

An Exploration of Administrative Operations and Quality Measures at Primary Level: Perceptions of the Head Teachers in the Rural Area Primary Schools in Punjab

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Abstract

Quality learning especially at the primary school level depends on the school Head teachers and strategies they adopt to improve the teaching and learning processes at school. The role of the Head teachers remains crucially important in maintaining school progress at one hand and tackling the unintended concerns and issues on the other. While causal inferences portray a general perspective of problems and issues, there is an emerging need to pay attention to the operations and measures at the grass-root level. The main objectives of the study were; to identify the problems faced by the head teachers in maintaining quality learning at primary school level in rural areas, to explore the strategies head teachers adopt for enhancing the quality of learning at primary schools, and recommend some suggestions to manage with problems faced by the administration at primary school level in rural areas. The qualitative research design was employed to conduct the following study as a qualitative research design explores the problem in depth. The interview protocol was designed to collect the desired information. All Head teachers of primary level teaching in rural areas of District Bahawalpur were the targeted population of the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. Twenty head teachers were selected for the collection of the data. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to gather information from the head teachers. Before interviewing, the pilot study of the interview protocol was carried out. Four specialists in the field were coopted, between them, two were teachers and two were educationists. Modifications in the interview protocol were made based on the opinions of the experts and educationists. Due to the situation of COVID 19, a researcher couldn't visit the schools personally so, telephonic interviews were done by the researchers. The collected information was analyzed and themes were drawn through thematic analysis. The main findings of the study reveal that there was a shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff at the primary school level. School teachers are lacking in the expertise of the use of the latest technologies. It was recommended in the study that required teaching and non-teaching staff should be provided in primary schools to increase the effectiveness and to enhance the quality of the learning. It was a recommendation that multiple pieces of training should be organized to enrich the numerous skills of the teachers.

Keywords: Primary education, Quality, Head teacher, Administration

Introduction

The multifaceted development of any

society largely depends upon the education system and the provision of quality

education. The quality of school management depends on the engagements of different offices and stakeholders that are interlinked. The nearby or ordinary office, the region office, the local gathering, and the school staff all have an impact on the step by step operations of the school. The head teacher is the crucial link in this framework and outrageous expect the most essential part of ensuring school adequacy (Bolman&Deal, 2003). This study is anyway disapproved of bogging and mentioning the individuals. It incorporates the executives of money related, human and material resources in component situation affected by various internal and external forces. This endeavor is made more problematic by the way that these resources in a country are ceaselessly used (Bass, 2008). The head teacher expects a basic role in the administration and the executives of the school. It is commonly seen and agreed that the idea of the community and local administration reliably has some effect on the school ampleness. The head teacher is, in this path in a remarkably annoying position, being depended upon to pass on 'better quality' preparing with least resources (Harris & Jones, 2010). The criticalness of the piece of Head teachers on the school affiliation can't thusly be overlooked. Head teachers are incredibly amazing in school affiliations. Subsequently, the school goes to consider affecting the direction of the teachers remembering the ultimate objective to achieve the goals of the school. Transformational approaches to managing pioneers have been motivated for the effective administration of the instructive framework. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) saw that who inspires people to surpass desires and expresses a significant vision for the affiliation get a better result in the end. School head teachers are needed to show this power quality to improve teaching and learning in the school. Hord and Sommers, (2008) center out that the achievement of a pioneer depends upon the accessibility, the

preparation obligation, and the limit of the disciples to take after and likewise the limit, the style, and capacities of the pioneers. Consequently, the achievement of teaching supervisors depends on their sufficiency and the suitability of the classroom teachers. It has been seen by schooling accomplices in Pakistan that preparation structure at all levels is loaded up with plans and issues, which consolidate helpless educational execution of students, deceiving in assessment, and helpless perspective of teachers to teach. Unexpectedly these administration issues go on persistent in schools (Irby, Anderson, Henson, & Devese, 2006). The school Head teachers are reproached for non-execution of their commitments and their failure to show appropriate vital practices to handle these interminable issues assaulting training structure. The basic commitment of the head teacher is to improve teaching and learning in the school (Harris & Jones, 2010; Harris, 2003). Evidence has moreover suggested that Head teachers are in an exceptional situation to affect school learning society (Rammer, 2007). Worth-based pioneers are identified with the exchange of rewards and honor for meeting agreed-upon objectives. Screens lovers to ensure mistakes are not made but instead grants social occasion to exist. For this circumstance, the pioneer mediates exactly when things turn out seriously. A non-pioneer assemble, free venture authority is nonattendance of the board (Schlueter&Walker, 2008).

Functions of Head Teachers

As schools increase in size and the heaviness of association and assessment creates, the components of teacher and head teacher are tending to isolate. In a couple of countries, surprisingly Germany, however head teachers have been given to naming head teachers arranged in association and the executives and with no direct teaching knowledge (Marzano&Waters, 2008). Their

administration fundamentals are equivalent to those of private present-day or business works out, besides open guidelines specific to preparing. In such cases, head teachers are certified administrators and might get a head's style. A portion of the time open part head teachers view and present themselves thusly. The head teacher is dynamic in two fields, the executives of resources and the board of people from a specific perspective (Locke, 2010). Authority due to the way that no other term reflects so clearly the novel thought of the authoritative limit ascending in schooling systems. It has transformed into an official term in Great Britain, where considering and change of the calling has likely changed most starting late. The School pioneer has replaced the ordinary Headmaster (Lunenburg, 2010). The executives of teaching are considered to relate to the substance of instructing, its affiliation and methodologies, and assessment of understudies' learning and their headway. It may to a more conspicuous or lesser degree be constrained by decisions, guidelines, and standards set up at close by, regional or public level. Here again, extensively divergent levels of school self-administration are discovered (Burton, Obel, &Håkonsson, 2015). Authority of this sort requires gigantic inclination, a capacity that will constantly be rare (Lunenburg, 2010). School change research has exhibited that administration is basic in conveying extraordinary understudy results (Bjork &Kowalski, 2005) observes the following to change the focus of instructive administration the improvement of instructive pioneers theory and investigation over late many years, watching three gigantic general developments (Boschee, 2009). Authority is passed on among the teachers. This makes a pleasing climate in the schools. Schools end up being more attractive based on the demonstration of participative decision making and exercises. The board requires speculations from everyone so all

people are busy with causing a hugeness and following up on that significance (Tareilo, 2010).

Head teachers assessment is, most importantly, about filing the idea of head teacher execution; at that point, its middle developments to heading teachers upgrade their execution and holding them duty regarding their work. "Starting late, as the field of preparing has pushed toward a more grounded focus on duty and careful examination of factors affecting instructive outcomes, the head teacher has ended up being the most convincing school-related force in understudy achievement" (Barnett, McCormick, &Connors, 2001). Given the emphasis on head teacher quality as communicated in No Child Left Behind, just as enactment, public approach, and practice in each state (and, besides, numerous countries all through the world), an excellent must be put on top-notch head teacher assessment frameworks to a certain extent that didn't exist heretofore (Arnett, Burns, &Lubbers, 2010).

In Pakistan education is a provincial matter and the educational administration department is governed by the Provincial Minister for Education. To meet the emerging needs and requirements of the school administration, the provincial government has taken many steps. School Information System (SIS) is a smartphone app, used for self-reporting of data in Punjab province. This app is developed by PITB (Punjab Information Technology Board) which is an autonomous body organized to combat IT consequential in the province(Basheer et al., 2019). The government of Punjab developed a test for the assessment of functional literacy. The test LND (Literacy and Numeracy Drive) is developed for grade 3 students and helps in ascertaining the functional knowledge in English, Urdu, and Mathematics.The government has introduced a continuous monitoring system for financial affairs. The system name PMIU (Punjab monitoring and Implementing Unit) and the sole responsibility is to look after the

NSB (Non-Salary Budget). The PMIU has developed more than 19 indicators for the monitoring of the various aspects of school progress. According to EMIS (2016), Punjab has 53,000 schools approximately, of various grades. Between them, 37,000 were primary, 8400 middle schools, and 6400 high schools. A sum of 60% of the age group population is enrolled in primary schools. A high ratio of primary schools is operative with a single teacher. According to Aslam, Jamil, and Rawal (2011), Aslam (2009), 22% of the school teacher is untrained and engaged in multi-grade teaching. In this context of Pakistan's school education, broader efforts are required to benefit the school management in all contexts (Nisar et al., 2021). The current study is carried out to identify the micro-level problems and hitches that are the possible stumbling blocks on the way of the smooth functioning of schools. The head teacher impacts teachers through a well-managed climate, resourceful classrooms, and encouragement to the staff among the other elements. Leadership effectiveness can be seen in the mediation with staff and students for the better and effective functioning of the institution (Robinson, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

It is the sole responsibility of the administration of any school to ensure students' learning and personality development. Quality education at the primary school level is very important for the comprehensive and continuous development of students. Concepts learned at the primary school level have a greater impact on children's life throughout. The current study was designed to reconnoiter the operations of school administration and challenges they face in the provision of quality learning in rural areas Primary schools of Punjab.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the Study were as following:

1. To identify the problems and issues faced by the head teachers in maintaining quality learning at the primary school level in rural areas.
2. To explore the strategies head teachers adopt for enhancing the quality of learning at the primary school level in rural areas.
3. To gather some suggestions from front-line administration to manage problems at the primary school level in rural areas.

Research Methodology

The qualitative research design was employed to conduct the following study as a qualitative research design explores the problem in detail. The interview protocol was designed to collect the desired information.

Population

All head teachers of primary school level teaching in rural areas of District Bahawalpur were the targeted population of the study.

Sample and Sampling

The main aim of the study was to explore the institution-level operations and the threats in the quality of learning of primary school students. For this purpose, a convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. Twenty head teachers were selected to gather information. The confidentiality of the respondents was ensured and all the participants were given a code. The information and quotes of the respondents were depicted with a self-created identity.

Research Tool

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to gather information from the head teachers. To develop a research tool, the research reviewed the in depth literature. The interview was comprised of five main questions related to the operations, policy, administrations' strategies, and problems in maintaining the quality. The participants were given the questions before the interview for

preparation and reply. The interviewees were further probed during the interview session to get deep information when required.

Pilot Testing

Before interviewing the field pilot testing was done from four experts. Among these four experts, two were primary school head teachers and two were educationists. Modifications in the interview protocol were made based on the opinions of the experts and educationists.

Data Collection

Due to the situation of COVID 19, the researcher couldn't visit the schools personally so, telephonic interviews were done by the researchers. Before conducting the interview time was decided with the interviewee. The researcher also got permission to record their interviews. Notes were also made by the researcher to note down the answers of the head teachers.

Data Analysis

As data collection is a systematic process. The gathered information was written on separate sheets. After that categories were drawn and data were organized according to the nature and objectives of the study. Further, the obtained categories were merged into themes. The same themes were written on a separate sheet. Information with different themes and points of view was organized on a separate sheet.

Results of the Study

The current study was conceded for the identification of problems related to primary school administration. The study was qualitative and 20 head teachers from rural area schools were interviewed. The interview protocol was developed on the four basic questions. Many subsidiary questions were imposed during interview, when required.

The first question of the study was about

the problems and issues that affect the smooth running of the institution. According to the given responses, a majority of the respondents described that the burden of administrative work keeps them busy and they get little time for academic matters. Maintenance of enrollment targets and attendance is a challenging task for school administration. UPE (Universal Primary Education) survey is also a major problem for head

One of the heads commented in these words,

“Head teachers have to do door to door walk every morning to collect students. Due to this act, teachers' reputation become fade.”

Heads always lacking in achieving the goal due to the uneducated and non-cooperative community. One of the respondents R-9 utter,

“We are working in an area where the majority of people are illiterate and hesitant to contact the school. They even show no interest in sending their child to school. Our teacher met them at their place for regular attendance and homework completion, but get no improvement”

Another problem was indicated by many of the respondents the complexity and length of the entries of the SIS (School Information System) app. It is little or no guidance and training were provided for the use of that app. A participant R-2 of the study pointed out the problem in the following words,

“The senior heads are reluctant in the use of gadgets like smartphones and laptops. They feel comfortable with manual work assignments. The online work is a big challenge for them. They not only need training for the use of technology but also behavior modification”

Few have a view that the LND test is again an over-ambitious task. The available staff and their efficacy does not match with the requirements of the LND criterion. Many individual heads were pointed out the

shortage of resources, unnecessary file work, shortage of instructional staff, and non-cooperative local councils were amongst the difficulties.

The system of inspection in school was also criticized by the participants. The participant was annoyed by the stereo type functioning of inspectors and demanded a meaningful process which helps to collect data on effective learning. Few also were in a view that feedback never been provided to the school heads on the performance of school and staff.

The second question was designed to probe the approach and vision of the heads for future development. A large number of defendants supported the autonomy and freedom of heads for better development. One head teacher R-3 added that,

“A democratic decision making and group sharing can be the best option to reach the agreed goals”.

Few were in the view that smooth functioning and to regulate the matters of the school, the head should focus on the development of rules and regulations. It was also articulated that the head should work for the elevation and promotion of its staff. Timely promotions of staff keep them motivated and directly related to efficiency and effectiveness.

The third part of the interview was to get the demands of the heads towards the upper-level administration. The majority of the respondents demanded more budget in the category on NSD. Almost all pointed out the shortage of funds in NSB, schools even not able to maintain cleanliness in the school. Many heads showed their displeasure over the dropout policy of the Punjab education department and demanded a separate section of district authority to ensure the retention of students in schools. A head teacher R-16 said,

“Majority of Head teachers always indulged in the laborious clerical job. Most assignments are overlapping and demand the same data and numeric again and again. This tiring job is very useless

and wastage of human resources”

Many demanded the basic facilities, like clean drinking water, washroom, and repair of furniture, etc. A member of the survey necessitated that SED (School Education Department) should complete the exact number of books as many students in schools.

The fourth question was asked to get suggestions from heads to enhance the quality of education at the primary level. Heads were determined that the quality of education is linked with the quality of teaching staff and materials. Few were in favor to close the LitNum (literacy and numeracy) hour, as they consider it a useless activity. Many also persuasively necessitated stopping the inclusion and engagement of teaching staff in non-teaching activities, like the dengue campaign and census. It was also declared that any sort of political interference in school matters should be stopped. All heads of schools at various levels have no powers, which affect the authority and control of heads at the school level. The empowerment of the head teachers could help them to implement school policies more effectively.

One senior head R-6 suggested in these words,

“Head teachers should be given the power to hire and fire”.

Moreover Mostly demanded technology-related training for heads to cope with the emerging trends in administration. Student-Teacher Ratio (STR) is a good initiative but still, there is a lot do to increase its effectiveness. Modern systems of education around the globe ensures a balanced teacher-student ratio. Individual attention is important in effective communication and it can only be achieved with a small number of students in a class. A head from rural area school R-11 gave opinion in the following words, *“I am working for 23 years as a head and never worked in a rural school with sufficient teaching staff. Although English is a compulsory subject we don't have a*

subject specialist for English for the last five years”.

PEC (Punjab Examination Commission) was necessary and teachers were performing better in the compulsory examinations.

MEA (Monitoring Evaluation Assistant) should be from the Education Department who have a professional qualification. A head R-15 criticized as,

"A matric retired army servant can never know student's psychology, abilities, the system of the school, and understanding of school maintenance. MEA should be recruited from the educational background and should be trained to serve the purpose.

All the promotions are based on the length of service, educational qualification, and "linkages". There is a need for a merit and performance based system for promotion.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that the administration needs skilled staff who can do extra administrative work like maintaining ace of the attendance record, Conduct an LND test, and necessary file works. Teaching staff at the primary school level was not possess sufficient and related skills in using modern technologies. Mulford (2003) found the same results that the school administration at the primary school level was also facing the problem of shortage of staff which was the main hurdle in the promotion of quality education. The IT training plays a significant role in developing efficiency in the use of modern technologies. On the basis of the perspectives of the Head teachers of primary schools in rural areas, it is expected from the school leadership to enhance the quality learning of students but they were not fully authoritative in developing and implementing the strategies. It was further concluded that Head teachers were not asked or included in framing the strategies in their schools. Research studies concluded that delegation

of power within the system gives motivation to the teachers as they feel belonging and are attracted to work for longer periods (Mulford, 2003). The study concluded that the Head teachers from the rural background get in touch with the community and try to get their cooperation for the betterment of the school. Barley and Beesley (2007) found the role of rural leaders in promoting community and school partnerships. Heck and Hallinger (2009), also describe the same role in rural schools' head as they share the responsibility with the neighboring community for the betterment of the school. There was a shortage of funds in NSB head and schools even not able to maintain cleanliness in the school due to the shortage of resources. Teachers tend to play roles other than the teaching (Memon, 1998) and it affects their progress and completion of tasks (Farah, Mehmood, & Anna, 1996). The dropout policy of the Punjab Education department was also a hurdle for heads in showing their work efficiency. The extra work assignments also a hindrance for the leaders to strengthen the institution (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves, & Chapman, 2013). There should be staff for performing non-teaching activities as it was very time consuming and their attention was diverted from teaching. They also demanded to stop the unnecessary interference of the political persons in school matters. The same results were visible in the study of Memon (2003), Moos (2013), Brown and Wynn (2009) highlighted the misuse of resources, misuse of school infrastructure. Whereas Hatcher (2004), Sergiovani (2000) vindicated the heads overwork and lesser time for academics in their findings. The School head teachers should empower with authority to make their own decisions. A training session should also be provided to teachers in which they learn the latest ICTs. In many studies, the contextual challenges regarding staff training and up-gradation

of knowledge were recommended (Khaki, 2009, Goleman, 1995, Barth, 1990, Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996).

Recommendations

After the rigorous survey and inclusive analysis of the qualitative data following recommendations were developed for the improvement of Primary schools in Punjab.

- In Government schools, students' attendance is the responsibility of the head teacher. This is a major issue for the head. The majority of the parents in rural areas do not show cooperation in students' regularity. So multiple sources should be adopted to bring attitudinal changes in them. Electronic media, religious scholars, and community workers can be helpful in this chore.
- In most of the schools, a sweeper is not present in primary school; the head has to maintain cleanliness. Even that sometimes head clean the washroom of school with the help of their staff. It is strongly recommended that supporting staff may be increased and sufficient resources may also be provided to fulfill the needs.
- Poverty is also a big issue of the rural and far-flung areas. Higher authorities force school administration to maintain the uniform of the students. Parents do not send their children even with clean clothes. The Head is responsible for students' uniforms. It is suggested that uniforms and bags should be provided free of cost in the vulnerable wards of the community.
- When the head receives special incentives, they can perform better. The incentive of the head is PRs. 500, which is an insufficient amount. It is therefore suggested that a handsome amount may be allocated to boost their affiliation. Moreover, the process of promotion should be replaced by competency and performance-based system instead of seniority.
- Literacy and Numeracy Drive is a bold and progressive initiative of the government of

Punjab. But it demands preparation and trained staff, which is currently unavailable in rural area schools. So it is advised that LND passing percentage should be revised and a flexible marking format should be introduced. Keeping in view the usefulness of LND, it was further recommended for class 4 and 5.

- To meet the needs of fast and safe communication, it is recommended that SED should organize an office for the head which should be equipped with a computer and printer facility with an internet connection.

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