

Problems of Government Secondary School System in Pakistan: Critical Analysis of Literature and Finding a Way Forward

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Abstract

This study critically analyses the problems of government secondary school system in Pakistan. For this purpose a vast existing literature was critically reviewed. Analysis of literature showed that the system is affected due to the following main reasons. The system is financed poorly. There is a lack of motivation among teachers. In some places the teachers are transferred from one place to another on the basis of favoritism and nepotism. The study further found that the system is affected due to political interference in the process of selection. As a result under-qualified teachers are appointed who cannot effectively manage the process of teaching and learning in schools effectively which is reflect in poor performances of students and dissatisfaction among parents regarding the performance of government schools. The study also discovered that teachers are overburdened with more classes due to acute shortage of teaching staff in schools. Lack of teaching and learning resources in schools has affected the quality of teaching and learning. There are meager professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching skills. Last but not least, incessant political interference has gravely affected the process of smooth teaching and learning in schools. On the basis of the findings of this study it is recommended that the

problems of teachers could be solved by creating an environment of trust and strengthening the mechanism of accountability in the school systems. Government may increase facilities for teachers and provided resources for teaching and learning. Political interference should be eradicated. Merit should be followed during process of selection of teachers. Ongoing professional development programs should be run on regular basis to enhance teaching skills of teachers.

Keywords: critical analysis, education system, possible solutions, quality of teaching and learning

1. Introduction

Education is development. It is the backbone of development of any nation in the world. It is an established fact that any type of progress and development in the world is the direct corollary of education (Bregman and Muhammad, 1998). Countries that have effective system of education are more developed as compared to other nations and societies in all fields of life. Such countries are considered the leaders of the world. In short it is education that can turn the population of any country into useful human capital. In fact, education is the tool that changes the raw abilities of people into useful skills and knowledge on the basis of which the individuals contribute towards the progress and development of their societies and thus the people are turned from burden to human resources (Hoodbhoy, 1998). Education is the key to development in all spheres of life. The education system works on many important individuals among whom teachers occupy a key place. Among other factors, teachers are the ultimate force in the process of education. The qualities, skills and knowledge of teachers determine the quality of the overall system of education (Farooq, 1990). The education system of Pakistan has many problems. Although, the general problems of the system of education in Pakistan have long been identified through various studies but in many instances the causes of the problems of teachers are yet to be discovered. This study attempts to identify the main causes of problems of teachers underlying the education system of Pakistan due to which the function of schools, the process of teaching and learning, the quality of students' results is negatively affected.

2. Statement of the problem

The system of education in Pakistan is among the lowest in terms of quality in the South Asia. Pakistan stands at the lowest ebb in the world in terms of education ranking. There are many problems responsible for this phenomenon among which the quality of teacher is one of the prominent issues. Teachers in Pakistani schools face various problems due to which the overall process of teaching and learning is affected (Hayes, 1987). Therefore, this study attempts to analyze the problems of teachers at secondary level in Pakistan. For this purpose existing literature is deeply and critically analyzed to find possible solution to this problem.

3. Objectives of the study

The present study attempts to critically analyze the problems of government secondary school system in Pakistan. For this purpose the study focuses on different aspects of the problems such as academic, administrative, power structure, financial, training, curriculum,

parental, examinations and so on. These are generally considered the main elements of an education system and are closely related to the functions of teachers in any system of education around the world.

Following were the main objectives of the study.

1. To identify the main problems of the government secondary school system in Pakistan.
2. To examine the problems in the light of literature
3. To present possible solutions on the basis of the study

4. Research methodology

Although the problems of the education system of Pakistan are numerous and there are different problems at various levels. However, this study was delimited to problems of secondary schools in the country. For this purpose existing literature was deeply and critically reviewed. The findings of the study are presented below in a descriptive form. On the basis of the analysis of literature (results or findings) of the study possible recommendations are presented for possible solutions of the problems.

5. Review of literature

The secondary education system of education is an important terminal process. There are serious problems in the education system of Pakistan at all levels both on qualitative and quantitative terms. The system of education in the country is so poor and outdated that there are serious reservations about the system from all quarters of the society (Government of Punjab, 2002). The situation is not improving. Many attempts on the parts of various successive governments to raise the quality of system of education to acceptable national and international standards have brought no positive results. This alarming situation indicated that the system of education is going towards collapse in all fronts (Ashraf, 1983). There are many problems that the system of education in Pakistan is faced with, among whom the problems of teachers are highly prominent. Teachers are the key to the success of any education system. However, studies show that in Pakistan, the problems of teachers have multiplied with the passage of time rather than being solved. It seems that no one is paying attention to these problems and resources and energies are wasted on mere improvement of buildings and in the improvement of the curriculum or system developments (Government of Pakistan, 1998). There is sense of feeling of extreme alienation among the teaching community because teaching profession is considered the most underpaid and less lucrative and unattractive professional service in Pakistan. Teachers do not enjoy the social respect which is enjoyed by other service men in the country (British Council, 1988). As a part of the review of literature, critical analysis of the problems of teachers in secondary schools in Pakistan is presented below.

6. Critical analysis of the problems in the secondary school education system of Pakistan

Following is the critical analysis of the problems of the secondary school system in Pakistan.

6.1 Financial problem

In Pakistan education is the most neglected in terms of financial support from the government side. Government spends the least budget on education which is less than 2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Due to receiving less financial support, the sector has remained the most under paid and poor in performance. This fact has rendered the education sector as the most unattractive profession in the country. Teacher community is the most financially poor in the society which compels them to look for other sources of money at the cost of their professional integrity in some case. Teachers get more than fewer salaries in the country (Zafar, 2003). Teachers are unable to lead a decent life within the salary provided to them by the government. This factor has affected the motivation level of teachers. The teachers as a whole do not take active interest in the performance of their duties. This situation has ultimately impacted the whole process of quality in teaching and learning in schools. In many cases teachers get salaries without attending schools. The ratio of teacher absenteeism in government schools is higher. Many teachers run their own businesses apart from their professional duties (Shahzadi and Perveen, 2002).

6.2 Political interference

Education system of Pakistan is does not have freedom from the clutches of domestic politics. The system of education was completely politicized since the establishment of the country. Almost all institutions in Pakistan are under the dictation of political kings. There is no concept of institutional freedom. The main reason behind the problem of political interference is that in many cases the induction of teachers is made on political basis (Shah, 2003). The concept of merit is pushed behind in the process of professional appointments. Thus, politically elected teachers cannot work independently. This factor has grossly affected the smooth process of education in the Pakistani schools. The teachers who do not listen to the dictations of the political actors are severely punished in social or financial terms. This absence of professional freedom of teachers has badly affected the degree of success of their duties. The teachers cannot creatively due to lack of professional liberty. They work with interest and motivation (Saleem, 2002).

6.3 Social recognition

According to Rehman (2002) teaching is considered the most respectful professions in all societies of the world. In some countries of the world teaching is taken as the most honorable profession. In some countries of the world it is highly paid and lucrative as well. All this defines the social parameters of teaching profession. In Pakistan, teaching profession does not enjoy a great social status in the society. Teaching is considered as the most underpaid and less attractive profession as compared to other professions like medical or engineering and so on. Malik (1991) discovers that in Pakistan social status of teachers in the society is accepted only at the extent of Holy Scripture. For example, ideologically teaching is deemed as the prophetic

profession and teachers as the promoters of prophetic job. However, in practice this does not exist. Teachers stand at the last edge of the social ladder in the society. This phenomenon has decreased the self-esteem of teachers. In these conditions the profession of teaching is the most little attractive field of service for the youth. Normally teaching is the last option in the priority list of different professions.

6.4 Problem of accommodation

Government does not provide any residential accommodation to school teachers. Therefore, teachers who are posted in remote areas or outstations face problem of accommodation and shelter. The main cause of this is lack of policies of the government regarding the residential issues of teacher community. Due to non-availability of official accommodation teachers are not able to perform their duties with full attention and satisfaction (Hussain, 2001). It has been observed that teachers who are posted in remote areas are more interested in return transfer to their near stations from the time of transfer to the school. This practice negatively affects the performance of the teachers and leads to disturbance and mental agonies. The teachers away from their families cannot perform effectively (Government of Punjab, 2004). Many teachers cannot afford to rent houses on the salary which is given to them. They hardly make their both ends meet. The teachers suffer from frustrations and finally look for other sources to support their families and their own personal expenses. All this badly affects their professional duties.

6.5 Problem of frequent transfers

Teachers in Pakistani schools are always at the sweet will of the education officers and school administration. The transfers are usually made on the basis of favoritism and nepotism. Due to this practice most of the teachers remain in high mental agony, disturbance and pressures (Khan, 1980). The main cause of the frequent transfers to remote areas and places are decided on the basis of personal relations and favors. Teachers who are transferred to new places do not find enough time to get adjusted to the new environment. The practice of frequent transfer of teachers creates not only disturbances for the teachers rather it also affects the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. This directly impacts the performance of students. In this way the degree of education is affected. This practice also badly affects the life of the teachers. The social life of the family of the teachers especially their children remain in a state of pressure and disturbance (Farooq, 1993).

6.6 Lack of professional development

Teaching is a profession which needs continual updating. New changes occur in the society and around the world needs teachers to be continuously abreast with latest theories, research and other addition to the pool of knowledge. Teachers who are not professionally sound and upgraded are not able to cope with the different changes and challenges in the society, country and the world at large. Those teachers who acquire latest knowledge, develop their skills effectively manage the process of teaching and learning. They teach and learn better (Farooq, 1990). Effective teachers need to be effective learners. The practice of professional development of teachers is less in Pakistani schools. Due to lack of latest knowledge and skills the teachers are found weak in solving the problems of students in the

process of schooling. It is observed that students graduating from the schools have poor communication skills, social skills and even leadership skills to deal with problems of life. Students in Pakistanis schools memorize the concepts for examination purpose. They lack analytical, reflective or critical skills like their teachers. This situation has affected the overall degree of quality of education in the country (British Council, 1988).

6.7 Staff relations

Relationship of teacher and teacher and between head teacher and the staff is essential for creating an environment of trust. Lack of friendly relations affects the process of effective teaching and learning. The negative effects of politics in Pakistani schools have deeply affected the system of education. In some cases principals or head teachers give favors to only those teachers who accept their dictations or orders without any critique. Those teachers who question them or ask for more support are cornered and disregarded. This practice has given birth to mistrust and de-motivates some of the teachers who dislike sycophancy. Normally the beavers of school principals are likened to a small king and school a kingdom (Government of Pakistan, 2001). School principals generally lack the ability of staff coordination. They lack vision which leads them to feeling of superiority over teachers. This trend has led to situation where some times skirmishes take place between teacher and principal or verbal war start. The ultimate effects of this situation fall on the students. Even the process of quality of education in the schools is deeply affected (Khalid, 1998).

6.8 Community relations

Schools are community in miniature. Teachers are important change agents. The teachers are academic leaders of the society. In Pakistani schools the concept of parental participation is very poor. Teachers normally face negative remarks form the parents' side as all performance of the students is related to the performance of the teachers only (Muhammad, 2002). Students who fail or show low marks in the examination, the teachers are held responsible for this without realizing that the performance of the students is associated with the role of school administration, parents and teachers. It is injustice to only hold teachers responsible for the bad results of the students in examination and so on. There is lack of awareness on the part of the parents and community that parents and community is equal stakeholder in the development of the student (Illahi, 1986).

6.9 School politics

Malik (1991) argues that educational institutions in Pakistan are not free in terms of political independence. The destiny of teachers is decided by the political figures in the society like other professionals working in different public institutions. The political interference in the professional area has eroded the quality and integrity of the system. In some cases politics has actively entered into the corridors of education. For example, in colleges and higher education institutions in form of political parties, small political parties are working. This has affected badly the process of smooth education (Khan, 1998). Inside schools there are groupings and associations which define the activities inside the schools. Under these conditions teachers are able to work in peace and tranquility. The teachers remain in the search to join one group or another. This practice has affected their professional duties. The

political groupings in schools are joined by other groups from outside. These situations in schools have created extremely unfavorable teaching and learning conditions for students and teachers (Khan, 1992).

6.10 Burden of more classes

According to Kahlid (1998), the unrealistic working conditions in Pakistani schools have added to teacher burnout. There are no procedures of work in some schools either due to the ignorance of the administration of laps on the part of teachers to find out the procedure of work. In some schools there is lack of teaching staff. This creates more problems for other teachers in the schools who have to teach more classes than their normal routine. In view of Saleem (2002) this situation has increased more pressures on the teachers who become prone to physical discomforts. In this situation the teachers try to cover the syllabus at the cost of the quality in teaching and learning. Teachers cannot pay individual attention to many students which is a great psychological and social need of students.

6.11 Lack of physical and learning resources

Due to lack teaching and learning aids in schools teacher face many during teaching process. Some schools even do not have basic aids such as boards and books. Some schools do not have classrooms and library. There are no playgrounds for the physical development of students (Qureshi, 2002). This situation has created more problems for teachers as they cannot provide the students wider opportunities for learning and development. Teachers are expected to cover courses well in time. In these conditions teachers fail to create meaningful learning environment in schools (Hussain, 2001).

6.12 Lack of supervision

Rasheed (2004) has found that there is a poor concept of supervision in Pakistani schools. The process of supervision is filled with bureaucratic underpinnings. The purpose of supervision is for the development of teachers and improvement of the performance of teachers and students. Conversely, in Pakistan the process of supervision is characterized with the notion of inspection. Supervisors create fear during the process of supervision in the minds of teachers (Mohanty, 990). The supervisors behave like kings and treat the teachers like slaves and inferiors. This trend has created mistrust and discouragement among the teachers. The supervisors instead of providing constructive feedback give orders to the teachers and hence no improvement takes place (Khan, 1998).

6.13 Lack of coordination

The system of education in Pakistan lacks a mechanism of coordination. This problem has taken roots due to weak communication between the policy makers, staff, parents and the community. The state of poor coordination in the system has promoted misunderstandings between the stakeholders (Farooq, 1993). Teachers remain at the receiving end in all areas be it making of curriculum or any other policy. The teachers participate only in the implementation not in the development part. This ends up in creation of a culture of blame. There is even lack of coordination between teachers and principals (Zafar, 2003). This lack of coordination in view of Ashraf (1983) has stopped discussion on mutual problems faced by

teachers in schools. As result no effective measures are taken to resolve vital issues at the school level. Teachers receive orders from the high ups and implement that without further elaboration.

6.14 Curriculum issues

Curriculum development in Pakistan is a centralized activity. Curriculum is developed and schools are supposed to implement it as it is without any manipulation. Teachers' role is that of implementer. They cannot contribute on their own towards the process of curriculum development or evaluation (Hoodbhoy, 1998). This practice has left the teachers ignorant of many aspects of the curriculum which ultimately affects not only their own performance but also the process of teaching and learning in schools. In many cases teachers are not aware of the aims or goals of the curriculum for certain levels. This creates gaps between understating of the curriculum and its effective implementation. In developed countries of the world teachers are invited to participate in the process of curriculum design and development. Their inputs are considered vital for the right direction of the education system (Government of Pakistan, 2001).

6.15 Issues of text books

Text book is a vital ingredient of teaching and learning process. It is one of the important sources which provide opportunities for improvement of reading and new knowledge for learners. Textbook development is highly specialized area in curriculum development. A textbook as one of the sources of content is an essential element of education (Farooq, 1993). Teachers in Pakistani schools face problem of instruction due to non-availability of quality textbooks. There is a culture of multi-medium of instructions in schools. This confuses both the teacher and the student. Besides, there is lack of training of teachers on how to facilitate or explain concepts from different textbooks (Hussain, 2001). This lack of orientation has created confusion among teachers which reflects in their poor performances. The teachers finally lose interest in the profession and seek other sources of gaining bread and butter. This is a highly dangerous development taking place in schools. At the same time teachers are expected to cover the syllabus before examination by all means at their disposals (Khalid, 1998). For this purpose teachers resort to only reading and preaching the books without taking into account the vital aspects of teaching and learning such as development of various skills (communication, analysis, reflection) of students and enhancing their knowledge in an effective way.

7. Findings and conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the problems faced by teachers at secondary school level in Pakistan through a critical review of literature. The study on the basis of analysis of the existing literature concluded that overall the system of education in Pakistan is affected due to acute shortage of financial support. There is lack of motivation among teachers towards teaching profession due to fewer facilities available in the service. Teachers get fewer salaries as compared to other professionals in the country. Besides, the teachers are transferred from one place to another on the basis of favoritism and nepotism. Hence, teachers are not happy.

The study also concluded that there are no facilities of accommodation for teachers posted in remote or outstations. Due to political interference in the process of selection, under qualified teachers are appointed who cannot effectively manage the process of teaching and learning in schools.

The study also concluded that teachers are overburdened with more classes due to shortage of staff in schools. Lack of resources in schools renders the teachers helpless while they need different aids for teaching and learning. There are no training facilities available to professionally update the teachers to improve their teaching skills.

The study further explored that in schools, principals or head master in most cases create master servant environment which makes the teachers feel alienated from the system. Political groupings in schools have badly affected the relationship between teachers and teachers. This has also gravely affected the process of quality of education in schools.

8. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study it is suggested that the problems of teachers could be solved through the following ways:

1. By creating an environment of trust and strengthening the mechanism of accountability in the school systems, the role and performance of the teachers could be improved.
2. To retain the interest of teachers in the teaching profession government may increase facilities for teachers. This will enhance their motivation level. It will have a positive impact upon the overall teaching and learning process.
3. For the improvement of quality of teaching and learning schools are needed to be provided with different teaching and learning resources. This measure will improve the degree of quality of learning and teaching. For this purpose more funds could be provided to schools to be used in acquiring of equipment for teaching and learning aids.
4. Schools are needed to be completely free from corruption and politics. For this purpose, it is needed to be ensured that political interference is minimized rather eradicated from schools so that an environment of professionalism and trust is built.
5. Pure selection on the basis of qualification ensures the selection of qualified people for teaching. Qualified people develop systems. Hence, it is recommended that during the process of selection or appointments of teachers merit should be followed.
6. Today's world is replete with new changes and developments. Teachers produce professionals for the future. Hence, the teachers need to be fully abreast with new knowledge, research and latest information in order to effectively train and educate the children for their future roles. For this purpose, teachers need training on continual basis. The teachers may be provided opportunities to participate in ongoing professional development programs to enhance teaching skills of teachers.
7. Teachers are the key in the process of education. Teachers' participation in the curriculum development will enhance the degree of quality of education in schools.

For this purpose, it is recommended that teachers may be provided opportunities to participate in the process of curriculum development.

8. In order to retain the level of interest among teachers, the distribution of classes could be rationalized in schools by the principals or the higher authorities. To overcome this problem more teachers could be provided to schools so that teachers are not overburdened with extra classes and their energies are not exhausted.
9. In order to solve the problem of textbook, teachers could be advised to relate the knowledge to daily life experiences of the students. Instead of teaching the book, teachers may be advised to teach ideas by using other sources such as newspapers, journals and so on. For this purpose, school authorities could play a vital role. In this way teachers will be able to cope with the monotony of textbooks.
10. For effective schools effective system of coordination is essential. Teachers may be communicated properly about the different developments taking place in the system of education like policies, programs and so on. In this way, the teachers will develop a sense of care and feel to a team player rather than a fixing part in a system. This will enhance their self-esteem and they will participate in the process of teaching and learning enthusiastically.

9. Future research

This study investigated the problems of teachers at secondary level in government schools in Pakistan. It is suggested that another study should be conducted on problems of students at secondary school levels. This will help in deeper understanding of the problems of education in Pakistan. On the basis of this, viable solutions could be provided.

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