



RESEARCH PAPER

**Changing Context of Teacher Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:
Identifying and Addressing Gaps**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to critically examine the recent teacher induction policy implemented by the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In the context of Pakistan, national educational policies consistently emphasize the enhancement of the quality of teacher education. Despite these efforts, achieving the desired targets have proven challenging, prompting a continuous call for improvement. Notably, the decision by the government of KP to eliminate the professional qualification requirement for school teacher recruitment deviates from the prevailing national educational policy. This research focused on analysis of policy documents, policy changes, and their implications. It is found that induction policy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a direct contradiction with the present national educational policy of Pakistan. The elimination of the professional qualification condition may impact the overall quality of teachers entering the education system. There are concern for long-term negative effects on teacher education and student learning. It is recommended that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revisits its teacher induction policy. Reinstating the professional qualification condition in the teacher recruitment process is suggested to align with the national educational policy of Pakistan.

KEYWORDS Teacher Education, Induction Policy, Professional Qualifications, Pre-service Programs, Teacher recruitment, Educational Policy

Introduction

Teaching is one of the best and noble professions and teacher is considered a prominent personality. All the members of other professions are made by teachers, so the role of the teacher is very significant in the socio-economic development of a country. It is therefore important for any nation to improve its teacher education, as teachers are considered as a change agent and responsible for students learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2013). To achieve the said purpose the developed, as well as developing countries around the globe, are making efforts to improve their education system.

After the 18th amendment in the constitution of 1973, the provinces are made autonomous in their education system. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has introduced certain reforms in the education system i.e. establishment of the independent monitoring unit, improvement in infrastructure, improvement in textbooks and new teacher induction policy. Some of the measures taken by the provincial government are appreciated by the civil society whereas new teacher induction policy has been criticized by many stakeholders. This paper is an effort to highlight the new teacher induction program and its relevant consequences in the education system of the province.

Literature Review

Historical Context of Teacher Education in Pakistan:

After gaining independence, the country started creating institutions to train teachers, which became essential in building an organized system for preparing educators. These institutions, influenced by the British colonial period, played a crucial role in setting the foundation for teacher education in Pakistan after it was established in 1947. Initially, the focus was on traditional teaching skills, but over time, there was a shift towards more comprehensive methods that combined theoretical knowledge with practical training in the 1970s. As we travel through time, the story of teacher education is also shaped by changing policies and reforms, unraveling this historical tale are essential not only to understand the present state of teacher education but also to navigate the path toward improving education in the future.

The National Education Policy (1972) in Pakistan played a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of the country, particularly in the context of teacher education. This policy underscored the crucial role of well-trained educators and recognized the need for robust teacher training institutions. Emphasizing the professional development of teachers, the policy aimed to improve the quality of teaching through targeted training programs that integrated both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Furthermore, the policy sought to make teacher education more inclusive, tailoring programs to address the diverse needs of students in various regions and communities. Recognizing the significance of community participation in education, efforts were made to involve local communities in the development and implementation of teacher training initiatives. The policy also addressed the importance of aligning teacher education curricula with contemporary educational needs, ensuring that the content reflected evolving educational philosophies and pedagogical approaches (Muzaffar, Hussain, Javaid, Khan, & Rahim, 2020).

The National Education Policy (1992) in Pakistan acknowledged the role of teachers in the education system, emphasizing the necessity for well-trained teachers to enhance overall educational quality. The policy emphasized the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, recognizing the need for ongoing training programs to keep teachers up-to-date of latest teaching methodologies. Although the policy advocated for decentralization and community participation in decision-making, it lacked specific strategies to improve the quality of teacher training programs. Challenges included the absence of clear plans for standardizing teacher training and accrediting institutions, hindering effective implementation of teacher education reforms. The policy did not explicitly address the integration of modern pedagogies, and there was a lack of clarity regarding resource allocation to support teacher training initiatives. While the emphasis on community involvement and decentralization held promise for positively impacting teacher education, subsequent policies would need to build upon these foundations to implement more targeted and comprehensive reforms in the realm of teacher education in Pakistan.

The National Education Policy (1998) in Pakistan recognized the central role of teachers in the education system and outlined strategies to enhance teacher education. Emphasizing both pre-service and in-service training, the policy aimed to equip teachers with essential knowledge and skills and providing continuous professional development opportunities. Quality assurance mechanisms, including standardized curricula, assessments, and accreditation processes, were introduced to elevate the standards of teacher education institutions. The policy fostered to align teacher education programs with higher education standards, bridging the gap between school-level training and advanced degrees. Moreover, it encouraged the integration of

technology into teacher education and acknowledged the importance of community involvement in creating a supportive environment. Despite these positive initiatives, challenges in implementation, including resource constraints and coordination among stakeholders, underscored the complexity of transforming policy intentions into effective practices. Overall, the National Education Policy of 1998 reflected a commitment to improving teacher education by addressing key areas essential for the development and effectiveness of educators in the Pakistani education system.

The National Education Policy (2009) focused on shaping the landscape of teacher education. Recognizing the vital role of teachers in the education system, the policy placed a strong emphasis on the quality of teacher education programs. It outlined a comprehensive approach, addressing both pre-service and in-service training, aiming to equip teachers with contemporary pedagogical skills. (Muzaffar, 2016). Continuous Professional Development (CPD) was highlighted as integral, emphasizing ongoing training to keep teachers well-informed of modern educational trends. Moreover, NEP 2009 advocated for the standardization and accreditation of teacher education programs, ensuring a consistent and high-quality training experience. The policy highlighted the significance of technology in education and called for its integration into teacher education programs. Gender sensitivity and inclusivity were focal points, encouraging the recruitment and training of more female teachers to create a diverse teaching force. It also emphasized the development of a relevant curriculum for teacher education, aligning it with the changing needs of the education system. The policy proposed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, ensuring accountability and effectiveness in the implementation of teacher training programs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2017 in Pakistan takes a holistic approach to education, encompassing various facets, with a particular focus on teacher education. NEP (2017) advocates for the standardization and accreditation of teacher education institutions, aiming to ensure that training programs meet established quality benchmarks. In alignment with the principles of inclusivity, the policy promotes teacher education that prepares educators to cater to the diverse needs of students. The policy also highlights the importance of curriculum reforms in teacher education, urging the development of relevant and updated curricula. NEP 2017 addresses teacher recruitment and deployment, emphasizing transparent and merit-based processes. Recognizing the community's integral role, the policy advocates for community engagement in education, extending to teacher education. Additionally, NEP 2017 emphasizes the significance of research and innovation in teacher education, fostering a research-oriented approach in teacher training institutions. Finally, the policy recognizes the importance of aligning teacher education practices with global standards, encouraging the incorporation of international best practices to prepare Pakistani teachers for global challenges. Overall, NEP 2017 envisions a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for teacher education to meet the dynamic needs of education in the 21st century.

To comprehend the current landscape, it is crucial to consider the historical evolution of teacher education in Pakistan. Traditionally, teacher training institutions have focused on imparting pedagogical skills, but the changing educational landscape necessitates a more comprehensive approach that includes a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical training (Naseer & Qayyum, 2016).

In this regard, Pakistan is also trying to raise the education standard that is reflected by its national educational policies. According to the recent National Education Policy, Government of Pakistan (2017)

Similar to other sectors of the economy and society the education sector also requires the critically needed human resource for the realization of the set targets. Therefore, intensive and meticulous planning is required to build an efficient and effective education system that has teachers and educators in a sufficient number who are professionally qualified, adequately recruited, empowered, motivated and supported for educating the children and youth to help them attain the prescribed learning outcomes (P-64).

Dilshad (2010a) commented that teacher education in Pakistan has been criticized by many stakeholders for its excessive quantitative expansions and poor quality. It is observed in developing countries like Pakistan that students at public sector schools do not succeed because teachers do not fully fill their professional responsibilities. They are widely regarded as incompetent and politically patronized (Ali, 2018). A pre-service teacher education program (Pre-step) was launched with the collaboration of Higher Education Commission, the provincial department of education, fifteen partner universities and seventy-five Government colleges of teacher education for the improvement of basic education through preparing better-qualified teachers. The major reform in pre-service teacher education was made with the introduction of B.Ed (Hons) four years' elementary degree and two years Associate degree education (ADE). 12 universities and approximately 45 colleges offered the B.Ed (Hons) and ADE programs.

Teacher Education Programs

Shah (2003) discussed the scenario of education in Pakistan as

"The major issues and challenges of the education system include low literacy rate, high dropout rate, widespread teacher absenteeism, weak management, and supervision structure, shortage of trained and qualified teachers especially female, lack of teachers' dedication, motivation, and interest in their profession and lack of physical facilities. Moreover, the curriculum is mostly outdated, irrelevant and does not fulfill the requirements of the present day". (P-9).

Keeping in view the short duration of teacher education programs 2 years Associate degree in education and B.Ed (Hons) 4 years were introduced from the year 2011 in certain teacher training institutes throughout the country. The primary purpose of these programs was to eliminate the deficiencies pointed out in teacher education programs of PTC, CT, B.Ed, and M.Ed under the umbrella of Pre-STEP Pre-service teacher education program in collaboration of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (USAID, 2012). Unfortunately, no rules were framed for the induction of B.Ed (Hons) graduated students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per National education policy (2017) the criteria of teacher qualification for appointment will be as follows:

To ensure content and pedagogical requirement for a teacher, four year B. Ed (Hons) elementary/equivalent (BA/BSc plus B.Ed) shall be required for teaching in primary and elementary classes while content qualification of sixteen years in a school subject with B.Ed secondary / five year B.Ed (Hons) secondary shall be the requirement for teaching secondary and higher secondary classes in a public or private school. Relaxation in qualification may be allowed only in less developed areas where sufficient number of qualified teachers is not available (P-63).

New Teacher Induction Policy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government

The competence and enthusiasm of teachers determine the heights to which an educational system can rise (Iqbal, 1996). Teachers are a knowledge ambassador and arguably the most important group of professionals for nurturing young minds. All the resource persons or members of other professions are made by the teachers. So the teacher has a significant role in making the students' life bright and productive (Barman, 2018).

The present teacher induction policy was adopted by the previous government of Pakistan Tahreek Insaf in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The major change in the new recruitment policy was the abolishing of the condition of professional qualification for the post of teachers. A candidate with any graduate degree can apply for the post of teaching in the education department. However, after selection, a novice teacher has to go through nine months of training in PITE and RITE.

Material and Methods

Following research process was adopted for the present study:

1. All national educational policies for teachers training programs before 18th amendments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were considered and studied.
2. New induction policy of teachers' induction of Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after 18th constitutional amendments was studied.
3. Analytical research approach was adopted.

Results and Discussion

Gap Identification

It would be a mistake to assume that everything in the area of teacher education needs thorough revision in order to start significant changes in the system. Perhaps it is best to consider the following factors:

Scope of B.Ed. (Hons) Program

New B.Ed. (Hons) four-year program for pre-service teacher training initiated by the Government of Pakistan at national level needs attention of the educational authorities. The curriculum of B.Ed. (Hons) 4 year was developed for enhancing prospective teachers' competencies both in content and pedagogical areas of teacher education program. This program was started by keeping in view the short duration of teacher training and preparing them as professional like others such as medical and engineering field. Why the new induction policy totally ignore this very important scenario? Moreover, the enrolled students in these programs are frustrated due to this un-sudden change. They have no preference in new teacher induction policy being a professional in the field of education whereas the persons from other fields such as medical and engineering are eligible.

Recruitment Problem

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa adopted a policy of hiring teachers through NTS exam on contract basis. Candidates who qualified NTS are then called for an interview which primarily consists of original documents verification only. No weightage is given for interview and neither practical skills are checked. Teachers hired through this process are then regularized after certain period. There is no specified aptitude test for entry into teaching profession. During the process of teacher recruitment and selection, there is number of factors that need attention i.e. educational qualification, skills, abilities and personality traits. Presently quantification of educational certificates along with test marks does not fulfill the sole purpose of teachers' recruitment. It has been witnessed that persons recruited of other fields such as medical, engineering are now saying goodbye to the education department by getting some good jobs in their respective field, leaving the education department in problem.

Improper Teaching Practice

Pre-service training was enhanced from one year to ADE 2 years and B.Ed. (Hons) 4 years, whereas new induction policy again reducing the teacher training duration to 9 months only in the form of induction training. Is this step of Government enhances the quality of teacher education? In this regard, Memon (2007) highlighted that a series of education reforms in the area of teacher education was introduced in the public sector but their vision seemed to be narrow, hence, they failed to make any substantial impact on the quality of teachers and teaching process. Eventually, it further affected the quality of education being offered in schools. Classroom teaching is different from the teaching that may take place within the informal environment, or helping or telling.

Lack of Professional Development

According to (UNESCO, 2006) in-service teacher training in Pakistan is much dependent on international donors. Shah (2003) commented that

Trained personnel in different capacities would have done more justice with the decentralized education system than untrained and non-familiar with the philosophy and purpose of the new system. P-32.

Ali (2018) also indicated the concern of continuous professional development of teachers in Pakistan i.e. whose responsibility is professional development? Whether it comes under the domain of local government or provincial or both are responsible? Ali (2018) in his study emphasized on the need for in-service training of teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in addition to addressing gaps in pre-service training. Rizvi, M., & Elliot, B. (2005) argued that with reference to teachers as professionals it is important to further enhance the professionalism of teachers for improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in the Government primary schools.

Challenges of Teacher Education

An educational system of poor quality may be one of the most important reasons why poor countries do not grow. In Pakistan, the quality of education has a declining trend. Memon (2007) concluded that without teachers' transformation we cannot transform the education system for improving the quality of education. Memon (2007) further highlighted that "The quality of teacher, which is a key factor in any education system, is poor in Pakistan". On one hand it relates to teacher certification programs and on the other hand, it is affected due to interference from local interest groups seeking to place teachers of their choice within their constituency. Dilshad (2010b) as various factors including curriculum, delivery of content, learning environment, supervision, and administration of academic facilities contribute to the quality of education; the central importance of the teacher cannot be denied. Teacher has to deal with the students of the different class, caste, creed, race, ethnicity, gender, religion and socio-economic background without any discrimination. The teachers need to be professional in their attitude, particularly, when they are dealing with problems and challenges. Halai, et al. (2018) also pointed out that the new teacher induction policy in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is direct contradiction with the recommendation of the national educational policies and international standards of teachers.

Insufficient Research

The commitment and competency of the teachers are associated with the feelings of interest and enthusiasm towards one's job, development of the feeling of job satisfaction and attitude towards the working environmental conditions (Shukla, 2014).

In some cases, the teachers do not feel satisfied with their jobs, as they do not take interest and enthusiasm in the execution of duties, hence, incomplete or lack of competency development of teachers is one of the major challenges.

Conclusion

The absence of a professional qualification requirement compromises the standard of teachers entering the education system. This potentially results in educators lacking essential pedagogical skills and knowledge necessary for effective teaching. This policy contradicts the broader educational objectives outlined in the national educational policies of Pakistan, raising concerns about the consistency and coherence of educational practices across the country.

Recommendations

Recruitment may be done on the basis of professional qualification and ability test as it is happening across the globe in advanced countries. Recruitment of teachers should be started again by the present government.

The present system of teacher education is supported by a network of national, provincial and district level resource institutions, working in integration to improve the eminence and efficiency of the teacher preparation programs at the pre-service level and also through in-service programs for serving the teachers throughout the country. The educational institutions are required to obtain accreditation from the accrediting agency approved by the council within five years of recognition.

There was inclusion of details of the curriculum, i.e. theory, practicum and internship, implementation and assessment.

Primarily in concern with the environmental conditions of the educational institutions, performance of job duties, management of the classroom, coping with the needs and requirements of the students, getting along with the colleagues, principals and other staff members of the educational institutions and so forth. In order to cope up with these challenges, it is necessary to possess the essential skills, abilities, and knowledge. Furthermore, we need to develop entry standards for the teaching profession. There is a dire need to introduce aptitude tests for entry into the teaching profession.

To improve the quality of education and the quality of educational institutions, it is necessary to update the educational methodology and to provide publicity to educational innovations by conducting various types of educational research.

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