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TRACKING GRADUATES OF AKU-IED'S MED PROGRAMME: THE CLASSES OF 1999, 2000 AND 2002

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Abstract

In each of the years 1997, 1998 and 2000 a new cohort of course participants joined the two-year MED programme at the Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development in Karachi, Pakistan (AKU-IED). Some two years later 87 or 92% of the entrants graduated from the programme and returned to their respective employers or systems. This paper focuses on the employment of and roles played by these 87 'completing' course participants before they entered and then after they exited from the AKU-IED MED programme.

The paper is based on interviews with the 87 graduates carried out some one year and some two years after programme completion for two of the cohorts and some eight/nine months after completion for the most recently graduated cohort. The paper charts changes in numbers in such categories as School-based educators (e.g. teachers; head teachers) and Non-school-based educators (e.g. teacher educators; university teachers) and asks whether these numbers appear to be affected by the regional and system background of graduates; their roles at entry to the programme and length of time since programme graduation.

Discussion is focused on issues related to 'flight from the classroom' and on the need to acknowledge complexity in the design and execution of studies of programme impact.

Introduction

In each of the years 1997, 1998 and 2000¹ a new cohort of students or course participants (CPs) joined the two-year Master of Education (MEd) programme at the Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) in Karachi, Pakistan. In all, there were 95 such entrants and the group sizes entering each of the programme years were 32, 31 and 32 respectively.

Then, in each of the years 1999, 2000 and 2002, these cohorts (or at least their residual members) graduated from their respective programmes and returned to their employers, workplaces or systems. The completion or graduation rate was high with 87 of the original 95 (30/32; 29/31; 28/32) or 92% satisfying programme requirements to emerge as Master of Education graduates. This paper focuses on the employment of and roles played by these 87 'completing' course participants before they entered and then after they exited from the AKU-IED MEd programme.

Before examining the data, four features of the MEd programme and of AKU-IED's programmes are outlined that might, at least in part, influence or determine some of the results of this analysis.

First, CPs entering the programme are sponsored by their employers or employment systems. Thus, rather than being individual entrants to the programme, they are employer-sponsored entrants and generally they contract with their employers to remain in their service for a certain period (typically three years) after programme completion. This factor would be expected to introduce a certain stability in the pattern of what happens to graduates in the first two or three years after graduation.

Second, because the programme itself was originally conceived as a cooperation between employers and AKU-IED, there is also typically a further contract between the employers and AKU-IED in which the employers undertake to release their employees (to AKU-IED or its associated agencies) to engage in the professional development of other teachers for perhaps 50% of their time after their graduation and programme completion. In this role, programme graduates are known as Professional Development Teachers (PDTs) and, in at least some of the employer systems, 'PDT' has itself become an employment category or occupational descriptor.

¹ In the year 1999 (at the end of IED's Phase 1) there was no intake to the MEd programme.

Third, before examining **actual** outcomes of the MEd programmes, it is important to describe the aims or **intended** outcomes of the MEd programme itself. In this case, the classes of 1999 and 2000 undertook the same MEd programme as each other whilst the class of 2002 undertook a substantially modified programme. The aim of the MEd programmes offered to the classes of 1999 and 2000 was ‘to prepare a cadre of experienced mid-career teacher educators, educational leaders, researchers and agents of change’ who would be committed to bringing change in their respective systems (Professional Development Teachers’ Information pack, 2001, p.1). The aims of the restructured MEd programme for the class of 2002 were threefold-’[a] programme graduate would be an exemplary classroom teacher; an effective teacher educator and a competent beginning researcher...’ (Handbook, Class of 2002, p. 9).

Fourth, as part of its commitment to ongoing professional development, AKU-IED has been able to sponsor some of its MEd graduates to undertake doctoral studies, in most cases through IED’s partner universities of Toronto and Oxford. Thus, one would expect a small number of programme graduates to be engaged full-time in higher education.

The data were collected in an ongoing study of Course Participants in these three groups. The results reported here are both from the earliest interviews with members of the groups (during the period of their studies at IED) and from more recent field-based interviews as detailed in Table 1 for each of the groups.

Table 1: Approximate timings of post-IED data-collection for all three cohorts		
Cohort	Phases of interview	Time of data collection
Class of 1999	Field-based interview 1.	Jun-Aug 2000.
	Field-based interview 2.	Jun-Aug 2001.
Class of 2000	Field-based interview 1.	July-Sep 2001.
	Field-based interview 2.	Nov-Jan 2002.
Class of 2002	Field-based interview 1.	Apr-Jun 2003.

Entrants to the programme

Table 2 shows the most general categorization of the areas of work of the 87 course participants (CPs) at the time of their entry to their respective MEd programmes.

Table 2: Categories of work being undertaken by MEd Course Participants at their entry to the programmes in 1997, 1998 and 2000.		
Nature of work	Number	Percentage
School-based educators	60	69%
Non School-based educators	19	22%
Education officials or managers.	8	9%
FT in Higher Education.	0	-
Outside education/Other.	0	-

From Table 2, a very clear pattern is visible. First, and unsurprisingly, for entry to a Master of Education programme, just over 90% of all entrants are educators or teachers whilst just under 10% are education officials or managers. A fuller description of the roles played by the educators is covered below. The Education officials or managers were in such roles as Assistant Sub-District Education Officers in government education systems; Field Education Officers in the Aga Khan Education Service or in managerial roles in other organizations. For example, one government employee described his task as an officer in Planning and Development as being to do,

... some inspections...because I was more linked...with the development, like going for seeing sites, or getting a building approved, or sometimes contacting with Communications and Works department [etc]...(4I/56)

Similarly a ‘manager’ outside the government sector described his role thus:

...they promoted me to the head office...and I was working there for one year ...working in the office and I was dealing with logistics, and the management in the offices... (3I/23)

Table 3 is an expanded version of Table 2. It shows an elaboration of the general categories of School-based educators and Non-school-based educators.

Table 3: Elaborated categories of work being undertaken by MEd Course Participants at their entry to the programmes in 1997, 1998 and 2000.		
Nature of work	Number	Percentage
School-based educators	60	69%
-Teachers	50	57%
-Head Teachers	8	10%
-Heads of Department	2	2%
Non-School-based educators.	19	22%
-Teacher educators	13	15%
-University teachers	6	7%
Education officials or managers.	8	9%
FT in Higher Education.	0	-
Outside education/Other.	0	-

What Table 3 shows is that the vast majority (50 of 60, or 83%) of the School-based educators were classroom teachers whilst very much smaller numbers were school-based as either Head Teachers (14%) or Heads of Department (2 of 60).

Of the nineteen Non-school-based educators, 13 or 68% were Teacher educators working in such settings as the government sector's Provincial Institutes of Teacher Education or as Master Trainers in the AKES system.

The remaining one-third of the nineteen Non-school-based educators were University teachers, all of them coming from Central-Asian countries and mostly involved in the teaching of languages at their universities. This category is reflective of particular cooperative arrangement between IED and State Universities in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Osh and Khorog).

After exit from the programme

After completion of their programmes, graduates returned to their own contexts and started working in a variety of different capacities. As Table 1 showed, in the case of the classes of 1999 and 2000 we were able to interview their members on two occasions after their departure from the programme. In the case of the class of 1999, these occasions were some 9/11 months after programme completion and again some 10/12 months later; in the case of the class of 2000, these occasions were some 10/12 months after programme completion and again some 14/16 months later; in the case of the class of 2002, we were

able to interview them once approximately eight/ten months after the completion of their programme in April/Jun of this year. However, in all cases, if subsequent information emerged that allowed us to update our data, then this has been done.

Table 4 shows the categories of work being undertaken by the 87 programme graduates at the time of the most recent information.

Table 4: Categories of work being undertaken by MEd graduates after their exit from the programme and at time of most recent update.		
Nature of work	Number	Percentage
School-based educators	35	40%
Non-School-based educators.	34	39%
Education officials or managers.	13	15%
FT in Higher Educationn.	2	2%
Outside education/Other.	3	3%

Table 4 shows that the predominant categories of work being undertaken by MEd graduates are as School-based or Non-School-based educators, with each of these categories accounting for me 40% of all participants. A substantial minority (15%) are Education officials or managers whilst small minorities are in full-time study, outside education altogether or seeking employment. More detail of the educators is provided below. Of the two very small categories, the full-timers in higher education include one person enrolled in an IED-sponsored doctoral programme at the University of Oxford and one person in a sponsored Masters programme at a US university. Those currently outside the education profession include one person working with an NGO in development work in Central Asia; one person acting as an aide to a Provincial Minister in Pakistan, and one person seeking employment.

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the numbers within the general categories of School-based and Non-School-based educators.

Table 5: Elaborated categories of work being undertaken by MEd graduates after their exit from the programme and at time of most recent data collection.		
Nature of work	Number	Percentage
School-based educators.	35	40%
-Teachers	10	11%
-Head Teachers	10	11%
-Heads of Department	3	3%
-PDT	8	9%
-Teacher/PDT	4	6%
Non-School-based educators.	34	39%
-Teacher educators	29	33%
-University teachers	5	6%
Education officials or managers.	13	15%
FT in Higher Education.	2	2%
Outside education/Other.	3	3%

The data of Table 5 provide elaboration upon the two broad categories of educators, each of which accounts for some 40% of all programme graduates. It shows that some 30% of the School-based educators are classroom teachers whilst a further 30% are head teachers and just under 10% of them are heads of department. In addition, we have had to create two new categories to account for those programme graduates who are PDTs working in school but whose responsibilities are distinctively different from those of regular classroom teachers, head teachers or heads of department. These categories, as included in Table 5, are School-based PDT (used to refer to those eight respondents whose primary role is the professional development of their teacher colleagues in school) and Teacher/PDT (used to refer to those four who are working primarily as teachers but also have some role focusing on the professional development of their fellow teachers).

The other large group of educators comprises those working in other than school environments. They consist of a large group of Teacher educators (86% of all Non-School-based educators) and a small group of University teachers. The Teacher educators all seem to carry out similar work and are concerned with the professional education or development of teachers in their respective systems, but they operate under a variety of titles. In the government sector, in its Colleges, Provincial Institutes of Teacher Education, or Institutes for Professional Development, they are Teacher Trainers. Elsewhere, they might be labeled as Program Associates (e.g. AKES,P), or as Professional Development Centre faculty (e.g. PDC, North in Gilgit) or simply as PDTs.

Changes in frequency of particular employment categories from entry to time of most recent data collection:

Table 6 presents data on categories of work from time of programme entry alongside the most recently collected data.

Table 6: Differences in categories of work being undertaken by MEd Course Participants/ at entry and after exit from the programme.			
Nature of work	Entry	'Recent'	Difference
School-based educators.	60	35	-25
Non-School-based educators.	19	34	+15
Education officials or managers.	8	13	+5
FT in Higher Education.	0	2	+2
Outside education/Other.	0	3	+3

What the data of Table 6 show is a very clear pattern of apparent 'flight from school' and into all other categories of work. The number of School-based educators has declined from 60 to 35, a decrease of 42%. And this, which at entry was by far the largest category (by a factor of 300%) has now basically the same number as those of the Non-School-based educators, with each category now accounting for some 40% of all cases. The number in the Non-School-based educators category has increased from 19 to 34 or by close to 80%. Likewise, a small numerical (+5) but large percentage (63%) increase has occurred in the number of Education officials or managers.

Table 7 provides elaboration and further breakdown of the two categories of School-based and Non-School-based Educators.

Table 6: Differences in categories of work being undertaken by MEd Course Participants/ at entry and after exit from the programme.			
Nature of work	Entry	'Recent'	Difference
School-based educators.	60	35	-25
- Teachers	50	10	-40
- Head Teachers	8	10	+2
- Heads of Departments	2	3	+1
- PDT	0	8	+8
- Teacher / PDT	0	4	+4
Non-School-based educators.	19	34	+15
- Teacher educators	13	29	+16
- University Teachers	6	5	-1
Education officials or managers.	8	13	+5
FT in Higher Education.	0	2	+2
Outside education/Other.	0	3	+3

Table 7 reveals something more of the pattern underlying the earlier-shown outcomes. It shows clearly that our label 'flight from school' was really a misnomer for what is now shown clearly (and dramatically perhaps) to be a 'flight from the classroom'. The number of purely classroom teachers has declined from 50 to 10 (a decrease of 80%) and this is only slightly compensated for by the new 'PDT in school' categories where 12 people are now to be found. The largest single increase has been in the number of non-school-based teacher educators (from 13 to 29, a percentage increase of 123%). However, to reiterate, the most striking features of Table 7 are the massive decrease in the number of classroom teachers and the growth or near-stability of all other categories.

Summarized changes in individual employment categories from entry to time of most recent data collection:

It should be noted that the data presented in Table 7 are the gross numbers in categories before and after the MEd programme. The numbers tell us, for example, how many teacher educators there were before and after the programme but they do not tell us about the individuals who entered the programme as teacher educators and what happened to them. We therefore examined each case individually for change or stability and the outcomes of this process are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Patterns of change for individual entrants to the MEd programme.		
Of the 60 School-based educators at entry:	Of the 19 Non-School based educators at entry:	Of the 8 Education officials/ managers at entry:
...53% (33) remain School-based educators;	...11% (2) are School-based educators;	...0% are School-based educators;
...34% (19) are Non-school based educators;	...58% (11) remain Non-school based educators;	...50% (4) are Non-School based educators;
...8% (5) are Education officials/ managers;	...21% (4) are Education officials/managers;	...50% (4) remain Education officials/managers;
...3% (2) are Outside education/Other;	...1 is Outside education/ Other;	...0 are Outside education/Other;
...1 is a full -time student in Higher Education.	...1 is a full-time student in Higher Education.	...0 are full-time students in Higher Education.

Despite the patterns of substantial change that we have already seen in tables Table 6 and 7, the data of Table 8 reveal another interesting, countervailing trend towards stability. That is, what these data suggest is that entrants to the programme tend to return to the roles in which they entered the programme. So, for example, we know from the data of Table 5 that the probability of any one programme graduate being a School-based educator is 40% whilst the probability of any programme graduate being a Non-school-based educator is similar at 39%. However, what the data of Table 8 tell us is that if we know that an entrant to the programme was a School-based educator at entry, then the probability of that person being in the same category at the most recent data collections is as high as 53%. Likewise, the probability of a Non-School based educator remaining as such at time of most recent data collection is 58%. A similar pattern is perhaps also visible for the Education officials and managers although the frequencies are so low as to prevent firm generalizations.

Regional effects

We examined the data for any possible national and regional difference but in this case the effects that we have already seen seem themselves to be too overwhelming to allow clear patterns in the much smaller regional and national data sets. That is, the trend for the number of classroom teachers to decline is the dominant feature of the data in every region. In Table 9 we have therefore used this one measure as our proxy for a brief examination of apparent or possible regional and national effects.

Table 9: Percentages of classroom teachers at entry and at time of most recent data collection across regions and countries (where N>5).			
'Regions'	N	Percentage of Classroom Teachers:	
		Entry	'Recent'
Karachi/Hyderabad	25	80%	20%
Chitral/N. Areas	19	26%	0%
Peshawar/Quetta	14	43%	14%
East Africa	16	75%	19%
Central Asia	12	50%	0%
Bangladesh	1	-	-

The data of Table 9 suggest that the trend of decline in numbers of classroom teachers is similar across all regions or areas represented but that issues of differences at time of entry might be worthy of further investigation.

System effects

We have carried out a comparable analysis of system effects as was done for regional effects. This is shown in Table 10.

Table 9: Percentages of classroom teachers at entry and at time of most recent data collection across systems (where N>5).			
Systems	N	Percentage of Classroom Teachers:	
		Entry	'Recent'
AKES	38	59%	8%
Government	37	57%	14%
Private sector	7	71%	29%
ITREB	3	-	-
NGO/CBO	2	-	-

These data suggest that the trend of decline in numbers of classroom teachers is similar across at least the two large employers represented here-AKES and Government. The private sector data suggest perhaps a slightly higher retention of teachers in classrooms in this sector.

Time since Master of Education completion

Given the evidence provided above for substantial change in the nature of MEd participants' employment, there remain questions of whether we are observing perhaps sudden and radical change immediately after the MEd programme or of whether we are observing gradual but continuing trends. Fortunately, in the case of the classes of 1999 and 2000, we have post MEd data collected on two separate occasions (see Table 1). With both classes, the first post-MEd data collection was approximately one year after programme completion. In the case of the class of 1999, the second occasion was on average just under one year after the first; in the case of the class of 2000, the second occasion was on average 15/16 months after the first. Table 11 shows the outcomes of this analysis.

Nature of work	Entry	After approx one year	Most Recent
School-based educators.	60	35	-25
- Teachers	50	10	-40
- Head Teachers	8	10	+2
- Heads of Departments	2	3	+1
- PDT	0	8	+8
- Teacher / PDT	0	4	+4
Non-School-based educators.	19	34	+15
- Teacher educators	13	29	+16
- University Teachers	6	5	-1
Education officials or managers.	8	13	+5
FT in Higher Education.	0	2	+2
Outside education/Other.	0	3	+3

What is clearly visible in Table 11 is that the transition from School-based educators to Non-school based educators; the flight from the school and the classroom is not a one-time transition. Rather it is a phenomenon that continues to occur with the passage of time, as more and more people tend to shift their positions towards teacher education with the passage of time. Indeed, there is a suggestion in Table 11 that 'PDT in schools' may be just a temporary phenomenon and that over time even this small increase in the number of School-based educators might itself disappear.

Discussion of results

In summary the results, from time of programme entry to time of latest data collection, were:

- the percentage of educators (both school- and non-school-based) declined from 91% to 79%;
- the percentage of school-based educators declined from 69% to 40%;
- the percentage of non-school-based educators increased from 22% to 39%;
- the percentage of education official or managers increased from 9% to 15%;
- there is a greater diversity in the later data (the average percentage in any one category declines from 33% to 20%);
- the number of purely classroom teachers declined from 50 to 10 although this was partly compensated by 12 programme graduates working in schools in PDT or part-PDT roles;
- the number of teacher educators increased from 13 to 29 or by 123%.
- the above effects seemed to apply regardless of the regions or employment systems from where the graduates come;
- the nature of employment at entry seemed to help determine the likely future employment of graduates; and,
- changes which occurred in graduates' employment after their MEd programmes seemed to be gradual and continuing rather than one-off.

This discussion focuses on two major issues arising from these results-that of the apparent 'flight from the classroom' and that of what these data might tell us about the nature of impact studies.

(a) Flight from the classroom?

Many colleagues with whom we have shared the preliminary results of this study have reacted with some shock, horror and concern at hearing of the decline in the numbers of classroom teachers from 50 to 10. At first, this too was our reaction and even our somewhat emotive label 'flight from the classroom' captures something of these feelings. However, some more reflection tempers this reaction and we now want to ask whether this outcome is something that should worry us or whether it is perhaps a reflection of something that should not surprise us greatly.

Contemplate first of all, IED's own descriptions of the MEd programme and its graduates:

...the programme graduates are called Professional Development Teachers (PDTs) and return as teacher educators to their home schools and/or educational organizations, as well as to institutions of higher education (such as the IED). It is expected that the PDTs will form the core staff of the Professional Development Centres currently being established or planned. (Information Pack: Professional Development Teachers, 2002, p.1).

Then recall that the aims of the programmes for the Classes of 1999 and 2000 were:

...to prepare a cadre of experienced mid-career teacher educators, educational leaders, researchers and agents of change' who would be committed to bringing change in their respective systems. (Professional Development Teachers' Information pack, 2001, p.1).

The programme aims for the Class of 2002 were:

[a] programme graduate would be an exemplary classroom teacher; an effective teacher educator and a competent beginning researcher...(Handbook, Class of 2002, p. 9).

It would appear that the outcomes of the programmes match remarkably well the statements of aims for these programmes.

In other words, we cannot have it both ways. If we wish our programme to have its effects in teacher education in PDCs and in Universities then we should not be surprised when that is the outcome. If, on the other hand, we want our programme to have its effects in schools and classrooms, then we should define our programme aims accordingly and plan for their achievement rather than for the achievement of different aims. And if we do, as a matter of emphasis, wish to increase the number of graduates who are classroom-based, then we should take note of the data presented here and at least make a point of admitting to the programme those who are classroom practitioners at the time of entry.

(b) On the nature of impact studies.

We are frequently asked at AKU-IED about some kind of hypothetical ‘before-and-after impact study’ which somehow would assess the impact of our MEd programme by comparing school students’ performance who have been taught by our CPs both before and after their MEd programme. We have argued elsewhere that questions of impact of the MEd programme are complex ones and that we will probably never be able to design, develop or create the one impact study which will offer conclusive evidence of the kind being sought. One way of interpreting the evidence that we offer in this paper is that the MEd programme succeeds in driving people out of the classroom. Another way of interpreting the same evidence is that these data suggest that the MEd programme is pretty good at achieving its stated aims and having people work in a variety of settings such as schools, universities, PDCs and in a variety of roles—teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. However, our preferred approach is to say neither of these things but rather to assert and to keep asserting that life is more complex, that impact is not the one-dimensional ‘collision between two objects’ so beloved of the physicists but rather, in our setting it is a question of complexity, of convolution, of multidimensionality. In his essay on ‘The Impact of Impact’, Fielding (2003) puts a similar argument:

[The language of impact] valorises what is short-term, readily visible and easily measurable...it has difficulty comprehending and valuing what is complex and problematic, what is uneven and unpredictable, what requires patience and tenacity. ...it finds difficulty in distinguishing between levels of change, between what is fairly superficial and what is...’transformational’ ...it will turn out to be a blunt instrument which will produce commensurately crude findings... (p. 289)

He suggests that we need to do:

...the intellectual hard work [to] enable us to move on from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mechanical world view, through the nineteenth- and twentieth-century organic world view, to a view fit for the twenty-first century, a world view that understands that we are not machines, not just organisms, but persons. (p. 294)

What is certainly clear from the data presented here is that simple before and after studies of impact are not possible when the ‘before’ and ‘after’ states are as different as the ones presented here. Second, it is noteworthy that whilst this paper has addressed some

apparently very simple questions about participants' roles before and after the MEd programme, interpretation of the answers is more complex than is at first sight apparent. Our role is more like that of the forensic scientist than that of the laboratory physicist. We have pieces of evidence-some more reliable than others; we have hunches, theories and metaphors; we have clues, hints, traces and suggestions. Our search is for a mostly-hidden web of complexity with only a few of the nodes and links visible. Our task is to attempt to fill in the many missing pieces.

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