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CHAPTER 6

Mentoring as an Alternative Approach to In-service Teacher Education in Balochistan: some successes and challenges

MUHAMMAD MEMON, FIRDOUSALI LALWANI & RAKHSHINDA MEHER

The Context

Balochistan is the largest but least populated province of Pakistan with 4.6% of the total population of Pakistan. The majority of this population lives in small rural settlements. Educational attainment in the province is lower than in the rest of the country with an overall literacy rate of 10.3%. This indicates that the education system in Balochistan has not performed well. The reasons attributed to poor performance include ineffective educational plans and policies; inadequate number of schools; lack of qualified teachers; gender inequity; non-conducive learning environment; overemphasis on cascade approach to teachers' development; lack of innovative programmes; ineffective school governance and management; lack of follow-up mechanism for providing professional support on-the-job for teachers; and unrealistic objectives and outdated content of in-service teacher education programmes. Warwick and Reimers (1995) mention that:

Teacher-certification programmes in Balochistan faced the greatest obstacles of any in Pakistan. Because of its severe shortage of teachers Balochistan appointed candidates to teaching posts with no preservice training. Most of them obtained their positions through recommendations from provincial and national politicians. The province assigned them to teach for five or more years before they received any training. By that time they had formed teaching habits that would be hard to dislodge even with the most effective training courses. They saw their training not as

a way to improve their teaching but to get the certificate that they needed to be called trained and to be promoted. (p. 48)

The above situation has significant implications for the quality of education in general and teacher education in particular. The Government of Pakistan (1998) has also acknowledged that the existing programmes are not adequately responding to the increased demands for quality education and advised that in-service teacher education programmes must incorporate modern teaching methodologies.

In the late 1980s, learning coordinators were recruited in Balochistan with the assigned task to provide on-the-job professional support to primary school teachers. However, a majority of the learning coordinators acted like 'inspectors' and 'evaluators', involving themselves in 'stock-taking' exercises rather than serving as 'mentors' or 'facilitators'. Before the emergence of the Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) in Balochistan, the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Education Centre developed and conducted short courses in different subjects included in the curriculum. The programmes focused on enhancing content knowledge and pedagogical skills but the balance between these two was hardly established. These short courses were conducted mainly by a group of master trainers from secondary school education and college education. Most of them had never taught in school or had never gone back to the classroom after becoming master trainers. Master trainers usually focused on imparting a battery of mechanical skills to teachers rather than using an integrated approach to enhance teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical approaches, communication, interpersonal and reflective thinking skills. Graybill (1999) pointed out that

Prior to 1996, the only in-service training primary teachers in Balochistan received ... formal two-week in-service courses at centralized training venues delivered by so-called 'master trainers' who had no experience at the primary level After participating in the two courses, most teachers reverted back to their former didactic and teacher-centred approaches to teaching, and the learning process in schools has continued to be relatively uninspiring for most primary students. (p. 1)

Warwick & Reimers (1995) argue that teachers who attend in-service courses consider it as one source of earning a modest extra income through travel and daily allowances and spend a lot of time resolving related issues. If the allowances are not as per their expectations, they would participate in the programmes only half-heartedly.

In the early 1990s, the Government of Balochistan introduced a number of new initiatives to transform teacher education. These included the condensed primary teaching certificate, bridged courses, female mobile teacher courses and crash programmes. These were conducted through a 'cascade model'. Although a substantial number of teachers were trained in

these programmes, they failed to introduce any change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes and instructional approaches. Teachers remained afraid of taking risks. One of the problems associated with the cascade model was that cascading of information always resulted into 'watering down' and 'misinterpretation' of concepts by master trainers who lacked confidence, knowledge, and understanding to deliver the goods (Pardhan et al, 2004).

The cascade model has been widely criticized as being an ineffective approach to teacher education due to various reasons. These include short duration of teaching practice; superficial approach to teaching practice; inadequate guidance provided to trainees; lack of conducive environment for professional learning; single shot training approach; lack of relevance of curriculum and instructional materials; lack of trained teacher educators; and theory-driven delivery (Anzar, 1999; Qaisrani et al, 1999).

Anzar (1999) argued that the quality of education in Balochistan would not improve until curricula and instructional methodologies are changed. Therefore, an alternate approach to in-service teacher education programmes was necessary to provide continual professional support for teachers at the classroom level to overcome their fear and anxiety while implementing innovations in curricula and methodology. The Institute for Educational Development at the Aga Khan University (AKU-IED) initiated a cluster-based mentoring programme in four selected districts of Sindh and Balochistan provinces. Mentors were developed through intensive in-service teacher education programmes with a focus on mentoring, problem solving, reflective practice and teaching skills. These mentors worked with their mentees by conducting interactive workshops in their respective school clusters and providing follow-up support in the schools. AKU-IED has since used this model with NGO-supported community schools in Sindh with considerable success (Memon & Mithani, 2003). This approach seems to suit the local needs and conditions since it allows 'hands-on' activities, experiential learning and enquiry for building individual and institutional capacity. In the rest of this chapter, we describe and discuss the planning, implementation and outcomes of the cluster-based mentoring programme in Balochistan.

Initiating the Cluster-based Pilot Mentoring Programme in Balochistan

In the 1990s, the Government of Balochistan, in collaboration with the international loan-giving agencies, launched a major initiative entitled Primary Education Development Project (PEDP) for improving the quality of primary school teachers. Under this initiative, the Government established the Primary Education Directorate (PED) and delegated it some fiscal and administrative autonomy. The PED was made responsible for the planning, development, and management of primary schools as well as for the in-service training of primary teachers. Earlier, in-service training was the

responsibility of the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension. In order to accomplish the demanding task of training a large number of primary teachers, the PED established a Teacher Training Support Unit (TTSU) within the organization, headed by the Deputy Director, to develop plans for initiating a needs-based innovative in-service teacher education programme. TTSU was provided with a small number of professionals and a small support staff as the Teacher Learning Resource Team (TLRT). The team was responsible for managing, monitoring, and documenting in-service teacher education programmes in the province. TLRT conceived and developed the cluster-based pilot mentoring programme in three selected districts of Balochistan. This was considered as an innovative initiative based on a decentralized model of teacher education (Anzar, 1999; Graybill, 1999; Qaisrani et al, 1999). The quality of the cluster-based pilot mentoring programme was assured by the technical advisor for teacher education hired by the loan-giving agencies. The overall purpose of the cluster-based pilot mentoring programme was to try out an alternate approach to in-service teacher education which could provide an outreach facility for the continuing professional development of teachers at the grass-roots level. Qaisrani et al (1999) described the following objectives of the pilot mentoring programme:

1. to assist the teachers to upgrade their content knowledge in primary curriculum and school subjects;
2. to enable the teachers to use teacher guides;
3. to develop reflective practices and problem-solving skills; and
4. to facilitate a process of collegiality among teachers and bring about positive changes in their beliefs and teaching practices.

Anzar (1999) found that the cluster-based pilot mentoring programme was able to achieve its objectives with minimum human, financial and material resources. An element of ownership and accountability was also found among the mentors and district education officers. Anzar (1999) quoted a district education officer, 'once I started the cluster training programme in my district, teachers became confident in their dealing with children and got a sense of progress by going to school every day. This helped us to loosen the control of teachers' unions which were basically there to protect the incompetent teachers. I tried to cover every teacher' (p. 36). The teacher community also found this programme useful as it allowed them to learn, apply, reflect and evaluate their new experiences. Loan-giving agencies and district education management also seemed satisfied with the outcomes of the pilot programme. Overall, the experiment with the new model was found to be successful, although the role of teachers as mentors who played a role in the 'actualization of professional reformation' was not formally recognized (Smith, 2001).

The Notion of Mentoring and Models

Mentoring is perceived as an effective developmental process for new teachers but it can be equally effective for experienced teachers who need to further improve their content knowledge, pedagogical and classroom management skills (Ganser, 1996). Mentoring is generally defined as a process of establishing personal and professional contacts between mentors and mentees for their professional development. Koki (1997) considers mentoring as a complex and multidimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing and supporting teachers in their workplaces through mutual trust and beliefs. Anderson & Shannon (1995) suggest that mentoring is a nurturing process in which more experienced teachers assist the less experienced teachers for their personal and professional development through reflective, collaborative, shared inquiry and caring environment.

Sometimes the terms mentoring and coaching are used interchangeably; however, mentoring is a process which may include coaching as an instructional strategy. To be effective, a mentor must be able to demonstrate a range of coaching competencies such as posing thought-provoking questions, probing, and gathering and analysing response for improving teaching and learning processes (Gray & Gray, 1985). Koki (1997) suggests that an effective mentor must have qualities such as a range of interpersonal skills, good working knowledge of teaching methods, ability to use a coaching process for fostering increased self-direction and self-responsibility among teachers, effective communication skills and understanding teacher development needs.

The significance of mentoring has gained wide recognition in the developed world (Anderson & Shannon, 1995; Maynard & Furlong, 1995; Tomlinson, 1995; McIntyre, 1996). However, in many parts of the developing world, including Pakistan, mentoring has not yet been fully recognized as an alternate approach for in-service teacher education. Mentoring is becoming increasingly complex because of its various forms and models. These include the apprenticeship model, the reflective coach model, the co-inquirer model, and the staged model. The apprenticeship model entails mentoring as a form of apprenticeship training where novice teachers observe a skilled teacher and then attempt to emulate the mentor. Within a reflective coach model, a mentor acts like a critical friend (Schön, 1983) and the process of learning is determined by experiences. In the co-inquirer model, the mentor acts as a co-inquirer with the mentee who sets targets, analyses and evaluates student performance. The mentor encourages the mentee to engage in and share critical reflections. In the staged model, the mentor's role varies from stage to stage as summarized in Figure 1.

Balochistan's mentoring model was a blend of three models – reflective coach, co-inquirer and staged mentoring within the broader framework of a cluster-based mentoring approach.

Stages	Mentor's role
Beginning teaching	Model
Supervised teaching	Coach
Focus on learning	Critical friend
Independent teaching	Co-inquirer

Figure 1. Mentor's role at various levels.

The Role of the Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development in Developing Mentors

As a result of the keen interest of senior government officials, practitioners, policy makers, teachers and other stakeholders in the pilot programmes in selected districts, the Government of Balochistan decided to replicate the cluster-based mentoring programme in all districts of the province. However, it was felt that the programme should be conducted by an educational institution that had practical experience and institutional capacity to develop primary school teachers as mentors. Consequently, the Government of Balochistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Aga Khan University, Institute of Educational Development (AKU-IED), Karachi in 1996 to help prepare primary school teachers as mentors.

AKU-IED agreed to build the institutional capacity of PED. Two of its faculty members held a series of meetings with the provincial and district education officers, policy-makers/implementers, teacher educators and teachers to understand the context and identify the needs of teachers and mentors. They also met with the instructional team which had led the mentoring programme in the piloted districts and the mentors who had implemented the cluster-based programme for teachers.

In these meetings, the needs of primary teachers and of potential mentors were identified. They included the need to learn strategies for effective delivery of primary school curriculum in the context of multigrade teaching, to develop low cost material, to enhance pedagogical content knowledge and to understand the dual role as classroom practitioners and mentors. With these needs in mind, AKU-IED designed a programme for mentors using the framework of its regular Visiting Teacher (VT) Programme (see Chapter 5). A three-week orientation programme was also organized for district education officers to familiarize them with the purpose, strategies, processes and practices of mentoring programmes.

Gray & Gray (1985) remind us that the mentors must be carefully selected. Primary teachers from each district were selected, through a rigorous process, jointly by AKU-IED and TLRT. Similarity in the linguistic, ethnic, and socio-economic background of the potential mentor and the teachers they would be working with was considered in the selection. Other attributes such as willingness, commitment, enthusiasm and leadership potentials were also considered. Ten mentors (seven males and three

females) were identified from each district. The programme was conducted in six phases. In each phase, three or four districts were included in the mentoring programme. Altogether 166 teachers (121 male and 45 female) from 20 districts were prepared to become mentors through six programmes. Out of these, four programmes were conducted by AKU-IED's M.Ed. graduates, called Professional Development Teachers (PDTs), at AKU-IED in Karachi. The fifth programme was conducted in two stages. Stage one, consisting of six weeks, was conducted at AKU-IED in Karachi and stage two, consisting of two weeks, was conducted at the Primary Education Department in Quetta, the capital of the Balochistan province. The TLRT staff included a few graduates from the AKU-IED's M.Ed. programme who assisted the planning and delivery of the first five programmes and took on the major responsibility for conducting the sixth programme delivered entirely in Quetta. By end of the programmes, 20 out of 23 districts had implemented the mentoring programmes. Three districts could not be reached because donor funding which had supported the programme ended.

Mentoring was a cross-cutting theme of the programme. Sessions on mentoring were organized every day with 'hands-on' activities where participants were engaged in role-plays and simulations of mentor and mentee roles. They were also given hands-on experience of conducting interactive workshops. Demonstration interactive workshops were organized by faculty members after which course participants, in groups, planned and conducted similar workshops on various topics such as students' meaningful learning, formative and summative assessment, students' learning difficulties and so on, for their fellow participants. This experience helped the course participants to improve their skills of planning, conducting and evaluating workshops. They felt that hands-on experiences boosted their confidence and sharpened their mentoring skills. Several practicums were carried out to develop communication, interpersonal, negotiation, mediation, counselling, active listening, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

Implementing the Cluster-based Mentor Programme in Balochistan

After completion of each programme, mentors initiated cluster-based mentoring programmes in their respective districts. At level one (the Level of School Cluster), mentors met with 30-40 mentees in their cluster for two days each month to conduct interactive workshops. During these workshops, mentors and mentees focused on academic and professional aspects such as teachers' content knowledge; pedagogical approaches; classroom environment; school management; student assessment; effective use of low cost material; use of teacher guides; effective use of textbooks; community participation; professionalization of mentor's role; parents' participation; students and teachers' absenteeism; students' drop out rate and teachers' retention and transfer. Principles of learning such as mutual trust and

respect; relationships; self-esteem and image; self-responsibility and accountability for learning were employed during the cluster sessions. A common structure of a day's mentoring session was as follows:

- Share and discuss a day plan of activities.
- Share reflections on new experiences.
- Identify a problem and build session around it.
- Discuss and seek solution to problems.
- Develop action plans for implementing new learning.
- Review/analyse new experiences in relation to students' learning.

Sometimes, mentees would share academic, professional, management and logistic problems with their fellow mentees and discuss possible solutions. If the group could not find solutions in the cluster, the problems were forwarded to the concerned district education officers or TLRT for solutions. District education officers or TLRT were expected to come up with a solution and share it with the concerned mentors.

At level two (District Level), TLRT members, in collaboration with the respective District Education Officers who were ultimately responsible for the implementation of the programme in their respective districts, conducted a one-day meeting with ten mentors within the district every month. This was a regular activity throughout the programme. The purpose of these meetings was to provide an opportunity for both mentors and TLRT to discuss academic, professional, and administrative matters at length and identify alternate strategies to deal with them. Mentors were also encouraged to approach TLRT members through the telephone, personal visits to PED, or through letters if they needed academic or management support.

At level three (Provincial Level), matters related to policy and finance were referred to TLRT but due to the bureaucratic process mentors could not get timely feedback and support. The process at all three levels is summarized in Figure 2.

One might argue about the similarity between the cluster-based mentoring programme and the cascade model of teacher education as far as the levels were concerned. However, the cluster-based mentoring programme was completely different from the cascade model in terms of its rationale, framework, strategies, processes and practices. The cluster-based mentoring model allowed teachers to create a sense of 'togetherness' for promoting professionalism among teachers. Mentors and mentees developed a sustainable professional relationship which helped create the 'critical mass' needed for managing change effectively.

Currently, a one-on-one situation of mentoring is more common in teacher education programmes but the Government of Balochistan adopted a cluster-based mentoring approach which seemed more economically viable to achieve the maximum benefits within minimum resources.

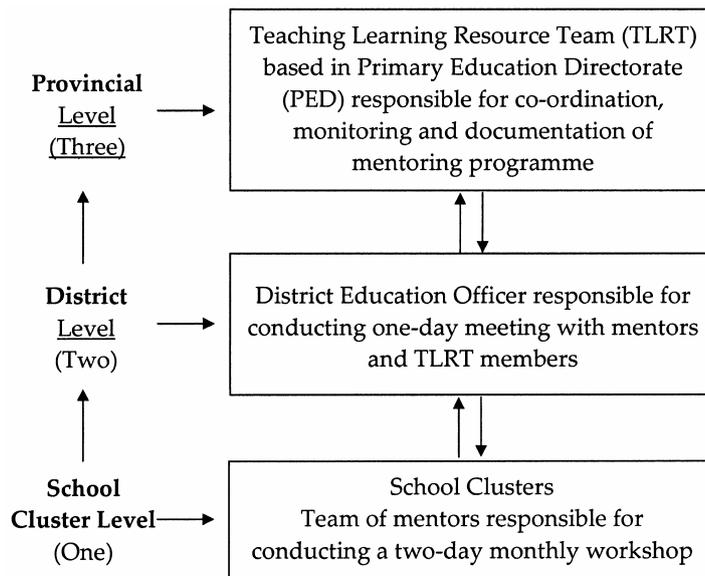


Figure 2. Levels of mentoring programme.

Some Strengths of the Cluster-based Mentoring Programme

A few studies (Anzar, 1999; Graybill, 1999; Lalwani, 1999; Qaisrani et al, 1999) were conducted to study the process of mentoring in the cluster schools and to identify the successes and challenges of the cluster-based mentoring programme in Balochistan. All these studies indicate that on the whole the programme achieved its objectives to a great extent within the short span of time. Some strengths of the programme are discussed below.

1. The mentoring programme was perceived as an innovative in-service teacher education programme which enabled mentees to learn from their mentors who came from the primary school background (Lalwani, 1999; Qaisrani et al, 1999). The cluster became a hub of professional development where teachers discussed their academic, professional and contextual issues and searched for relevant solutions. As one of the visitors to the programme said: 'every mentor we met was committed to the strategy of supporting colleagues in local schools. Primary Teachers Mentoring Programme (PTMP) is a sound idea, which nicely balances professional support with the realities of distance, culture and resources ... We sensed a spirit of collegiality and mutual respect emerging which augurs well for the growth of all teachers in the cluster. Whereas some mentors had influenced colleagues to make both the school environment more attractive and functional' (extracts from the correspondence of the UNICEF Regional Office for the South dated 6 November 1997).

2. The programme also provided access to teachers for enhancing their content knowledge and pedagogy. Generally, primary school teachers in Pakistan have poor content knowledge (see chapter 4). The monthly interactive cluster workshops provided an opportunity for teachers to share problems related to content knowledge with their fellow mentees and seek support from them and from the mentors. They spent considerable time clarifying concepts in Science, Mathematics and Social Studies. One of the male mentees described that, 'We brought textbooks related problems and jointly discussed and tried to solve them. If we were not successful in solving these problems, then we would send them to the Directorate. In the past, we did not have a practice of sharing our weaknesses with others. Now, we do not have any hesitation to get help from each other' (interview with a male teacher). The mentor maintained a balance between content and pedagogy and the mentees enhanced their content knowledge while learning how to teach a particular subject matter.

3. By appointing primary teachers as mentors, the programme gave recognition to the fact that primary teaching requires special knowledge and skills. Traditionally, secondary school teachers are considered higher in status and stronger in knowledge, and become master trainers in programmes for primary teachers. The mentoring programme also broke teachers' isolation and loneliness by creating opportunity for mentees to learn from each other. Qaisrani et al (1999) noted that by attending the cluster-based workshops, teachers came out of chronic isolation and created opportunities to learn from each other. A mentee described how the programme had affected them. 'We made our teaching learning process better. In our meeting we were forty teachers, therefore, forty minds. We jointly worked and solved problems. Before joining this programme, we were under the impression that only senior teachers could guide junior teachers, but in this programme junior teachers could also guide senior teachers. Some of us, who were newly appointed teachers, were also able to develop confidence to teach effectively' (Lalwani, 1999, p. 63).

4. One of the major purposes of this programme was to improve students' learning. Some positive effects on students' learning were noted by the programme evaluators. Comparing students of teachers who had participated in the mentoring programme with those who had not participated, Qaisrani et al (1999) reported that 'Performance of the students taught by the mentees was to some extent better than the students taught by non-mentees' (p. i). District education officers and TRLT members also confirmed that mentees introduced activity-based teaching which contributed towards enhancing and sustaining students' interest in learning. It helped in reducing students' absenteeism and drop-out particularly among girls. Students also reported that their teachers had become more caring and supportive and their teaching style had also changed.

5. Mentors were able to create all possible conditions to conduct an effective mentoring programme. They were committed, motivated, friendly,

open-minded, flexible and empathetic towards mentees' professional development (Graybill, 1999). One of the mentees shared her view of the mentors. 'We found our mentors different from the instructors of Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing and Colleges of Elementary Teachers. Mentors encouraged us questioning their view points and styles, engaging us in the learning process, providing individual feedback, and respecting our opinion ... Of course, the mentors belonged to the community of primary school teachers whereas the instructors don't ... We feel proud of our fellow primary school teachers who assisted us in our professional learning' (interview with female mentee).

6. Mentors performed several roles such as facilitators, moderators, counsellors and critical friends in their cluster workshops. They developed personal and professional relationships with their mentees based on mutual respect, understanding, need and trust. According to one mentee, 'I liked the mentor's attitude....He worked with us as a friend; therefore, I discussed personal matters as well. While discussing a problem, we became critical, but he never reacted. He personally arranged classroom settings, material display etc for us' (interview with male mentee).

7. The programme provided ample opportunities for mentees' professional growth at the grass-roots level. Through this programme mentees learnt from their own and others' experiences and took charge of their own professional development. This programme allowed mentees to reflect on the implementation of new ideas and assess implications for the teaching/learning process. Mentees felt empowered while dealing with the critical issues of teaching and learning. Some mentees brought their instructional material to cluster workshops and shared them with their fellow mentees. This encouraged others to further improve their lesson plans and develop instructional material to improve teaching. Sometimes mentees would invite each other to observe their classes. In each cluster, mentors and mentees worked together on developing low and no cost material. They were encouraged to try new ideas and share their successes and challenges. Qaisrani et al (1999) report that

Teachers found cluster meetings useful for their professional development. They also learned new techniques of teaching. They considered themselves as professionals and talked about professional problems and difficulties. They were open-minded, confident, courageous and curious. They would sometimes challenge their mentors' viewpoint, which helped them to develop more confidence.

8. Mentors were able to develop and promote positive relationships with mentees. As one female mentor said: 'As a mentor, my prime responsibility is to create a friendly environment in the workshop so that everybody contributes to it which helped mentees in improving their professional learning' (extract from a female mentor's correspondence). Literature also

considers a positive relationship as one of the prerequisites of an effective mentoring programme. This programme helped develop and promote collegiality and collaboration among mentors and mentees (Graybill, 1999). The professional relationships provided a reciprocal process contributing to the personal and professional development of both mentor and mentees; strengthening their self-image and professional positions. For successful mentoring, positive personal and professional relationships are necessary. The relationships in this programme were based on the principles of mutual respect, trust, confidentiality, academic honesty, shared understanding and expectations, common goals and good will.

9. Mentors served as link persons between teachers and District Education Officers to discuss issues related to teaching and learning. This was a significant achievement of the programme since prior to this programme, teachers were not allowed to talk directly to their senior officials. The programme helped to minimize the communication gap and break the hierarchy by regularly bringing together primary teachers (both mentors and mentees) together with the district officers to discuss issues and find solutions. The close and continuing interaction regarding primary teaching at and between the cluster, the district, and the provincial education department was a new and potentially effective approach for improving the quality of primary schools. The level of communication among teachers, district education officers and TLRT members had substantially increased. Senior and junior teachers worked together on a regular basis and the education officers worked more closely with teachers to provide logistic support. Thus the programme contributed towards creating a culture of harmony and togetherness among teachers and education officers. In the programme, some mentors were less experienced teachers and they encountered difficulties while working with more experienced mentees. However, they were able to gain respect and influence the traditional thinking that one learns only from the number of years spent teaching.

10. District education officers were found to be supportive and committed to mentees' professional development for enhancing the quality of education in Balochistan. TLRT and the concerned district education officers also attended district based mentoring meetings and provided adequate feedback for mentors to continuously upgrade and improve their knowledge and skills. This helped mentors to keep their morale high. It was observed that those officers who supported mentors in a variety of ways in their clusters became more successful than others. Some clusters are still functioning without any further monetary, professional and logistic support.

Some Challenges of the Cluster-based Mentoring Programme

A number of successes of the programme have been highlighted above; however, there were also several challenges which affected the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme.

1. Loan-giving agencies' sudden withdrawal from their financial commitment badly affected the institutionalization of the programme.
2. The majority of mentors were 'generalists' rather than 'specialists' in their teaching subject areas, hence, they lacked adequate content knowledge in Science and Mathematics. They also lacked understanding and skills of multigrade teaching and students' assessment (Qaisrani et al, 1999).
3. Even though the programme was effective in many respects, as discussed above, a majority of stakeholders, especially higher provincial education authorities and district education officers, developed very high and unrealistic expectations from mentors and were looking for quick results in terms of improvement in teaching and learning.
4. Those mentors who performed well started leaving their jobs and joining the private sector which normally pays more salary and fringe benefits.
5. The TLRT was responsible for providing academic support but instead remained more preoccupied with management chores. Moreover, the team at the TLRT was not large enough to support all mentors. A TLRT member confirmed this limitation when he said, 'We had a small team of four members. It was impossible for us to look after all districts and in each district there were ten clusters. We tried our best to visit one or two clusters (interview). Some mentors did not find meetings with TLRT useful. According to one mentor, 'Monthly meetings with TLRT were a waste of time and resources because they could not help us in improving our understanding about content knowledge' (extract from male mentor's letter). As soon as the project was over the level of enthusiasm of many officers went down, hence, they could not continue providing support for the mentors. According to a male mentor, 'In the beginning the PED took keen interest in solving problems, but later they lost their interest' (extract from correspondence).
6. High turnover of education officers at the directorate and district levels also affected the sustainability of a cluster-based mentoring programme.
7. The majority of district education officers were replaced with new officers who were not able to provide continued support to mentors.
8. Many mentors were not able to provide professional on-the-job support for their mentees because of the distance, the harsh climate in winter and summer seasons, the teaching workload, the immobility of mentors and the lack of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives.

Conclusion

The cluster-based mentoring model of teacher development implemented in Balochistan offered a decentralized, economically viable and contextually-driven approach to in-service teacher education (Graybill, 1999). It also introduced a 'paradigm shift' in in-service teacher education from 'competency-based training' (Pring, 1995) to 'inquiry-based teacher education' The programme developed confidence, commitment and

competencies among those it prepared as mentors. The programme focused on the building and maintaining of relationships, exchanging information, exploring ideas and opinions, discussing difficult issues, sharing experiences and working towards the future. The mentoring programme became well known for its effectiveness both in the national and international community and received a technical achievement award from the Academy for Educational Development, USA, in 1998. Through this programme, an innovative approach to in-service teacher education was introduced as an alternative to the centralized and hierarchical approaches to teacher education which were predominant in the context.

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