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Teacher Training in Pakistan: Overview of Challenges and their Suggested Solutions

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Abstract

Education is a key component of progress in the present-day world. But this progress cannot be made without efforts of teachers. Therefore, teacher education, in particular teacher training becomes extremely important. In this regard, several trainings programs are initiated and executed across Pakistan but the desired outcomes have not been achieved so far. Hence, this study was conducted to explore the challenges in teacher training in Pakistan and the ways through which these issues can be resolved. The sources for the data of the study were the published studies in the field in the context of Pakistan, national education policy, and other relevant literature. Based on secondary data, the study concludes that the issues with teacher training in Pakistan are administrative as well as faculty related. The findings reveal that the challenges related to policy and planning, poor induction of teachers, lack of resources in teacher training institutions, demotivation among teachers, and unequal distribution of skilled and productive teachers, dual training system and infrequent trainings. These issues can be fixed by fostering encouraging environment, ensuring accountability and merit, providing necessary resources, systematizing professional training programs and their continuation.

Keywords: Teacher, teacher training, education, teaching.

Introduction

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Education is indispensable to make progress in the knowledge-economy driven world. Education plays a critical role in developing intellectual resources. It increases people's productivity and skills and thus generates skilled labor that leads the economy towards sustainable economic development (Memon, 2007). Along with that, Education has the potential to open new horizons for the learners to grow boundlessly. It has a great influence on all the fields of life. So, education is of great importance not only for the growth of an individual but also for the entire society socially, economically and morally. The key factor in this mass development of individuals and the society is the teacher who enables the learners to explore the world around them, investigate the phenomena of nature, and contribute to the stock of knowledge. Hence, teacher education is extremely essential, particularly in the present-day globalized world. Teacher education means knowledge of the subject matter as well as the skills to impart that knowledge to students, and develop skills in them (Grossman, 1990). In order to make teachers proficient in their content knowledge and equip them with necessary skills or polish their content and/or pedagogic potential, various teacher training programs are developed and implemented across the world. Similarly, teacher education and teacher training in particular have been emphasized in Pakistan. Several training programs for teachers of various disciplines are offered by the concerned training institutes. However, all is not well with these teacher training programs. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the issues related to teacher training in Pakistan and how these issues can be resolved to improve the teacher training programs in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. What are the major issues with teacher training in Pakistan?
2. How these issues can be resolved to improve the quality of teacher training in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Teacher Training

Training is defined as a process that uses a broad range of techniques to change attitudes, skills or actions in order to achieve efficient output in a particular task or collection of tasks (Hawes & Hawes, 1982). O'Neill (1986) explained training as a person's systematic development of the information, attitudes and skills required for him to be able to perform adequately in a job or assignment whose specifications can be relatively well defined in advance and which demands a fairly standardized output from whoever attempts it.

In the past, teacher education and teacher training were used synonymously; however, training is

separate from education in that training has limitations. For instance, it deals with instructions in the performance of particular functions as in on-the-job training, to develop functional skills and knowledge. So it is like a supervised practice. Whereas teacher education, which can be defined as “the program of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level” (Osler & Starkey, 2017), covers skills of teaching, comprehensive pedagogy and professional skills.

Importance of Teacher Training

“Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of a fire” (Kelly-Gangi & Patterson, 2001). It means that the light of education spreads far and wide and teacher is the one who is a source of that illumination. Therefore, in the field of education, teacher training and success are also very critical and perhaps the most crucial component. A familiar truth about the role of quality teacher training is that teacher training is one of the best and most vital requirements for promoting, enhancing and developing education. An effective teacher training system can produce quality teachers who are committed, pedagogically sound, and concerned about student learning and development. The following paragraphs will elaborate on these dimensions.

Kelly-Gangi and Patterson (2001), mentioning the qualities of quality teachers state, “quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice.” They also affirm the fact that they possess good communication abilities and diagnostic skills. Effective teachers are also able to comprehend diverse learning styles and entertain cultural differences that influence their classrooms. They have complete information about child development, and have the aptitude to employ multiple techniques to meet student needs (Kelly-Gangi & Patterson, 2001). Such teachers can only be produced through effective teacher training.

Research also suggests that how well teachers teach heavily depends on training, ability, incentive, qualification, experience, and a multitude of factors (Memon, 2007). Also, quality teacher training undeniably plays a vital part in nation-building and, therefore, it is essential that teachers be educated to form a competent future society.

A distinct and potentially most valuable instance of quality teacher training can be produced by a combination of subject mastery, understanding of comprehensive pedagogical skills, communication and interpersonal skills (Saeed et al., 2013). Such a training program tends to produce quality teachers who positively impact student learning and development. Teaching skills

Teacher Training in Pakistan: Overview of Challenges and their Suggested Solutions

plus pedagogical theory plus professional skills equal to quality teacher training. Scholastic experiences, subject-related knowledge, competency, and accomplishment of teaching and competence of the teachers have positive effect on the teaching and learning process. Several previous studies have shown that the most significant school-based factor in the achievement of students is teacher quality (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003), as the impacts of teachers on student learning have been identified to be long-lasting. Such influence from teachers can be produced through effective teacher training.

Teachers have a greater role to play in teaching and learning process. However, they are unable to effectively accomplish their assignments due to issues such as regular and long gaps in their professional training and other difficulties they face in the teaching-learning process.

Concept of Teacher Training and development in Pakistan

Since Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country, Islamic view of training and development holds great importance in the training and development. Islam defines human development as “the development of both spiritual and human virtues”. Training at perfection in Islam is a high praised quality as persons possess varied desires and possess different means to achieve their goals. Islam initiated training and development fourteen hundred years ago which continued long after that. Initially, madrassas were set up that later turned into universities. Especially the universities in the cities of Fez, Cordoba, Tunis, Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus and Jerusalem marked considerable change in individual and social development (Hassi, 2012). These universities produced great intellectuals because of having teachers of high caliber who were trained informally and they rendered valuable contributions to their respective institutions in particular and society in general.

Like many other countries, Pakistan has formal system of teacher education. Curriculum wing of Ministry of Education, Pakistan designed PTC (Primary Teacher Certificate) and CT (Certificate of Teaching) Teacher Education Syllabi for pre-service teachers. And HEC Islamabad devises syllabi for B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education), M.Ed. (Master of Education) and M.A. (Master of Arts) Education. Minimum requirements for PTC were Matriculation plus two years education. For CT, it was Intermediate, and for B.Ed. requirement is bachelor degree, and similarly for M.Ed. program pre-requisite is bachelor degree in education in Pakistan.

It is the responsibility of the provincial government to administer teacher training programs all over the province. The curriculum wing at the federal level, however, is also accountable to institutions of teacher education. Government primary school teachers are educated in secondary

Teacher Training in Pakistan: Overview of Challenges and their Suggested Solutions

schools, known as Regular Schools or PTC units, through Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers, the Allama Iqbal Open University distance education program, and through teacher training courses. A similar curriculum is taught to graduates of these institutions and they receive a primary teaching certificate or a teaching certificate at the annual completion of the program. The number of applicants is generally far higher than the number of places available. There is also a serious shortage of teacher training facilities, especially in the case of female teachers in some regions and, in particular, in the province of Balochistan (Memon, 2007).

Education Boards and Extension Centers are held responsible for in-service training. In addition, in-service trainings have been delegated by the provinces to one or more GCETs. Three distinct forms of opportunities for in-service education exist for teachers:

- In-service recruitment of untrained workers through the government's three-month full-time crash programs
- The government's short-term refresher courses for those who are already teaching
- Restricted private sector initiatives (short as well as medium term)
- Varied donor-funded initiatives aimed at the in-service training of government teachers

For in-service teacher training for each province, an Education Extension Center and/or Staff Development Directorate is responsible. The aim is to provide each instructor at least once every five years with one in-service training program. A recent analysis of in-service refresher courses in Punjab Province found that these INSET (In-Service Education and Training) courses are offered to an insignificant proportion of teachers. There are scores of teachers who have not had any in-service training even till the end of their career (Memon, 2007).

In Pakistan, the number of systematically and effectively running teacher training institutes is around two hundred and three (203). Additionally, almost three hundred (300) teacher resource centers have been set up by the government of Pakistan. There are also private teacher training centers, in addition to government agencies, which train teachers and equip them with certain pedagogical skills and provide them with professional certificates (Statistics, 2013). Research also indicates that about 40,000 teachers are educated each year under these short-term programs (Aly, 2007). More than two hundred institutions and colleges are presently functioning for training of teachers of formal school system (Pakistan, 2017).

Issues in Teacher Training

Pakistan faces certain issues with respect to education programs. The current and developing

Teacher Training in Pakistan: Overview of Challenges and their Suggested Solutions

concerns of teacher training institutes are: (a) Teacher training facilities face financial limitations and are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of the current system of teacher education (b) Institutes of teacher training face a severe shortage of services, such as teaching aids, buildings, libraries, furniture, text materials and other related tools (c) Examination system at these institutes is not up to the mark, and (d) Teacher absenteeism, poor management, and inefficiency of administration are more underscored problems (Farah, Fauzee, & Daud, 2016). Research also indicates that teacher training programs in Pakistan have faced significant challenges in terms of quality, policy and resource shortages (Jumani & Abbasi, 2015). Some of the most crucial issues that the research reveals are the following.

Poor Induction

One of the problems is to acquire and attract the right individuals to become good teachers because desirable standards can never be achieved without attracting good quality candidates to the teaching profession. Since the candidates who apply and get selected for teaching are not so serious and thus do not benefit from these trainings (Farah et al., 2016).

Low levels of education

It is also a challenge to equip teachers with the necessary and correct abilities. Teachers must be armed with appropriate information and teaching skills that can boost student success by offering relevant feedback to them. Low levels of education and weak preparation leave teachers awarded with teacher training institution/university certificates/grades without the necessary subject knowledge and pedagogical abilities to provide every student with the paramount possible instruction (Memon, 2007).

Infrequent and inadequate training sessions

Pre-service teacher training courses and frequent in-service teacher training sessions do not meet the teaching needs of children between 3 and 5 years of age. Primary school teachers are not trained in interactive teaching methodologies to encourage joyful learning among pre-primary-level children (Pakistan, 2017).

Lack of resources

Another problem when addressing quality teacher training is the lack of funding in teacher training institutions / universities. It has been found that educational institutions for teacher training frequently lack services, including laboratories, libraries, reading materials, facilities for construction and information and communication technology, etc. (Farah et al., 2016). Teachers' professional development is affected by all these factors.

Lack of motivation among teachers

Yet another issue is to encourage teachers to perform their job effectively. Many factors can be given, including the low pay, which significantly affects the morale of teachers. Low income levels have also been found to have an adverse effect on the personal lives of teachers and their ability to do well in their work, as most teachers prefer part-time teaching elsewhere to raise their incomes (Ofoegbu, 2004). Demotivated teachers are seldom concerned about their professional development. Hence, teacher trainings become rather useless and ineffective for them.

Ineffective distribution of teachers

Another problem could be the unequal allocation of skilled and successful teachers. On the one hand, well-trained teachers in various countries tend to teach in schools located in urban areas where incomes are comparatively high and they can have facilities. As a consequence, the achievement of students is unacceptable, where even parents unwantedly take their kids out of school in rural areas (Memon, 2007).

Dual Training Systems

Due to an acute lack of properly trained and qualified teachers and any kind of support mechanism for these teachers, the quality of education provided by the majority of private schools is questionable. With the exception of large school systems such as Beaconhouse, District, Lahore Grammar, and others that make up a small percentage of established private schools, most of the others have teachers who, like their government sector counterparts, are eligible for intermediate (12 years of education) or BA level (14 years of education) and are being paid much lower salaries. Large schools and district schools have set up their own teacher training programs or have access to specialist private institutions. There is less willingness in these schools to employ teachers who have been already educated and hold B.Ed degrees from government institutions. Their preference is for those who are fluent in the English language. Very few teachers hired by private schools have, therefore, undergone any pre-service training (Memon, 2007).

Suggestions for Revamping Teacher Trainings

Although the teacher education system in Pakistan is inflicted with many problems yet there is always some room for improvement. A democratic society and the society where education and human development are held high, teacher quality and teacher education related issues are always a priority (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009). Since Pakistan is on the path of democracy, serious efforts should be taken with regard to teacher education. Highlighting the significance of teacher

Teacher Training in Pakistan: Overview of Challenges and their Suggested Solutions

training for Pakistan, Farah et al. (2016) state that the government of Pakistan must assist educational organizations, teachers, and put effort in teacher training program to achieve millennium development goals (MDGs). This will result in increase of students' performance. Good standard of education is vital for proper development of any country and teacher education plays an indispensable part in regulating it.

Besides, the problems of teacher training could be resolved by producing an environment of trust and strengthening the process of accountability in the school systems, minimized political interference and merit must be followed in teacher recruitment, provision of facilities to teachers and increase in teaching learning materials. Moreover, prevailing professional development programs should be run on systematic basis to improve teaching skills of teachers. Besides, it needs excessive expenditure in physical resources and human capital to set up well-trained teachers. However, due to multiple factors, most low-income countries such as Pakistan suffer from lack of finance (Azam, Fauzee, & Daud, 2014). It is proposed that if unproductive spending decreases and corruption is controlled, teacher training can be made effective even within limited resources. Policymakers should pay more attention to promoting teacher training. Moreover, teacher training should not be limited to programs of professional degrees. Online courses should be initiated and informal teacher training should be encouraged in the age of globalization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is stated that progress without making strides in education is next to none. All socio-economic progress is directly related to development in education of which teacher is a pillar. Teacher is the one who guides, molds and transforms the tender minds and youth of the community or nation. In Islam, teacher's role is well-defined and he holds great responsibility of developing his/her students. This huge importance associated to teacher necessitates betterment in teacher education, particularly in teacher training because teacher training is an integral part of teacher education. There are some serious problems with teacher training like attracting suitable individuals for teaching, equipping them with adequate and correct skills, lack of resources in teacher training institutions, demotivation among teachers to carry out their work effectively, unequal distribution of skilled and productive teachers, dual training system etc. However, pragmatic steps such as investment, eradication of corruption, strengthening institutes will help revamp teacher training in Pakistan.

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