learning session, teams also intermittently shared work samples (leadership practice artifacts) associated with their action-based project. These materials were translated and shared with Cosner, who used them to consider participant learning and development, and, ultimately, to identify ongoing learning needs for developmental attention—information critical for shaping and refining the ongoing learning program.

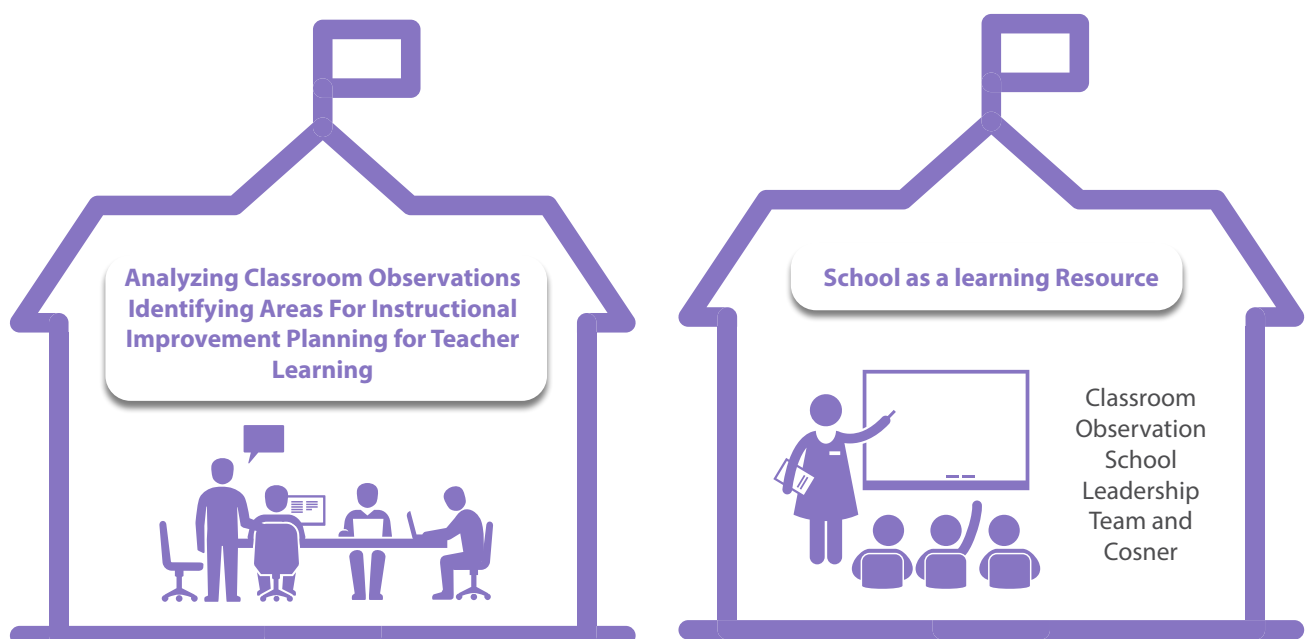
Figure 2:



# Structuring and Supporting the In-Person, In-School Learning Experience, Another Active Learning Experience

Each school-based team participated in a full-day learning experience at their school. This created another active learning experience where the school again become a resource that supported the team’s learning. However, in this instance leadership teams and Cosner jointly engaged in leadership practices within the school—in this case observing instruction in multiple classrooms. Joint work has been identified as a useful developmental approach for school leaders (Honig and Rainey, 2014). Following these observations they met to collectively discuss their experiences and observations. Through these conversations they identified instructional issues that would benefit from attention and considered the kinds of teacher learning experiences that could support such instructional development. These school-based sessions provided leaders with relevant, practice-based leadership experience. Like the virtual experiences, the in-person learning experiences necessitated a designated interpreter who accompanied Cosner and supported all of her interactions with individuals and teams.

Figure 3: Using the School as a Learning Resource



# Supporting a Virtual Learning Experience That Required Language Translation/ Interpretation

Several planning actions were taken to support a virtual learning experience that required language translation/interpretation including:

sourcing and/or creating learning resources and materials in advance of sessions, providing time for translation from English to Arabic (translation done by Ministry)

A

B

embedding supportive graphics and using simplified vocabulary and texts for all materials being translated

providing time for participants to review translated materials prior to learning experience sessions

C

Virtual learning experiences benefitted from a variety of measures:

using a virtual platform (such as Zoom) with an interpretation function allowing for immediate translation

A

B

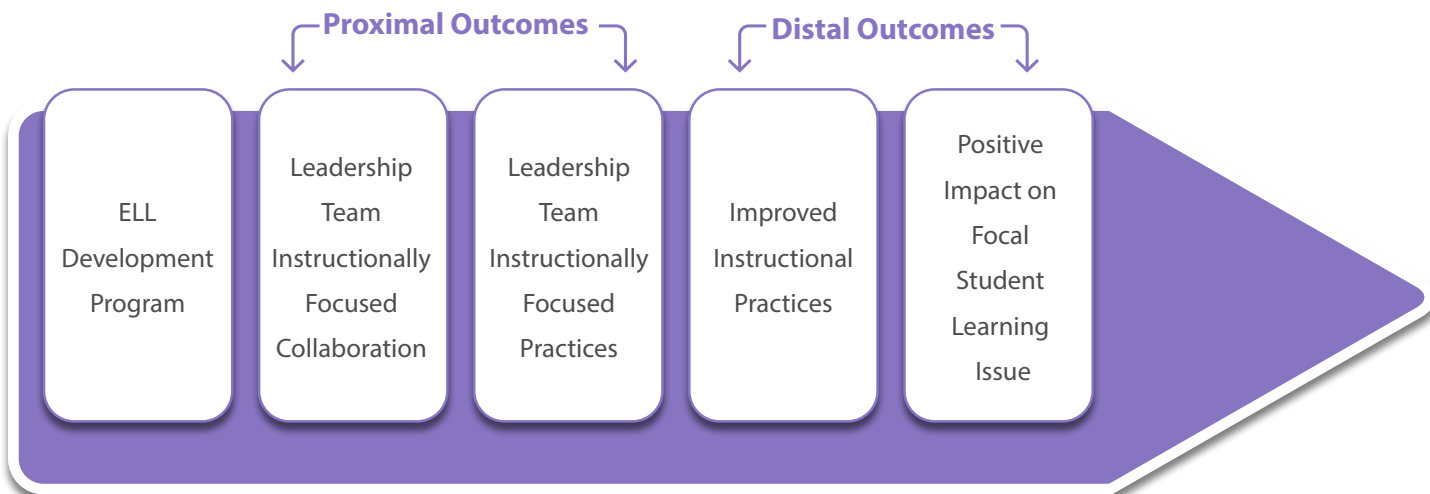
practicing with interpretation within the virtual interpretation function prior to virtual sessions by Cosner and the interpreter

including additional bilingual assistants embedded in virtual learning spaces (provided by the Ministry) to synthesize small group conversations and share insights (through text messaging) with Cosner as she engaged leaders through Zoom

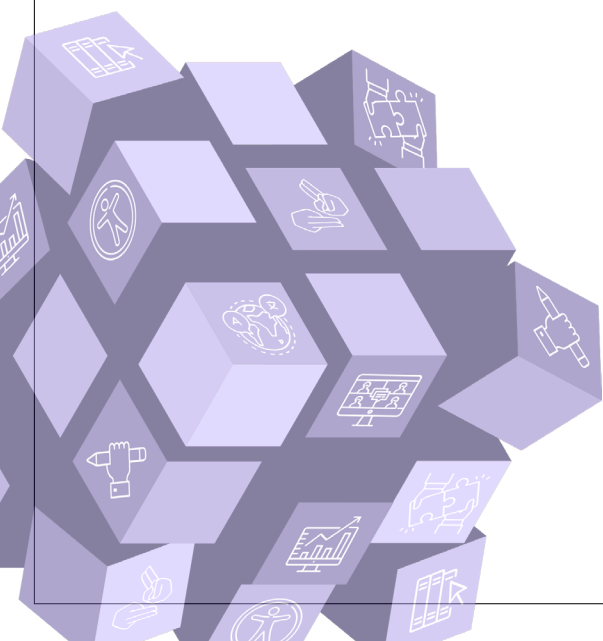
C

# Examining Program Impact

Figure 4:



**Leadership Team and Leader Practice Development:** We collected actual work samples (leader practice artifacts) from each of the leadership teams as well as short written pieces where teams discussed their work more directly. These materials were used in an ongoing manner to evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of each team’s leadership practices and practice development. Findings from these work tasks as well as Cosner’s interactions and observations of teams during the final in-person learning experience informed her work with each team during the on-site learning experience.





Three-quarters of the teams evidenced strong practice development in practice areas targeted for development including:



collaboratively developing an instructional vision in an area relevant to the school's most recent evaluation report and the focal student learning issue receiving the leadership team's attention



identifying key next edges of growth in teaching practice from collected instructional data and using these understandings to inform teacher learning and ongoing data collection to assess teacher instructional practice development



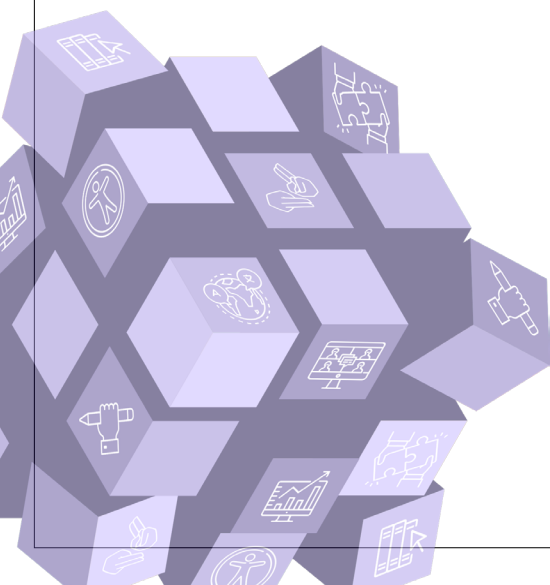
engaging in collaboration routines as a team of school leaders (principal, academic vice principal, subject coordinators)



collaboratively designing instructional data collection tools including classroom observation tools aligned to the instructional vision



collaboratively collecting instructional data (classroom observation, lesson plan, unit plan)





As educational systems around the world confront the issue of educating children, two fundamental realizations stand out after years of pandemic-related disruption to education. Given that education has a direct impact on people's lives and the economy, it is essential to prioritize its improvement as nations enact post-pandemic recovery approaches. Second, it is impossible to exaggerate the significance of school administrators in nurturing teacher development and improving the quality of education for all students. Investments in leaders and their development have demonstrated both a positive impact on student performance and a high return potential. Thus, it is crucial that nations prioritize school leadership development as part of their efforts to sustain and accelerate student learning. How to support the more wide-spread enactment of leadership development programs is and will continue to be a critical consideration for many nations in the Global South and MENA regions.

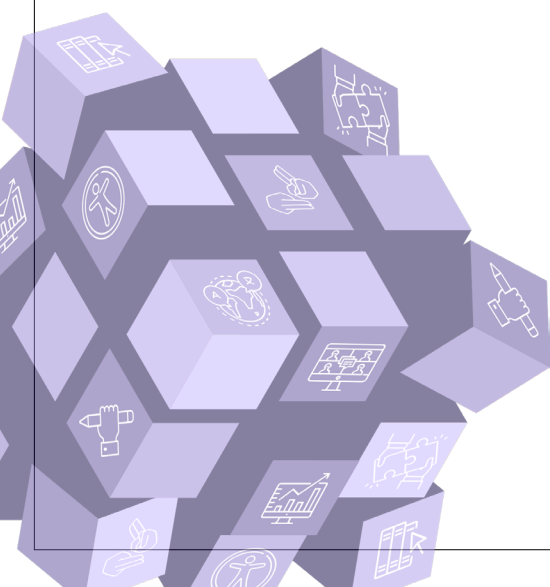
To address this knowledge need, we drew upon national efforts in Qatar. Work in Qatar provides insights into how such programs can be catalyzed and sustained as well as the actual design of such development programs. Although Qatar has made education a top priority and places great emphasis on providing its children with an education comparable to that of other developed nations, Qatar's education system faces key obstacles to these aspirations. Qatar's teaching workforce, for example, is dominated by non-Qataris, and there is an absence of formal development for many educators. In response to these issues, Qatar has more recently established curriculum requirements and professional standards for school principals.

Drawing from work in Qatar spanning seven years between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and WISE, we generate insights in two important areas. First, we use this work to reveal the value of public-private partnerships to the formation and sustainability of school leader development programs. In Qatar, this collaboration demonstrated that public and private educational institutions can collaborate to deliver school leadership development programs, even under extreme conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This sort of partnership is of high value because it generated additional investments for school leadership, and it also harnessed a broader pool of the talents and knowledge than might otherwise have existed within an individual organization within the partnership. For this reasons, the potential value of partnerships cannot be overstated. By examining literature on educational partnerships/public-private partnerships, we were able to mine this partnership for important insights into key factors that promoted its formation and sustainability even during the more challenging context of the global pandemic. We return to these insights below framed as recommendations for others seeking to engage in such work. Following this brief discussion, we return to the key elements of 2021 ELL leader development program to offer several recommendations likely to be useful to leadership development designers. In doing so, we highlight several of the more critical design features of this program, and we also suggest several enhancements that could be made. We expect insights in both of these areas to be of value to a wide assortment of educational actors in other settings in the Global South and MENA regions.

# Cultivating Public-Private Partnerships that Support Leadership Development: Key Recommendations

- 1. Engage multiple individuals within partnering organizations:** Identify and work to engage several or more individuals within partner organizations who have expertise and positional authority to contribute to a potential partnership. When multiple individuals are engaged in each of the organizations, both initially and over time, there is likelihood of broader bases of partnership support. Moreover, personnel transitions are less likely to undermine the partnership over time.
- 2. Take early steps to build goal congruence and use this goal to establish a shared vision:** If you want to build a productive partnership from the start, work early on to build goal congruence across the multiple organizations. Use this goal to establish a partnership vision that is shared by the participating organizations.
- 3. Develop clear roles and responsibilities within the partnership:** It is important to establish clear roles and responsibilities for each partner to avoid confusion and ensure that everyone understands their contributions to the partnership.
- 4. Work initially and over time to establish and maintain mutual trust and respect and to maintain ongoing communication:** It is critical to build a relationship between members of collaborating organizations that is built on a trust and respect. For organizations working with a Ministry of Education, it will be important to listen to the needs of the Ministry and the schools it serves and tailor programs accordingly. Regular communication between the partners is likely to contribute to trust-building. It will also prove vital to ensure that the partnership is progressing smoothly, and any issues or concerns are addressed promptly.

# Designing and Enacting/ Leadership Development Programs: Key Recommendations



- 5. Collaborate in program planning, development and enactment and also share in contributions to the development program:** Partnerships are supported when partnership-oriented work is conceptualized as joint work that benefits from both the consideration by and contributions of individuals from all partnering organizations. Ongoing collaboration will promote program design and enactment that meets the expectations of both organizations and remains well-aligned with the partnership's identified goals and vision.

Above we elaborated a set of issues and elements associated with the design and enactment of the 2021 ELL program. Although we recognize these design elements as critical to the overall program, the enactment of that program generated additional insights that shape the way we think about the design of such a program moving forward. Here we share our key recommendations for leader learning designers.

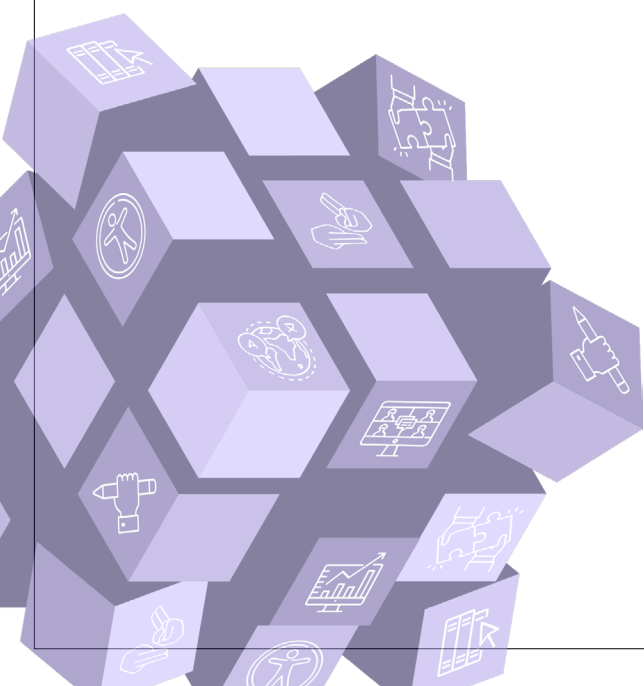
- 1. Develop responsive learning designs:** Develop learning designs that are responsive to particular leaders, their work, their context, and their ongoing learning needs is important. Many sources of information are likely to be vital for such considerations. In our work we initially drew upon such things as: (a) relevant national leadership standards, (b) key written accountings of the national educational context, (c) interviews with and surveys from a broad assortment of educators—individuals within the Ministry as well as school leaders—and of individuals in WISE who had extensive experience working with schools, and (d) school leader work samples (artifacts of practice). All of this information informed the initial program content and learning objectives. Ongoing data collection and analysis of such things as leader work samples (artifacts of leader practice from actual work in their schools) proved vital for learning about the application of learning and ongoing practice development. Understanding ongoing practice development (or lack of development)

generated critical formative information for shaping learning content and experiences in the year-long learning series.

- 2. Engage multiple leaders from a school in team-based learning:** In our work, teams of leaders that spanned multiple roles (principal, academic vice principal, subject coordinators) engaged in learning together. This structure allowed individuals to learn with and from their colleagues. It also cultivated collaboration and more collective leadership work.
  
- 3. Leverage leaders' schools as a learning resource:** Developing learning designs that create ongoing opportunities for the application and practice of learning within the learning experience are vital to practice development. In our work we accomplished this in two ways. First, we used an action-oriented team project to encourage school leadership teams to incrementally practice what they were learning within their schools. Each of the virtual large group learning sessions concluded with time for each of the teams to consider: (a) what they would work to apply in their school prior to the next session, and (b) the key actions they would take. Subsequent team-based virtual sessions were then used to provide coaching to individual leadership teams to support their work within their respective schools.

Next, we also held a learning session in the team's school. Cosner used this session to jointly engage in several leadership practices with the team including: (a) observing classroom instruction, and (b) considering observations to identify teacher learning needs and plan for teacher learning. Given the power of within-school learning sessions, which provide critical opportunities for joint work to be undertaken by the developer and school leaders, we would recommend greater emphasis on joint work experiences in future leader learning designs.

Our enactment of this leadership development program also generated an additional insight important for enhancing this learning design. Leadership teams in this development program made unique selections about focal problems within their schools that would receive their focal attention. This discouraged certain levels of collaboration between schools. There are likely to be problems that are broadly experienced across many schools. Working with participating school leaders to surface these sorts of common problems and select one or more common problems for attention by each of the participating school leadership teams has potential to support greater levels of collaboration.









## ASMAA ALFADALA

Director of Research and Content Development at WISE

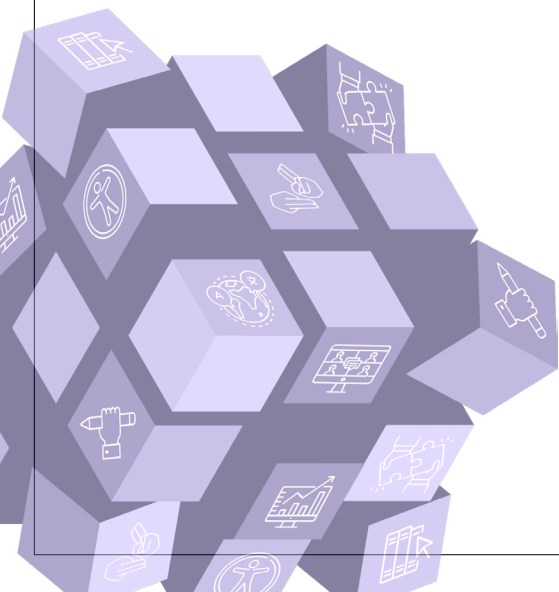
Asmaa Alfadala is the Director of Research and Content Development at WISE. She is also a visiting fellow at Cambridge University. She has over twenty years of expertise in K-12 education, higher education, and policy development, and has served as a government policy writer, professor, author of books on leadership reform, and board member on educational organizations. Dr. Alfadala holds a Ph.D. and an M.Phil in Educational Leadership and Policy from Cambridge University. She has worked as a program committee member, teacher, school leader, and fellow in various institutes in Qatar. She is a widely recognized author in the field of educational policy and leadership. Dr. Alfadala's research interests include educational leadership, entrepreneurship education, teacher professional development, educational transformation and innovation, and the SDGs.



## SHELBY COSNER

Professor and Director of CUEL

Shelby Cosner is a professor and the Director of the Center for Urban Education Leadership at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) in the United States. She is an expert on leadership for school improvement, the development of organizational capacities that support school improvement, the preparation and development of educational leaders, and the use of continuous improvement to strengthen and transform leadership preparation and development. She has designed, enacted, and tested leadership development interventions and programs for school districts, state and national education organizations, and ministries of education in settings throughout the globe. Cosner's research and development work has been widely funded by organizations and foundations (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, The Broad Foundation, William T. Grant Foundation, Qatar Foundation). Her work appears in a broad assortment of journals and books.





## ABOUT WISE

The World Innovation Summit for Education was established by Qatar Foundation in 2009 under the leadership of its Chairperson, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. WISE is an international, multi-sectoral platform for creative, evidence-based thinking, debate, and purposeful action toward building the future of education. Through the biennial summit, collaborative research and a range of on-going programs, WISE is a global reference in new approaches to education.

The WISE Research series, produced in collaboration with experts from around the world, addresses key education issues that are globally relevant and reflect the priorities of the Qatar National Research Strategy. Presenting the latest knowledge, these comprehensive reports examine a range of education challenges faced in diverse contexts around the globe, offering action-oriented recommendations and policy guidance for all education stakeholders. Past WISE Research publications have addressed a wide range of issues including access, quality, financing, teacher training and motivation, school systems leadership, education in conflict areas, entrepreneurship, early-childhood education, twenty first century skills, design thinking, and apprenticeship, among others.



## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

The Center for Urban Education Leadership (CUEL) is housed in the College of Education at the University of Illinois Chicago in the United States. CUEL works to impact issues of equity for PK-12 students through research, development, and policy advocacy. CUEL investigates and acts upon both leadership-focused and multi-disciplinary, leadership-inclusive problems to generate knowledge. CUEL designs, enact, and tests learning designs that develop educational leaders and their organizations. This work occurs in settings throughout the globe. CUEL has secured over 17M to fuel a broad assortment of research and development projects. In collaboration with UIC's doctoral program in Urban Education Leadership (Ed.D), CUEL has been recognized for its expertise with continuous improvement by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement in Teaching.

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