

The Current Context Teachers and Teaching in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to throw light on the current context of teachers and teaching in Pakistan and to suggest further line of research on teaching and teachers in the country. **Design:** This paper is based on the review of different papers and articles available in different journals; and downloaded from internet and also on the daily experiences of mine which I face as a teacher and a teacher trainer. **Findings:** The review shows that teaching is a profession by default or an additional source of income. Male members only opt this profession because they could find any other job or adopt it for surplus income. Mostly the teachers are with low qualifications. Teaching is only the transmission of knowledge. **Practical Implications:** Future directions for the future exploration in this area of study are suggested. **Originality:** This paper is an attempt to know about the life of the teachers in developing countries, like Pakistan.

Key Words: Teachers, context and teaching.

Introduction

Pakistan is a developing country. The amount spent on education is only 2.2 to 2.5% of the total budget. Irrespective of the fact that every Government stresses on education, it is the most ignorant area to be addressed. Education always remains the sore point.

As it is an open secret that the development of any country depends upon its education, education and educationists are always being ignored in our society. It resulted in the division of education at different levels and created segments in our society.

A lot of work has been done and still is being done in the area of curriculum development and its implementation but the teachers who are the real implementers of curriculum are required to be included in the process of education effectively. That is why in this paper I tried to examine the profile or context of teachers with the intention to suggest further research in this area for the future betterment.

The Context of Teaching and Teachers in Pakistan:

Like many other developing countries, school teaching in Pakistan is the least-paid and least-respected profession which is not structured well. Always the average students who could not enter any other profession because of low scores opt for this profession.

Thus, most of the teachers in our country are teachers, by default and not teachers, by design. Male teachers get into this profession because either they could not find another job or they need a supplementary income to support their families well. Females are employed in a larger number because:

1. Schools provide a safe environment.
2. Their families compel them to join this profession.
3. They only have to interact with children and other teachers, mostly female.
4. They can share the expense as a homemaker.

Female teachers do not do any other job like male teachers but they have to look after their houses after the long tiring routine.

Teachers are working in multi-grade over-crowded classrooms (40-80 students). Most schools lack the basic facilities. Many Government schools do not have a proper building. The lightning arrangements are very poor. Furniture is scarce and students are sitting on floors. Teachers do not have basic teaching material. Even laboratories do not possess sufficient equipment.

These conditions, along with poor salaries and limited incentives demoralize the teachers. Due to low remuneration teachers are not attracted towards this profession. These conditions are not changed since long.

Teachers also have to tolerate the social and cultural pressures. They are bound to the central Government to follow strict regulations, prescribed textbooks, national curriculum and other instructions issued and introduced by Centralist Ministries of Education, with little discretion given to them (Arthur 1998; Bjork 2004; Dhand, 2000; Coombe 1997). Teachers' main concern in this respect is meeting the requirements of centrally devised diktats (WU, 2004).

The teachers are also expected to develop the socially dominant values. They are supposed to transfer special sense of their society and loyalty. Teachers are not motivated at all as it is already mentioned that they are concerned with this profession due to one compulsion or the other, and not due to internal motives. Rarely any teacher is teaching because of personal interest or commitment. Mostly the teachers in rural areas join this profession because of the non-availability of any other alternative. Female teachers in the country give different reasons to enter the profession like love with children, idealism etc. their families play a key role in the selection of this profession. Many girls who were unable to score enough to get into a Medical college had "teaching" left for them as the only career option.

Academically brilliant students go for Medical, Engineering or other socially high status professions. Average students with no other choice become teachers.

Mostly teachers have very limited content knowledge because they have gone through the same educational process under the supervision of same teachers as they are. Gaps in teachers' subject matter knowledge have been well documented in other parts of the world but this issue has not been systematically studied in Pakistan (Ball, 1988; Ball and McDiarmid, 1990). Pakistani teachers could not even reach the minimum competency level of 40% in any of the three areas- mathematics science and pedagogical skills, probably due to poor reading habits (Saeed and Mahmood, 2002). Not a single individual was able to score more than 30%, which is passing grade for students in Pakistan (Ali, 2000).

Primary school teachers require matriculation certificate and PTC, Primary Teaching Certificate. Matriculation Certificate can be earned by taking the BISE examination, even without attending regular school at all.

Teaching in middle schools or secondary schools requires another two to four years college education. Students with third division or C-grade are acceptable as teachers. To enter in profession of teaching one does not have to be a high scorer as required to be on the merit list of Medical or Engineering Universities.

The certificates earned in the name of professional education are also not reliable. These certificates can be earned from Open University through distance education or as a private student by taking a written examination and providing a certificate of one year working in any school recognized by Education Department and affiliated with BISE. Schools normally provide this certificate to their teachers to avoid giving them study leave or normally the teachers have to leave the job. The threat of losing the job also keeps them away from any sort of professional training.

Commenting on the curricula of pre-service education programs (Smith et al. 1988) in their survey of teacher education in Pakistan, state that they did not see any evidence of:

- Differentiated objectives for children of different ages.
- Consideration of the interaction between child development and learning environments.
- The management of multi-grade schools in villages or large classes in cities, both of which are the key characteristics in Pakistani schools.

In PTC programs 58.3% time is used for teaching contact, 18.2% for teaching practice and 23.5% for examination activities (Mehrunnisa Ahmed Ali, 1998).

Most teachers in developing countries applied to teacher training programs because it is relatively inexpensive route to a settled and secure life (Dyer, 1996).

Teachers' role towards them is not very encouraging. Majority of male teachers have other jobs. In Pakistan normally the male member is the head of the family and they are responsible to fulfill all the requirements. The money paid to them as salary is very meager to meet the expenses of their families. Thus they have to go for other jobs. This extra load of work causes a bad effect on their teaching standards. Along with less pays, the issue of promotion also affects the teaching and plays an important role in demoralizing the teachers. Teachers are promoted on the basis of strict hierarchal structures. Knowledge, sincerity towards profession and hard work has nothing to do in the advancement of a teacher's career. Teachers' behavior towards teaching is not very encouraging. They are prepared as the knowledge transmitters but the modern world defines them as facilitators not knowledge transmitters. They are not concerned whether the students comprehend what they deliver. The teaching in Pakistani classrooms is more teacher-centered than student-oriented. Teachers use lecture methods to cram the children with lots of information. Students are supposed to recall and print that information on a piece of paper in name of examination. This is actually a test of their memories and not knowledge or understanding of the subject.

Teachers alone are not at fault for this. Actually they are pressurized by the education agencies to cover and transmit the prescribed subject content (Ali, 2000; White, 1997; Yildirim, 2003). They are supposed to cover the contents in the stipulated time. Students also like the teacher well who is able to transfer the knowledge in their brains and can prepare

them well for the examination. This is the yard stick to measure the competency of any teacher. Such teachers are taken as effective teachers and have no limit of evening tuitions. If we want to change this situation it is important to be realized at a higher level, because teachers are bound to obey the policies and are not motivated or have low tendency to bring the change or innovations in their teaching methodologies. Change is to be brought from up. In their times as students, teachers were also facing the same situations. They were supposed to show their strong memories. They are following the same practices as a teacher. Most teachers reject the students' answers because they do not match the expected "right answer". (Arthur, 1998)

At last but not the least, the selection of teachers is highly politicized. Political leaders take votes from their constituencies after making long list of promises including the sorest issue of unemployment. When their voters come to them for jobs the most suitable job is teaching which in Pakistan is a job for which any unsuitable person can be the most suitable candidate.

Conclusion:

The conclusion is that the teachers are poorly trained, least paid and demoralized. The teaching profession in Pakistan also does not carry the respectable position it deserves. Teachers in Pakistan do not take it as a full time job. The meager incentives and promotion strategies make it an unattractive job for new professionals. Teachers have to obey the educational policies which are not designed by them or for the development of those policies in which they have no contribution. The teachers are not aware of the responsibility on their shoulders when they enter this profession. They must realize that "they are the builders of tomorrow's nation."

Direction for Further Research:

Further studies can focus on the:

- ✓ Different tasks of teachers.
- ✓ Gaps in teachers' knowledge on subject matter.
- ✓ Teacher education at different levels.
- ✓ Teachers; lives and their careers.
- ✓ Teachers' selection.

Qualitative study, in my opinion, can be suitable to provide deep insights into the teachers' role and their impact in classroom teaching.

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