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Exploring Teachers' Experiences of Implementing Summer Camps in Public Schools of District Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

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In the year of 2026, the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, started the Summer Camp Initiative which provided opportunities for children to learn through hands-on and child-centered learning activities during the summer vacation. The role of teachers in the implementation of the school-based initiative is central, but their experiences have been less researched. The current phenomenological study aimed at understanding the experiences of 12 public-school teachers purposively selected from District Dera Ismail Khan. Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection, and Colaizzi's method was used for data analysis. There were six themes that were identified: initial expectations and uneven preparation; change in routine teaching practices; student engagement in meaningful but inconsistent ways; the effect of the local context; professional learning through improvisation; and priorities for the future of improving camps. Teachers found the camps useful with regard to stories, games, art, experiments and group activities. They also highlighted the following challenges as being related to extreme heat, irregular attendance, lack of teaching materials and unclear program expectations. The results showed that this half month activity had opportunities to use activity-based learning, but its success depends highly on the teacher's personal efforts as there was no consistent support system. Advanced orientation of teachers, adequate though moderate budgets, scheduling according to changes in the climate, better communication with families, and monitoring of the quality of learning, rather than paperwork, are recommended in this study.

Introduction

Long vacations are provided in the school calendar, which interrupt formal teaching and learning. These breaks have a different educational impact for different students, however. If children have access to books, the internet, adult supervision and structured learning activities, they can still be learning during vacation days. Other children, on the other hand, will come back to school with fewer opportunities to read, practice academic skills or play with new ideas. It has been a policy and research concern for decades that students have different learning opportunities during the summer months (Cooper et al., 2000; Quinn & Polikoff, 2017).

One possible solution to this problem are summer programs. Effective summer programs are not just an extension of the regular classroom program and are not simply "fun. Rather, they are a blend of academic assistance and projects, storytelling, games, arts, sports and collaborative problem-solving. These programs can enhance students' learning and motivation, as long as they are regularly attended, activities are purposeful, and teachers have adequate time and teaching resources (McCombs et al., 2011; Muir et al., 2024). The results of such programs may, however, be restricted if there is lack of planning, poor attendance or activities that do not respond to the learning needs of the students.

It is important that such programs are implemented by teachers at their center. Teachers might be advised to teach in a learner-centered way by policy, but this is up to them as to how they do so in the classroom. They understand the program objectives, choose activities and adapt them, invite pupils to participate and respond to a lack of effectiveness of planned activities. However, success of educational reform relies on not only the design of educational reform policy but also teachers' professional judgment, preparation and working circumstances (Fullan, 2020).

This is especially pertinent in a country like Pakistan, where educational policies are increasingly emphasizing competency-based learning, activity-based learning. But in-class instruction is still heavy on textbook and exams. It is important to note that teachers will be given more freedom to implement innovative and learner centered pedagogical approaches during summer camps as they are not required to follow a strict curriculum. Concurrently, these programs can identify potential challenges that already exist, including deficient educational materials, poorly equipped facilities, a lack of preparation time, uncoordinated activities, etc.

During this period, the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, launched the Summer Camp Initiative for the Summer vacation 2026. The public schools were urged to have their students participate in reading, creative writing, scientific activities, educational games, art, sports, and group projects. It was expected that teachers would be able to translate these general program priorities into concrete learning activities that would be appropriate to their students and local school context.

Previous studies on summer learning tend to be based on outcomes in terms of academic achievement, learning loss, or program outcomes. These areas are significant but offer a weaker sense of experience of the implementation process by teachers. The evidence of research is limited in Pakistan, especially for public schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This can be addressed through a phenomenological investigation, which aims to understand how teachers perceived the initiative, what practices they implemented, what difficulties they faced and what they learned from it.

Problem Statement

Teachers were a key component of the success of the 2026 Summer Camp Initiative. There is, however, little evidence at the context level to support their preparation, teaching methods, institutional facilitation and on-the-ground difficulties. It is important to acknowledge teachers' experiences to ensure policy intent and classroom reality are not conflated in program evaluation. It can verify the implementation of the initiative, but might not provide any detail on the way in which teachers understood and adapted the initiative and how they were able to maintain it in their school contexts. Hence, this study explored teachers' lived experience of the implementation of the Summer Camp Initiative in public schools of District Dera Ismail Khan.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the public school teachers' experiences in implementing the Summer Camp Initiative. It looked specifically at their preparation, how they delivered their lessons, how they felt about the engagement of their students, how they

responded to challenges in their local community, how they have developed professionally, and recommendations for how to enhance future summer school delivery.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To explore teachers' initial expectations and preparedness.
2. To examine instructional practices and perceived student engagement.
3. To identify institutional, administrative, and logistical constraints.
4. To understand how participant influenced teachers' learning and reflection.
5. To document teachers' recommendations for future summer programs.

Research Questions

Central Question

How did teachers experience implementation of the Summer Camp Initiative in public schools of District Dera Ismail Khan?

Sub-Questions

1. How did teachers understand and prepare for the initiative?
2. What practices did they use, and how did they perceive student engagement?
3. Which institutional and logistical conditions shaped implementation?
4. What, if anything, did teachers learn from the experience?
5. What changes did they recommended?

Significance of the Study

This study has specifically looked into the experiences of teachers and adds the knowledge into the existing literature, which largely concentrates on program results. The findings can support decision makers to learn more about the impact of program planning, funding, scheduling and monitoring on implementation at the school level. The results can be used by school leaders to enhance collective planning, support to the school and provision of required resources. The study could also benefit teacher educators to grasp the methods how the alternative educational programs can make a teacher educator willing to try new teaching methods and give consideration to his or her work experience. Moreover, the study describes how Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory can be applied in understanding teachers' learning process as well as students' involvement in learning activities.

Literature Review

Summer Learning Program Quality

There is a long history of concern about summer learning. Cooper et al. (2000) uncovered some academic benefits as a result of structured summer programs, but this effect was likely to vary between programs and learner groups. Since then, further research has confirmed a lesson learned: it is not enough to just provide a program. Participant outcomes are related to duration and attendance, effectiveness of the instruction, and fit with participants' needs (McCombs et al., 2011). Also noted in Atteberry and McEachin (2021) is that there are variations in patterns of learning throughout the season by grade and school context, and caution is given against a single, universal understanding of "summer loss."

Recent reviews expand the picture. Among at-risk or impoverished youth, Muir et al. (2024) find encouraging results for some types of education outcomes, but caution for differential outcomes across designs, contexts, and implementation. In addition, targeted support, skill development, and motivation are common concerns identified by Beach and Crump (2026) in their review of summer reading programs. All of this research corroborates the research on summer programming and counters the assumption that all camps are effective.

Activity Based and Experiential Learning

It is often the case that many summer programs depend on activity as there is a different tempo in the setting than with regular lessons. When students are asked to think, discuss, test, explain or create, rather than merely listen, there is an opportunity for active learning and to improve participation and understanding (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014). The role of social interaction also informs the importance of peer collaboration and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Activity, however, should not be romanticized. Skulmowski (2024) suggests that doing can have its own requirements and that, if the tasks are not guided or have no conceptual purpose, it may distract from the learning. This is particularly true in the case of camps, where a vibrant classroom can be an indicator of success even if students are not aware of what they are learning. Thus the role of a teacher is not diminished but transformed from content provider to designer, observer, questioner and meaning maker from experience.

Teachers as Implementer and Learners

Teachers' interpretations of reforms are shaped by their beliefs, experience, workload and institutional context. For change to become sustainable, it must be clear to teachers why it is happening and involve teachers in its development (Fullan, 2020). Similarly, the research on professional development suggests it works best when it is relevant to their work, shared, and ongoing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

A summer camp can thus be run at two levels. Pupils experience real and collaborative learning, teachers experience new learning challenges. The process of planning, observing a sub-optimal response, revising and trying again can be professional learning itself. Whether this learning sticks depends on opportunities to reflect, share and transfer successful practices to the regular school year.

Context and Research Gap

Much of the evidence of summer learning is from relatively well-resourced contexts and focuses on measurable student outcomes. There is less research on teachers' experience of implementation, especially in contexts where infrastructure, transport, climate and resource limitations are relevant. In particular, there is limited published evidence from Pakistan.

This gap is significant because it can result in differential experiences within schools, given the same program guidance. Teachers may get varying amounts of notice, leadership, material support and community response. A phenomenological study does not necessarily demonstrate program impact but it can provide an insight into the experiences of these conditions and the teachers' understanding of the educational value of their work. This is the contribution that is sought in this research article.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework (Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory)

Kolb's (1984) theory of learning is an explanation of how experience is converted to knowledge. It is a process of four interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The theory is applicable to the current study as teachers were not only delivering predetermined activities but also interacting with the students. They operated on unfamiliar situations, listened to the students and changed their thoughts and teaching methods and adjusted the next training session to fit.

But the framework does not imply that any experience is a learning experience. Constructive learning is learning that involves reflection and conceptual understanding. For instance, when a group activity fails, what is learned is only professionally useful if a teacher analyzes why the group activity failed and uses that to inform future decisions. The theoretical approach is thus

consistent with the phenomenological approach, which does not see experience as meaningful, but as an experience that has meaning only in the participants' eyes.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework links the Summer Camp Initiative to the teachers' pre-camp expectations, teaching approaches and barriers or facilitators to program implementation. The experiences of teachers were comprehended using Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The experiences can be part of enhancing pedagogical knowledge, professional confidence, reflection and teacher / student relations. They may also contribute to the creation of practical suggestions to enhance future Summer Camp programs for teachers. It served as a guide for developing the interviews questions as well as interpretation of the themes that arose from the data.

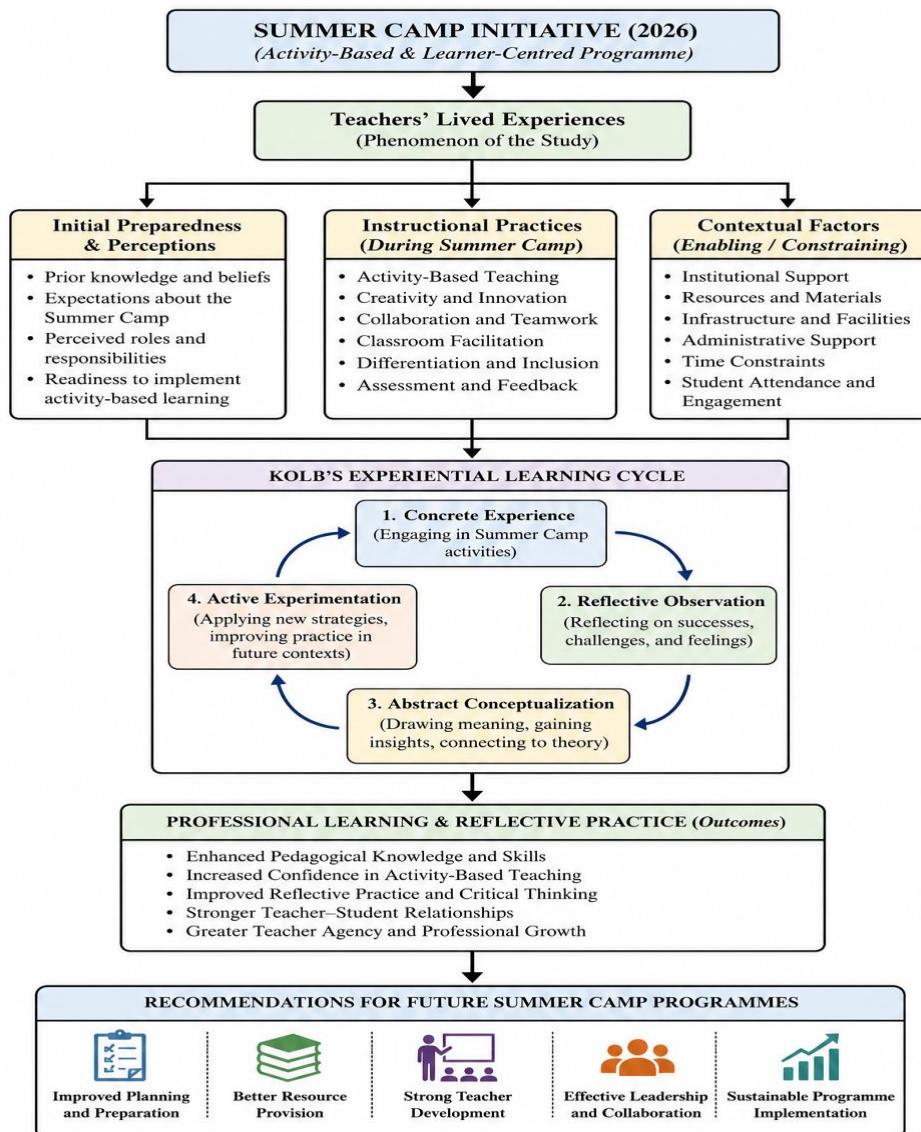


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework in the study is shown in the figure 1. It illustrates how teachers' knowledge and skills grew as a result of their participation in pedagogical opportunities and the enabling and/or challenging contexts in which these opportunities were enacted to implement the Summer Camp Initiative.

Methodology

Research Paradigm and Design

The research design used was a descriptive phenomenological design with an interpretivist paradigm. The goal of its creation was not measurement of the program against pre-defined criteria but it was an attempt to uncover the experience of teachers in implementing the program. This design was suitable for the phenomenon of all the participants because each of them explained it with the help of their own professional orientation, their own school environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Setting

The study was carried out in 10 public schools of District Dera Ismail Khan comprising four primary, three middle and three secondary schools. Six schools were in the rural area, and four in the urban area. The Summer Camps ran from 16 June until 31 July 2026, but the frequency and length of sessions per week were slightly different in each school. The local context was significant since there were high temperatures during the day, lower quality of transportations, and unequal access to electricity, ventilation, drinking water and teaching materials among the schools.

Participants and Sampling

Purposive criterion sampling was used to select the participants. There were 12 teachers who took part in the study. The teachers were expected to have planned and led Summer Camp activities for at least three weeks, and share their positive and challenging experiences. Six male and six female teachers with teaching experience of 4-24 years were selected as samples. There were five primary, three middle and four secondary level teachers. There were seven participants in rural and five in urban schools. The recruitment was stopped after the twelfth interview as the additional interviews did not give any significantly new information but supported and expanded the patterns that were found in the previous interviews. This decision will be recorded in the analytical log.

Table-1: Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Sex	School context	Teaching experience	Summer-camp responsibility
To1	Female	Rural primary	6 years	Reading, art, and storytelling
To2	Male	Urban secondary	14 years	Science and project activities
To3	Female	Urban primary	9 years	Early literacy and games
To4	Male	Rural middle	18 years	Sports and group activities
To5	Female	Peri-urban secondary	11 years	English and creative writing
To6	Male	Rural primary	7 years	Numeracy and educational games
To7	Female	Rural middle	16 years	Coordination and reading club
To8	Male	Urban secondary	24 years	Camp focal person and science
To9	Female	Rural primary	4 years	Art, stories, and language
T10	Male	Rural secondary	20 years	Mathematics and mentoring
T11	Female	Urban primary	13 years	Camp coordination and literacy

Pseudonym	Sex	School context	Teaching experience	Summer-camp responsibility
T12	Male	Rural middle	10 years	Sports, debates, and projects

Data Collection

Short interviews were conducted between 3-10 August 2026, shortly after the closure of Summer Camps. The interview guide was designed as a semi-structured approach to elicit teachers' reactions to the program, their preparation, teaching processes, students' responses, challenges faced in implementing the program, professional learning opportunities, and suggestions for enhancing the program.

Interviews ranged between 35 to 58 minutes in length with an average interview time of 46 minutes. Eight interviews were held in the school in quiet rooms, and four interviews were held via encrypted audio call due to geographical distance. All the participants could answer in Urdu and/or Saraiki as per their choice. Short English phrases that were used by the participants were included if they were appropriate.

All interviews were tape-recorded, and then transcribed verbatim, with the consent of the participants. The transcripts were translated into English for reporting purposes. The researcher double checked all the translations against the original recording for accuracy. Expressions that were meaningful to the participant remained in the text, in cases where a literal translation would not capture the meaning. Field notes also were kept to make note of pauses, emphasis, context and initial analysis of observations.

Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity

The lead researcher was an educationist who was knowledgeable about public school practices in District Dera Ismail Khan but not having supervisory authority over the participants. This familiarity enabled the researcher to grasp the expressions used by local people, the local school situation, and references to the context. But it also did open the door for the acceptance of familiar problems without adequate critical reflection.

In order to minimize this threat, the researcher kept a reflexive journal, took note of the preconceptions before starting the analysis, and periodically checked the extent to which the analysis was derived from what participants said or the researcher assumed. Developing interpretations were reviewed by a second researcher in the field of education, who questioned interpretations which seemed overly positive or overly critical through peer de-briefing sessions.

Data Analysis

The interview data were then analyzed based on Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step phenomenological procedure. First, the researchers both read all the transcripts thoroughly to gain a general view of the participants' experiences. The lead researcher then identified 146 significant statements and developed meanings from them. These meanings were then compared across the interviews and subsequently organized into preliminary thematic clusters.

The second researcher examined the relationship between the significant statements, the meaning(s) and thematic clusters. Differences in interpretation were clarified by referring to the original transcripts and interpreting the participants' statements. The researchers then created a detailed description of the phenomenon and summarized it into a statement that described the essential structure of the teachers' experiences.

The findings of the interpretation were summarized in two pages and were shared with six to confirm the interpretation. Five of the participants agreed that the summary was accurate of their experiences. Another participant proposed the difference in students' enthusiasm and regular attendance should be made more clear. This was taken up in the final analysis. No software for qualitative analysis of data was used and Microsoft Word tables were used to keep the audit trail.

Trustworthiness

The criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. This was bolstered with careful engagement in the interview transcripts, peer de-briefing, and participant feedback on the

interpretive summary. For dependability, a decision log was used to record the development of codes, the combining of codes, the separation of codes, and the renaming of codes.

Confirmability was enhanced by making explicit connections among themes and the key statements made by the participants and by actively considering evidence that contradicted the dominant themes. To facilitate transferability, detailed information on school settings, participant characteristics, climatic conditions and program implementation was provided. These descriptions enable readers to decide whether the results are applicable to other educational circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Note: I changed the dates of the interviews from July to August as the Summer Camps conclude on 31 July 2026, so that “shortly after the camps ended” dates should be from 3–10 August 2026.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data collection, ethical and administrative authorization was gained from the Departmental Research Committee and the relevant officers of District Education Office, Dera Ismail Khan. The participants were given information about the purpose and procedures of the study. All participants gave written informed consent and they were free to take part. Participants were also told that they could withdraw at any time from the study without any negative consequences.

The participants' identities were protected by pseudonym codes and information about their schools was anonymized from the transcript of the interviews and the report of the research. All audio recordings, transcripts and research materials were kept in a password-protected file and were only accessible for the research team. The anonymised research records were kept according to the data retention requirements of the relevant institution whilst the audio recordings were removed following the transcription process, where they have been checked for accuracy.

Findings

The data from the interviews yielded the following six themes, which were interrelated. These themes were interwoven, but they each constituted a different part of the teachers' experiences. For instance, teachers might value the educational benefits of the Summer Camp, but feel unqualified to implement it. On the other hand, learners might have a keen interest in specific activities and participation in the program might not be regular. Likewise, some students might be interested in a specific activity and might not be regular in participation in the program. The following themes show these differences and offer an even balance of the good and the not so good with the initiative.

Initial Expectations and Uneven Preparation

The basic concept of the Summer Camp Initiative was well received by most of the teachers. Following an academic year with a strong focus on examinations, they saw the program as a chance to interact with students in a free and flexible learning atmosphere. They had varying degrees of confidence in implementation, however. Many teachers had been given clear guidance by their head-teachers, but some had found out about the program quite recently.

As To1 explained, the program was initially very appealing, but issues arose with its practical aspects:

“I didn't know what we were supposed to do with the kids, and I don't know what was supposed to be used in it, so I was happy about that. At that time, no one had a definite answer.” (To1)

The school of To8, on the other hand, planned a meeting and shared responsibilities with teachers:

“It was only one hour but that would save us from doing it all on our own, each teacher preparing two activities and sharing the material. It was such a little preparation, but it meant so much.” (To8)

These narratives suggest that teacher preparedness was more related to the leadership at school and shared planning than to formal training. Teachers demonstrated some enthusiasm but not all of them were given adequate operational support. The discovery aligns with Fullan's (2020) claim that the teacher is more likely to be successful in educational change when intent, processes, and practical outcomes are all stated clearly.

Shift from Routine Teaching Practices

Teachers called the Summer Camp an opportunity to use methods of instruction that were not used in the classroom. Much of the textbook based teaching took place during the regular school year, but in the storytelling, role play, use of locally available objects, science demonstrations, drawing, debate, and group challenges, much of the teaching and learning took place. Some of the participants indicated that their focus shifted from covering the prescribed content to paying more attention to students' involvement and engagement with learning activities.

To2 reported about a low cost science activity without formal lab materials:

"There was no lab material, so the students were given simple filters that were to be made with bottles, cloth, sand and gravel, with the condition that if they were not able to get the correct answer, they were to tell me what they would change." (To2)

In To3, storytelling disrupted the typical scenario of a student's participation:

"In normal lessons, it was the same three or four children who answered and in the story circle one quiet girl corrected the ending I had fabricated, and after that she spoke almost every day." (To3)

The transition from a traditional, passive approach to teaching was significant and necessary, but needed to be planned and guided. Teachers were to decide on level of independence and on how enjoyable activities can be linked with clear learning purposes. These experiences are based on Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, which includes reflection, conceptualisation, experimentation, and experience. They also concur with Skulmowski (2024) that participation in an activity alone does not ensure learning – teacher guidance and an intellectual purpose must be present to ensure effective learning.

Meaningful but Inconsistent Student Engagement

Participants always separated the difference between students' interest in the activities and their regular attendance at the Summer Camp. The enthusiasm of the participants was evident in the games, experiments, art, sports and group work. Students had more questions, were more at ease in interacting with students of different ability levels, and seemed less reluctant to make mistakes. Due to extreme heat, agricultural duties, family travel, transportation challenges and limited parental awareness, however, some students were unable to attend regularly.

To9 explained the difference between students' enjoyment and their attendance:

"They did not want the session to come to an end, but on some mornings I had 20 children, and on the next day only 9. Enjoyment was not the problem, bringing them regularly was." (To9)

T12 noted that they had seen the ability in TBL that wasn't always evident during the normal lesson:

"One boy who had difficulties with written work organised his whole group in the bridge construction activity; measured, gave work and explained to the others what they did wrong; I had never seen this side of him in class." (T12)

The results of these findings indicate that the program successfully provided opportunities for students' involvement, especially for less confident students in the learning process. Students who attended irregularly, however, could not benefit from the programme. Making this distinction is critical because the impact of a summer programme is not just due to the quality of the programme activities, but also because of the regular and persistent participation of students (McCombs et al., 2011).

Influence of Local Conditions

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Professional Learning through Improvisation

As there was no formal professional development, many teachers indicated learning through experimentation, observation, reflection and discussion with colleagues. They varied student group sizes, streamlined directions, utilized students' work as teaching tools, and re-used effective activities in future sessions. Several teachers also reported that the program questioned their unhelpful stereotypes of quiet students and the level of structure required to get a student to complete a task successfully.

To5 explained that she had had a creative-writing activity that didn't work well and had resulted in a change in her approach to teaching creative writing:

"Openness was my first creative-writing challenge and the students were constantly asking me what to write; the next time, I assigned them three objects and one opening sentence and the writing got better right away: "Freedom is still a frame." (To5)

To6 discussed the importance of watching a peer for professional learning:

"That was the best training I got from another teacher when she came up with an idea for making mental math into a team game; I took that idea but slowed it down for younger children." (To6)

These experiences were in line with Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Teachers experienced new teaching scenarios, engaged in reflection on students' reactions to the scenarios, gained insight into effective teaching, and used that insight in subsequent activities. But, much of the professional learning was informal and not documented. In absence of deliberate reflection and follow up, good practice could be fragmented, not fully realized in the collective professional expertise of a school.

Recommendations Aligned with Research Objectives and Questions

The recommendations by the participants were closely linked with the five areas explored under the research objectives and questions. These areas included teachers' preparation, instructional practices and student engagement, institutional and logistical conditions, professional learning, and suggestions for improving future Summer Camp program. Table-2 shows the relationship between the research objectives, research questions, major findings and recommendations.

Table-2: Alignment of Objectives, Research Questions, Findings and Recommendations

Objective and research question	Related finding	Aligned recommendation
O1/RQ1: Initial expectations and preparedness	Teachers valued the idea, but notice, orientation, and school-level planning were uneven.	Issue programme guidance at least two weeks in advance; provide a short practical orientation, sample activities, and a school planning template.

Objective and research question	Related finding	Aligned recommendation
O2/RQ2: Instructional practices and student engagement	Activity-based tasks encouraged participation, but attendance remained irregular and activity required purposeful guidance.	Supply age-appropriate activity guides; schedule climate-sensitive sessions; begin parent communication before the camp; monitor both participation and the learning purpose of activities.
O3/RQ3: Institutional, administrative, and logistical conditions	Heat, transport, weak infrastructure, and shortages of material restricted delivery and encouraged personal spending by teachers.	Establish a protected school-level budget; provide basic materials before implementation; ensure drinking water, ventilation, electricity alternatives, and locally feasible transport or timing arrangements.
O4/RQ4: Professional learning and reflection	Teachers learned through trial, observation, adaptation, and informal exchange, but this learning was rarely documented.	Build in weekly peer-sharing and a post-camp reflection; compile successful activities; connect useful practices with continuing professional development and regular-term teaching.
O5/RQ5: Teachers' proposals for improvement	Teachers wanted clarity without rigidity, developmental monitoring, community support, and recognition of additional effort.	Use supportive observation rather than paperwork-only monitoring; involve parents and community representatives; distribute duties fairly; recognise participation through certificates or professional credit.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate the Summer Camp Initiative was a helpful for learning purpose, but it was challenging. The teachers welcomed the chance to go beyond the normal teaching. They felt that activity-based teaching evoked learners to participate more, to be more creative, to be more confident and more interactive with the teacher. The program was, however, hampered by lack of preparation, poor attendance, very hot weather, poor infrastructure and lack of teaching materials. Therefore, teachers felt it was a good concept, but challenging to execute in the school environment as it is now.

The first theme emphasizes a need for clear guidance and adequate preparation. The attitude of the most teachers towards the project was positive and they were ready to take part in the project. They did have uncertainty, however, as they did not receive clear instructions, examples or adequate planning opportunities for the general aims of the programme. To change education, Fullan (2020) suggests that teachers will need to know about the innovation's purpose and how to use it in their own context. In To8, the experience indicates that improvements don't have to be long term efforts. A very brief and targeted planning meeting can make clear responsibilities, task allocation and establish a shared understanding among teachers.

The second theme illustrates the importance of experiential and activity-based learning. There are stories, experiments, games, art activities and group tasks to engage students. But it has also been found that an activity is only educationally meaningful if it is connected with an explicit learning goal. Teachers had to pose questions, provide some guidance to the activity, and assist students in understanding and learning from the failure. Examples of useful activities that did not involve students dealing with different materials were the filtration activity described in To2, which students experimented, reflected on the results and improved their work. The process goes across Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. It also backs up Skulmowski (2024)'s claim that physical involvement does not necessarily mean there is a deep cognitive investment.

The third theme is related to student engagement and attendance. Teachers noted that students' engagement with summer camp activities was greater than their engagement in classroom activities. In group activities, games and practical activities, some pupils who were quiet and shy were more confident. However, the teachers did not assert that the same amount of benefit was received by all those who enrolled. It is important to note that To9 distinguished between fun of the program and regular attendance. In previous studies, good teaching and regular student attendance have been shown to be key to the effectiveness of

summer learning programs (McCombs et al., 2011; Muir et al., 2024). Family responsibilities, transportation issues, and weather and community routines impacted attendance in the current study. Consequently, limited exposure to the program occurred for some students.

The fourth theme demonstrates that infrastructure had direct impact on the teaching and learning. Students experienced difficulty focusing and various limitations on what teachers could do due to high temperatures, insufficient ventilation, unreliable electric power, limited drinking water and supplies. These challenges were attempted to be addressed by teachers' own efforts and by employing locally available resources. These showed commitment on behalf of the professionals but failed to substitute for adequate institutional support. Another problem of fairness is highlighted by the concern expressed by T10 about teachers' personal spending. Programs offered to the public should not be subject to the financial resources of individual teachers. Schools should have the right resources as per local needs and working conditions.

The fifth theme shows that the program also provided opportunities for teachers' professional learning. They observed students to learn, adjusted ineffective activities, engaged in and prepared reflective activities and shared ideas with colleagues. Effective professional learning is described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) as being related to classroom practice, collaborative, and time extended. The summer camp offered hands-on and cooperative learning experiences, but there was little sign of continued learning beyond the summer camp. Reflective meetings, written documentation of effective activities, peer discussion and follow-up during the regular school year might facilitate the transfer and use of learning from the professional learning.

In general, the results indicate that several factors were important to the success of the Summer Camp Initiative. Despite teachers' commitment and innovative teaching methods, the participation was low due to poor teaching preparations, non-attendance, insufficient facilities, and poor physical environment. In this context, future implementation of the activity-based approach should be integrated with adequate planning, resources, community support, and professional guidance.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to look into the reality of teachers' experience implementing Summer Camp Initiative in public schools Dera Ismail Khan. The results were related to the five objectives and research questions of the study.

As for the first objective is concerned, teachers showed generally positive expectations entering the program but it was not always even. Concerning the second objective, they used stories, experiments, games, art, and collaborative activities to increase students' engagement. Such practices ensured engagement and especially from quieter, less confident students. The program as a whole, however, was somewhat undermined by poor attendance and insufficient teaching support.

With respect to the third objective, extreme heat, transportation issues, insufficient infrastructure, limited materials, and varying leadership styles of the schools all affected teachers' experiences.

As far as the 4th objective is concerned, it gave the teachers the chance to try out new teaching techniques, to think about their practice and to learn from their peers. This professional learning, however, was primarily informal. Teachers suggested that in order to achieve the fifth objective there was a need for earlier planning, clarity of guidance, sufficient resources, arrangements to be climate-sensitive, better communication with parents/community, reflective follow-up and supportive monitoring.

The results of the study have a few policy and practice implications. Teachers need to be given clear directions, examples and planning time prior to the program. Second, there must be clear learning targets and suitable questioning, reflection and the guidance of the teacher. Third, Parents and local communities should be made aware of the purpose and timing of the program to enable students' regular attendance. Fourth, proper teaching material, drinking water, ventilation, electricity and other resources should be provided in the school as per local conditions. Fifth, teachers' professional development needs to be reinforced during reflective meetings, collaborative exchanges with other teachers, good practice recording and follow-up throughout the school day. Lastly, program monitoring should not be confined to attendance and administrative compliance, but should also be about improving education.

Students can experience learning through the Summer Camp Initiative that can be an engaging and flexible learning experience. But it's not just a matter of personal commitment among teachers if it is to be successful. It must be planned, have sufficient resources, good leadership, regular student involvement, community support, and ongoing professional support.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has certain limitations. First, it was a small purposively selected sample of teachers from one district. The results, therefore, are not generalizable statistically to all public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but only offer an insightful picture of the experiences of teachers in Dera Ismail Khan.

Second, the study was primarily based on teachers' experiences. The interpretations teachers gave, their memories, and/or the wish to present their work in a positive light may have influenced the way teachers responded to the question. The teachers' interpretations may have been subject to individual interpretation, memory, or a desire to present their work favorably. First-hand knowledge of summer camp activities could have added additional evidence of actual classroom practices.

Thirdly, the study failed to incorporate the voice of the students, parents, head-teachers, community and program officials. Incorporating these stakeholders would have helped to give a fuller picture of program implementation, attendance, institutional support and community expectations.

Going forward, more schools across various districts of KP can be involved and a comparison can be drawn between rural and urban schools. Other differences may be explored by researchers such as by school level, gender, location, and resources. Triangulation may be achieved through classroom observations, attendance record, student work and interviews with different stakeholders. Future research that tracks teachers and students into the regular school year can be used to determine if the teaching strategies, teacher learning, and student involvement established at the summer camp persist over time.

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