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Perspectives on Teacher Status: Issues and Challenges

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Introduction

Teaching and learning are fundamental elements of human societies. The desire and necessity for education is inherent in all human beings and modern societies have established schools to facilitate this process. In fact, the very survival and advancement of humanity depends on the ancient and noble profession of teaching.

The importance of teachers and the societal expectations placed on them can be seen in the formidable task of translating into reality the vision outlined in the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) and reaffirmed in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. Teachers are at the forefront of the struggle to achieve EFA goals. Furthermore, the constitution of UNESCO adopted in London on 16 November 1945 begins with these words: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed”. This underlines the importance of teaching in the modern world as well as the importance of fostering a competent and motivated teaching force, since the values of peace must be taught and learnt (Sheikh & Iqbal, 2003).

The development of an effective education system in Pakistan has been marked by a slow growth pattern. There are many reasons for this though an important one is that the pivotal role of teachers as key players in the development of a quality education system has not been sufficiently recognized. Teachers have not been regarded as an essential factor in the quality of education and the prominent and respectable position that teachers once held among the masses has been undermined. Whilst it is accepted that there are many hard-working and dedicated teachers in schools in Pakistan, the situation is such that their efforts are largely unrecognized because the overall status of teachers is low.

From a historical perspective, there has been a continuous downgrading of the status of teachers in Pakistan over the past thirty years or so. Nowadays, teaching in Pakistan is generally characterized by low efficiency and weak performance due to low self-esteem, inadequate salary structures, shortage of

teachers at all levels of education, an over-crowded curriculum and lack of subject content knowledge. Inadequate preparation of prospective teachers is a major issue in maintaining standards and ensuring the quality in education. Abbasi and Khokar (1994, p. 1) state some reasons for despair: “teacher training suffered due to an insufficient training system, multi-grade classrooms taught by a single teacher, over-crowding in classes, lack of equipment, short supply of textbooks and lack of proper physical facilities.”

The authors further contend that some of the over-arching issues and problems are:

- heavy theoretical training;
- imbalance of distribution of staff with particular reference to males and females and rural-urban distribution;
- inadequately staffed, managed, equipped and monitored institutions;
- lack of optimizing lessons and gains from foreign-aided programs;
- insufficient and loose collaboration, coordination and communication among the various departments; and,
- lack of policy analysis and strategic planning, implementation and evaluation.

A move from the dominant conventional training to open learning approaches, a need to motivate the teaching force, and adequate research to inform alternatives for effective training are all urgently required. From an international perspective, Hargreaves and Earl (1996) explain that such shortcomings can be addressed if certain features of schools are made more conducive for teachers and teaching, such as the nature of the act of teaching, the concept of teacher thinking and the pedagogical influences on student learning. Amidst all the challenges, teachers survive conflicting pressures and have the potential agency for bringing about change. Although there are constraining structures within which teachers and others must operate, there is an enduring optimism that once teachers understand the oppressive conditions they can be empowered to fight against them and transform education (Gore, 1993).

The purpose of this paper is to raise various perspectives on teacher status along with some issues and challenges. The position we take is that the status of teachers and teaching in Pakistan is unacceptably low and must be enhanced if the overall quality of school education is to be improved. It is widely known that there are serious problems in school education, particularly in the government

sector and in rural areas (Khan, 2005). We wish to argue that an important path to reform is to enhance the status of teachers.

The Meaning of Teacher Status

The status accorded to teachers has a significant impact on the composition of the teaching force and the quality of teaching. Attracting skilled and committed individuals and retaining them in the teaching profession is a prerequisite for ensuring high quality education. The ILO/UNESCO (1966) recommendation concerning the status of teachers defines ‘status’ in the following words:

The expression “status” as used in relation to teachers means both the standing or regard accorded them, as evidenced by the level of appreciation of the importance of their function and of their competence in performing it, and the working conditions, remuneration and other material benefits accorded them relative to other professional groups.

Status is a relative term and can only be assessed in relation to its environment and the dynamics of society. The status of the teaching profession cannot be considered in isolation from the status of the education system in general. Differing concepts of education influenced by different cultural traditions also affect the status of teachers.

The ILO/UNESCO recommendation puts forth the following guiding principle for the status of teachers:

The status of teachers should be commensurate with the needs of education as assessed in the light of educational aims and objectives; it should be recognized that the proper status of teachers and due public regard for the profession of teaching are of major importance for the full realization of these aims and objectives.

Arising from the definitions, there are various perspectives on teacher status that will help to illuminate the issue. These include teaching as a profession compared with other professions, the social and economic status of teachers relative to other occupations and the extent of involvement of teachers in educational decision-making.

Teaching: Is it a Profession?

A profession is considered to be a vocation founded upon prolonged and specialized intellectual training which enables a particular service to be rendered. The term profession has been traced to sixteenth-century England where it probably referred primarily to divinity, law and medicine. Over the ensuing centuries other occupations have come to be regarded as professions and those who study the development and nature of professions tend to agree that certain criteria distinguish professions from other endeavours. These criteria include:

- Knowledge based on scientific theory
- An orientation to provide service
- A unique function
- Control over standards of education and training
- An extended period of professional socialization
- Some form of licensure or certification
- Licensing or certification boards staffed by members of the profession
- Influence over legislation related to the profession
- Relatively high prestige, earning potential, and power
- Relative autonomy
- Norms of practice or professional ethics
- Strong sense of professional identification by members
- Involvement based on career commitment

(Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1962, pp. 199-202, cited in Duke, 1990).

Does teaching satisfy the criteria of a profession? A consideration of the above criteria suggests that teaching is only a quasi-profession because it does not meet all the criteria to the same extent as other professions such as architecture, engineering, law or medicine. Duke (1990) however, suggests that an historical review of the criteria indicates that teaching has steadily progressed towards a greater degree of professionalization. It is also evident that more progress has been made in some countries around the world than in others.

The basic aim of teaching is to promote learning. Whilst that appears to be a simple proposition, it is actually a complex issue. The complexities arise from the varied conceptions of education, learning and other functions of schooling. Hence

the debate continues; what is worth learning and who is to determine what is worth learning? What is the purpose of schools and who is to decide what schools are for? What should teachers teach and how should they teach? In considering such questions a variety of perspectives on teaching unfold and uncertainties about the precise status of teaching as a mode of employment continue.

Teachers get paid for what they do. In that sense they are professionals rather than amateurs, and are entitled to be regarded as members of a profession. However, the words 'profession' and 'professionalism' can be interpreted in different ways. First, it does not follow from the fact that people get paid for what they do, that they are professionals. Second, those who have achieved 'professional' standards in some sphere of paid employment e.g. plumbers or carpenters, are not necessarily regarded as professionals.

From the perspective of professional education, Carr (2003) argues that the role and status of 'reflection' as a form of knowledge in teacher education and training may raise doubts about a very precise analogy between teaching and say, medicine. For instance in professional curriculum content, although there is no doubt that at least some teachers require scientific knowledge no less than doctors, there may be important differences between the ways in which such knowledge is utilized or implicated in the enterprises of medicine and education.

Teachers need more or less advanced knowledge in order to have *content* to teach their students, whereas doctors need knowledge (such as anatomy or physiology) to *enable* them to treat their patients. Whereas the enabling knowledge that doctors need is usually acquired in the professional academy, the content knowledge that teachers need is mostly acquired prior to entry to professional education and training - either through general secondary education (in the case of many primary teachers) or in the course of pre-service university study (in the case of many secondary and some primary teachers). Hence, teachers need professional courses not so much to know *what* to teach but more to know *how* to teach. On this view, the knowledge that teachers acquire in the academic contexts of professional training is somewhat like the scientifically informed technical know-how that doctors acquire in medical school.

However, in teacher education and training the practical knowledge and expertise of teaching is *not* obviously of the scientifically grounded technical kind upon which medical expertise is based. Most so-called 'teaching skills' are probably better regarded as qualities of ordinary human communication rather than as the results of scientific inquiry. Such considerations serve to reinforce the view in teacher education and training that the expertise of teachers is best

acquired by a 'hands-on' practical apprenticeship in the way of a trade rather than a profession.

It is often argued that policy and curriculum formulation is not the concern of teachers and that their role is the transmission of what is considered to be socially and economically useful by those to whom they are accountable. This viewpoint threatens to 'de-professionalize' teaching, and reduce it to a 'white-collar job' rather than a profession in the sense of medicine or law. Sadly, this perspective has been widely influential in contemporary conceptions of education and teaching, especially in Pakistan. Various groups have been inclined to blame a wide range of contemporary social and moral evils on the failure of teachers to transmit 'traditional' or 'socially acceptable' values to students and hence they are said to be unprofessional.

In this light, although the use of 'professional' and 'unprofessional' – of a job well or badly done is applicable to any occupation, it does not follow that any occupation may be regarded as a profession. Thus, although we can speak of teaching as an activity conducive to professional or unprofessional performance, in Carr's (2003) view it is an open question whether teaching can or should be regarded as a profession.

Whilst we agree with Carr's position, we would argue that every effort should be made to enhance the professionalism of teachers so that teaching will emerge in the future as a highly regarded profession with similar status to other well established professions.

Social and Economic Status of Teachers

An important criterion in determining the professional and academic status of teaching is that its members should have acquired a sound background of general education, subject matter specialization and effective preparation in the methods and techniques of teaching. The academic status of teachers refers to the prestige which teachers enjoy by virtue of the education they have received in schools and colleges, their professional competence and their personal commitment to and care for their students. Other things being equal, the higher the level of education a teacher has received, the higher his/her academic status.

Social Status

Though social status is a complex phenomenon, the following elements may enable us to gain a perspective on the social status of teachers in Pakistan.

Professional pride. Above all else, it is the pride with which teachers regard their own profession that helps determine their status. A profession is what its members make of it. If they hold it in high esteem and are proud of belonging to it, they will guard its interests and standards. It is the authority and the power of the profession which gives it social status. In Pakistan, teachers are generally perceived to have less authority and power as compared to other occupational groups such as Police, Customs Department, Revenue Department, Central Superior Services (CSS) Officers, etc. and hence they lack professional pride.

Values of commitment and honesty. Teachers' commitment to their work is a major factor in determining the social status of teachers as ascribed to them by the community, parents and students. Whilst there are many highly committed teachers, it is widely known that some teachers in rural schools do not attend school regularly. As a result, the students and the community do not accept them as good teachers. A number of factors can be attributed to the syndrome of teachers' absenteeism though a lack of professional commitment would be an important one.

A great misfortune in the immediate past in Pakistan has been a lack of honesty in personal, professional and public life. A pre-requisite for enhancing professionalism is an improvement in the standards of honesty and integrity and on this basis other reforms will be made. If this is not forthcoming the nation cannot achieve the objective of a citizenry that looks upon personal honesty as the basis of self-respect and that views professional positions and public offices as sacred trusts (Quddus, 1990).

Degree of public recognition. Public recognition of the service rendered by teachers is reflected, among other things, by national awards and by teachers being invited to serve on national committees and commissions. Teachers in Pakistan are rarely given representation in administrative, developmental or legislative bodies. Teachers' social status is not something which can be enhanced solely through legislation. What is needed is a two-track approach which provides teachers with effective training, decent working conditions and remuneration and which at the same time demands unswerving commitment and dedication from them (Zafar, 1966, p. 139).

Though these elements of social status appear to be negative, there are also some quite positive images of teacher pride and commitment that are largely unrecognized and hence unrewarded. It is worthwhile to highlight these to provide a balanced picture. For example, the initiatives of various professional associations such as MAP, SPELT and SHADE (see Baber, Sarwar, & Safdar, 2005) have been achieved through extraordinarily high levels of commitment

from some teachers and teacher educators throughout Pakistan. These and other associations are engendering pride in teaching and improved public recognition and deserve to be supported and fostered to grow.

Economic Status

Income or salary clearly forms a very important aspect of economic status. Teachers are generally lowly paid and in the prevailing economic circumstances the woefully underpaid “makers of the nation” have often been driven to desperate measures to push their urgent demands. There are reports that female teachers employed by small scale private primary schools are notoriously underpaid. The remuneration paid to teachers serving in Non-formal Basic Education (NFBE) schools, Mosque Schools or Adult Literacy Centres is generally very low and there is little job security. Although many teachers living in urban areas have to travel to and work in rural areas, they are normally not offered any monetary incentive or hardship allowance.

There are thousands of graduate and undergraduate teachers in the secondary schools who have long been struggling to make both ends meet while facing up to the responsibility of a difficult and demanding job. Enveloped as they are in the misery of distressing circumstances they cannot possibly rise to the professional status that, in principle, should be theirs. Reminders of their high station and noble mission can hardly serve as substitutes for reasonably respectable emoluments. Character building which is the basic aim of education cannot conceivably be achieved through the agency or influence of teachers who are constantly oppressed by the trials and hardships of a deplorably underpaid career.

Bright young people are not choosing teaching as a career because the conditions of life and work in the primary and secondary schools in Pakistan are, to say the least, unattractive. While it is true that there is, on the whole, a considerable shortage of able and qualified teachers to fill the growing requirements of education at all levels, it is equally true that without adequate improvement in salary scales for teachers the better or even tolerable types of recruits will not be drawn to the teaching profession. Without improving the quality of teachers the numerical expansion of schools is extremely unlikely to meet the needs.

Alongside of expanding facilities for training it is clearly necessary to take steps, at the national level, to provide for some modest improvement in the hiring and working conditions of primary and secondary school teachers. In some cases we continue to pay less to teachers than to any other ordinary functionaries and

there is obviously need for a saner, more informed attitude to educational problems. Much can sometimes be made of a mere numerical increase in training institutes or the number of teachers turned out by the various training centres. The important thing is to ensure that those employed as teachers are indeed enabled to give of their very best in reasonably satisfying conditions.

No less important is consideration for improving the lot of teachers responsible for higher education, as much is expected of the university teacher – a high degree of professional competence and great deal more hard work than at present. It is important, therefore, that teachers be given emoluments sufficient to keep them reasonably contented and amenities to provide an atmosphere conducive to creative academic life. Such amenities should include adequate residential accommodation, proper medical care, and pension or contributory provident fund. University teachers should also be granted leave for advanced study and research, if their performance has indicated that such leave will be properly utilized. This should prove beneficial to the university as well as to the teachers.

Involvement in Educational Decision-making

The ILO/UNESCO (1966) recommendation concerning the status of teachers emphasizes that the teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of its professional duties, through participation in educational decision-making. It should be given a central role in the:

- Choice and selection of teaching materials and teaching aids.
- Selection of textbooks and application of teaching methods.
- Involvement in the development of new courses/textbooks.

In Pakistan, teachers have very little involvement in such matters as policy development, the process of curriculum development or writing of textbooks etc. These decisions are made by high officials or senior experts, many of whom might never have taught at the school level. However, an initiative was made to review the curriculum in the Middle School Project (1994-2004) in which teachers were involved in designing the textbooks but, unfortunately, they were never used because of late submission to schools. Again in this area, there is considerable room for improvement as a means of enhancing the status of teachers.

School Education in Pakistan

The context for this paper is school education in Pakistan. School education comprises four levels; primary (1-5), middle (6-8), secondary (9-10) and higher secondary (11-12) and there is a diverse range of schools including government, NGO and private for-profit schools as well as *madrassas*. It has been estimated that approximately 80% of children going to primary school in Pakistan are attending government schools while in rural areas it may be as high as 97% (Rashid, 2001).

According to the constitution of Pakistan, school education is generally a provincial responsibility though the Federal Government exercises considerable control through national policies and programmes. The status of teachers is well summed up by Rizvi and Elliot (2005) when they state: "...government primary schools in Pakistan are characterized by large numbers of under-educated, under-trained, underpaid and, most important of all, undervalued government primary school teachers..." (p. 35).

Whilst the problems of school education in Pakistan have been well documented over many years, a reminder of some of the issues was given at a recent seminar (9 June, 2006) when Dr Syed Irtefaq Ali, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Karachi highlighted the deteriorating condition of education in the country. Ali (2006) said there were 328,829 schools in the country but 17% of these had no roofs, 39% were without drinking water, 62% without electricity, 50% without toilet facilities and 46% didn't have boundary walls. He added that there were 30,000 ghost schools, 40% of children did not go to school while the dropout rate was 45%. Another speaker at the seminar, Dr Manzoor Ahmed, former Vice-Chancellor, Hamdard University, "was critical of the centralization of education and emphasized that bureaucratization of education should be abolished forthwith, adding that the trend had harmed the education system" (Ahmed, 2006).

At the time of establishment of Pakistan in 1947 most teachers were employed on an ad hoc basis and they not only continued service but were promoted in the following years again on an ad hoc basis. No uniform method of selecting teachers on lower levels was devised and no training facilities for them were provided on a nation wide scale. The methods of teaching and examination too are what they were several decades ago.

From the beginning the private sector had a major share in providing education through schools at various levels. Private schools were run by societies motivated by the cause of promoting education as well as by individuals making their living

through teaching. No detailed figures about the share of private owners and societies are available, but the breakdown between the government and private sector is known. Qaisrani & Sarfaraz (1998, pp. 177-178) point out that the government owned 4 per cent of primary schools, whereas the private sector owned 43 per cent of these schools. The figures for ownership of middle and high schools were 3 per cent and 9 per cent for government, and 47 per cent and 83 per cent for the private sector respectively. The rest of the schools, i.e., 53 per cent of primary schools, 50 per cent of middle schools, and 8 per cent of high schools, were run by various local bodies. Since the government was not able to meet the educational needs of the population with its given resources, the private sector continued to play an important role in providing education.

One important change that took place over the years was the greater role of the private sector in providing education at higher levels, and the increased involvement of government in primary and middle level education. Before 1972, the government owned 93 per cent of primary schools and 88 per cent of middle schools, and the private sector operated 40 per cent of high schools and 51 per cent of colleges. The role of local bodies declined significantly during this period and the share of educational institutions managed by them came down to less than 10 per cent in the case of primary and middle schools and colleges, and 26 per cent in the case of high schools. Due to the nationalization of educational institutions in 1972, the role of the private sector and NGOs for provision of education was briefly interrupted, but they resumed their functioning in 1979 with the result that, by 1990, 5000 educational institutions were being run by non-government enterprises and organizations to provide education from the primary to university level.

Due to lack of availability of any reliable research and documentation regarding the role of non-government enterprises and organizations, it is not possible to draw a detailed map of NGO involvement in education between 1947 and 1990. Some insights based on qualitative studies present the following picture of NGO schools:

- The majority of schools run by NGOs are located in urban areas, and less than 50 per cent of these schools are owned by NGOs.
- A large number of teachers in these schools lack training and earn a salary much below that of government school teachers, with longer hours of work.
- The teacher-student ratio in these schools is mostly between 1:20 to 1:40, which is much better than the teacher-student ratio in most of the government schools.

- The minimum fee charged in these schools is Rs. 50 per month, which shows the community's capacity to avail of fee-based services, provided they are reasonable.

Profile of Teachers in Pakistan

Teaching is one of the largest professions in the country with more than 1 million people employed including about 0.6 million in public sector Pakistani schools, colleges and universities and the rest in the private sector. Tables 1 to 4 show the number of teachers employed by level, gender and location (2004-2005).

Table 1: Public Sector

| Level | Urban | | | Rural | | | Total | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Primary* | 36,150 | 35,603 | 71,753 | 179,239 | 90,144 | 269,383 | 215,389 | 125,747 | 341,136 |
| Middle | 8,867 | 12,322 | 21,189 | 49,558 | 40,516 | 90,074 | 58,425 | 52,838 | 111,263 |
| High | 34,706 | 30,015 | 64,721 | 73,823 | 22,748 | 96,571 | 108,529 | 52,763 | 161,292 |
| Higher Sec | 5,205 | 5,941 | 11,146 | 9,936 | 3,788 | 13,724 | 15,141 | 9,729 | 24,870 |
| Inter Colleges | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1,122 | 587 | 1,709 |
| Degree Colleges | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8,562 | 6,306 | 14,868 |
| Post Graduate Colleges | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3,486 | 2,524 | 6,010 |
| Total | 84,928 | 83,881 | 168,809 | 312,556 | 157,196 | 469,752 | 410,654 | 250,494 | 661,148 |

Table 2: Private Sector

| Level | Urban | | | Rural | | | Total | | |
|------------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Primary | 8,242 | 50,718 | 58,961 | 13,079 | 23,040 | 36,119 | 21,321 | 73,758 | 95,080 |
| Middle | 17,013 | 68,355 | 85,368 | 18,998 | 28,849 | 47,847 | 36,011 | 97,204 | 133,215 |
| High | 24,461 | 72,108 | 96,569 | 9,542 | 12,360 | 21,902 | 34,003 | 84,468 | 118,471 |
| Higher Sec | 4,249 | 6,661 | 10,910 | 4,908 | 1,610 | 6,518 | 9,157 | 8,271 | 17,428 |
| Total | 53,965 | 197,843 | 251,808 | 46,528 | 65,859 | 112,387 | 100,493 | 263,701 | 364,194 |

Note: Estimated by AEPAM @ 5% / Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics Division, 1999-2000

Table 3: Other Public Sector

| Level | Urban | | | Rural | | | Total | | |
|-----------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Primary | 829 | 2,813 | 3,642 | 6,085 | 4,193 | 10,278 | 6,914 | 7,006 | 13,920 |
| Middle | 756 | 1,392 | 2,148 | 17 | 23 | 40 | 773 | 1,415 | 2,188 |
| High | 955 | 1,368 | 2,323 | 20 | 7 | 27 | 975 | 1,375 | 2,350 |
| Higher Sec | 384 | 248 | 632 | 21 | 3 | 24 | 405 | 257 | 656 |
| Degree Colleges | 393 | 369 | 762 | 8 | 15 | 23 | 401 | 384 | 785 |
| Total | 3,317 | 6,190 | 9,507 | 6,151 | 4,241 | 10,392 | 9,468 | 10,431 | 19,899 |

Note: Other public sector means institutions not run by Ministry of Education or provincial education department

Table 4: Total (Public + Other Public + Private)

| Level | Urban | | | Rural | | | Total | | |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Primary* | 45,221 | 89,135 | 134,356 | 198,403 | 117,377 | 315,780 | 243,624 | 206,512 | 450,136 |
| Middle | 26,636 | 82,069 | 108,705 | 68,573 | 69,388 | 137,961 | 95,209 | 151,457 | 246,666 |
| High | 60,122 | 103,491 | 163,613 | 83,385 | 35,115 | 118,500 | 143,507 | 138,606 | 282,113 |
| Higher Sec | 9,838 | 12,850 | 22,688 | 14,865 | 5,401 | 20,266 | 24,703 | 18,251 | 42,954 |
| Inter Colleges | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1,122 | 587 | 1,709 |
| Degree Colleges | 393 | 369 | 762 | 8 | 15 | 23 | 8,963 | 6,690 | 15,653 |
| Post Graduate Colleges | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3,486 | 2,524 | 6,010 |
| Total | 142,210 | 287,914 | 430,124 | 365,235 | 227,296 | 592,531 | 520,614 | 524,627 | 1,045,241 |

* Including Mosque Schools

Teacher Education and Training

In Pakistan, there are 90 Colleges of Elementary Education which offer teacher training programmes for Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) and Certificate in Teaching (CT) to primary school teachers. For secondary school teachers there are 16 Colleges of Education offering graduate degrees in education and 9

university departments that train teachers at the master’s level. There are only 4 institutions which offer in-service teacher training. Besides these, the Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, offers a very comprehensive teacher training programme based on distance learning; its total enrolment is about 10,000 per annum of which 7,000 complete various courses every year.

Two issues are of central concern when considering teacher education and training in relation to the status of teachers. The first is that the development of teachers is generally viewed narrowly as ‘training’ rather than more broadly as ‘teacher education’. Training implies the imparting of specific skills that teachers can use on a daily basis. Whilst that is necessary, teacher education is concerned with providing a critical understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which those skills are located so that teachers are able to question, analyze and reflect on their practices. Teacher education, inclusive of training, is necessary for the development of teaching as a profession and the enhancement of the status of teachers. Following from this, the second issue is the urgent need to review and update the curricular of teacher education institutions to make them more relevant to the needs of teachers and more current in terms of international developments in the field of teacher education.

Table 5: Teacher Education/Training Institutions in Pakistan (2004-05)

| Provinces/Regions | Government | Private | Total |
|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Punjab | 75 | 7 | 82 |
| Sindh | 56 | 24 | 80 |
| NWFP | 39 | 8 | 47 |
| Balochistan | 28 | 2 | 30 |
| Federal Area | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| FATA | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| FANA | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| AJK | 13 | 3 | 16 |
| Total | 227 | 48 | 275 |

Source: Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan

Problems of Teachers in Pakistan

The following have been identified as major problems of teachers in Pakistan:

- Lack of availability of transport, security and residential facilities in remote rural areas. This has emerged as one of the important problems, especially for female teachers.
- Non-transparent appointment practices. It is often observed that appointments of teachers are based on non-merit considerations.
- Poor management and evaluation practices. Performance reports are not always based on actual performance.
- Politicization. Frequent transfers of teachers for subjective or political considerations frustrate many teachers. This is of special concern and hardship for female teachers and rural school teachers.
- Student-teacher ratio. Over-crowded classes and a high student-teacher ratio, especially in the urban schools, is a perennial problem. It not only creates disciplinary problems but also affects the quality of education.
- Corruption in connection with retirement, pension payment and medical bills. At times, teachers are subjected to undue tension regarding the disbursement against their claims for pensions or medical bills.
- Additional assignments. Duties on national tasks like census, elections etc. have emerged as a problem as they result in the loss of instructional time for children.
- Contractual appointments. Teachers are being given contractual appointments which lack job security.
- Schools without walls. Teachers sometimes have to teach in schools without walls and without rooms in extreme weather conditions in rural areas (Sheikh & Iqbal, 2003).

Government Policies and Initiatives Related to Teachers

Since the 1990s, the Government of Pakistan has adopted a series of policies and programmes to improve the access to, and quality of, primary education. Realizing that both indicators rely heavily on the availability and quality of teachers, the emphasis on recruitment of academically qualified teaching staff, certified to teach, has been an essential component of every education policy and initiative.

Social Action Programme

In the 1990s, the Social Action Programme (SAP), launched by the Government of Pakistan, greatly emphasized the need for good quality teachers. It also realized that the lack of availability of female teachers in less developed and rural areas posed a problem for the functioning of girls' schools. To overcome this problem, SAP underlined flexibility of qualification and age in the recruitment rules for female teachers in these areas, with preference for teachers from the local community. In the lesser-developed provinces of NWFP and Balochistan, special monetary allowances were provided to female teachers.

National Education Policy

Teacher training forms an important part of the policy targets included in the National Education Policy (1998-2010) (Ministry of Education, 1998). The main objectives outlined in the National Education Policy in relation to teacher education include the following:

- To increase the effectiveness of the system by institutionalizing in-service training of teachers, teacher trainers and educational administrators.
- To upgrade the quality of pre-service teacher training programmes, by introducing parallel programmes of longer duration at post-secondary and post-degree levels.
- To make the teaching profession attractive to the young talented graduates by institutionalizing a package of incentives.
- To develop a viable framework for policy, planning and development of teacher training programmes, both in-service and pre-service.

The Policy stresses some key policy provisions for the training of teachers:

- Both formal and non-formal means shall be used, to provide increased opportunities of in-service training, to working teachers preferably at least once in five years.
- The curriculum and the methods of instruction in teacher training institutions shall be reviewed and revised, for bringing them in line with modern trends in this field.
- Special incentives shall be provided to attract and retain talented students in the teaching profession.

- A special package of incentives shall be provided to rural females to join the teaching profession.
- A new stream of technical and vocational training shall be introduced in the pre-service teachers' training institutions, initially at post-degree level.
- A new cadre of teacher educators shall be created.

Education Sector Reforms and the National Plan of Action for EFA

More recently, the Government has built on the National Education Policy by developing a comprehensive package of educational reforms with medium term targets - the Education Sector Reforms (ESR) Action Plan for 2001-2005 (Ministry of Education, 2001). Besides enactment and enforcement of the Compulsory Primary Education Ordinance and the rehabilitation and upgrading of physical facilities in existing primary schools, the main thrust of ESR is improvement in the quality of education through teacher education and training.

The provinces have launched major teacher training initiatives through their own and federal budgets since 2001. Over 175,000 teachers and lead trainers have received training at primary, middle and secondary levels.

The ESR also serves as a foundation of the National Plan of Action (NPA) for EFA developed as a long-term framework (2001-2015) to achieve EFA goals. Based on three five-year phases, the NPA relies on a set of strategies which include improvement in the quality of education through a variety of teacher-related measures such as:

- merit-based recruitment of teachers;
- checking teacher absenteeism;
- revamping in-service training for existing teachers;
- reforming and strengthening in-service teacher training; and,
- institutionalizing the incentives and accountability system for teachers to improve their performance.

Teacher Status and the Quality of Teaching

An important element of the status of teachers is the 'competence' they show in the performance of their professional work. Consequently, teacher status is closely related to the issue of quality of teacher performance. If the performance of teachers is weak they will not have high status in the society, therefore an

improvement in quality is necessary to enhance the status of teachers. Three aspects of improving quality are of central concern to school education in Pakistan:

- **Curriculum reform.** The Federal Ministry of Education (2006) has announced major changes in the 'scheme of studies' for classes I to XII which will improve the curriculum being taught in schools.
- **Time available for teaching and learning.** The Federal Ministry of Education (2006) has announced an extension in the number of academic days from 170 to 210 to begin from academic year 2007.
- **Teacher performance.** The issue of teacher performance places the quality of teaching and learning at the forefront and complements other reform efforts currently underway.

Until recently the focus of improving education has been on increasing access and enrolment and while that is still important there is now a trend towards improving quality. Various strategies have been tried to increase enrolment, such as provision of free textbooks, relaxation of restriction on uniforms, providing edible oil and financial scholarships. "These strategies have resulted in an increase in enrolment, but the critical questions of retention, quality of teaching and learning, evolution of the school as a learning organization ... are still unanswered" (Sindh Education Foundation, 2003, p. 44).

In this paper the teacher is viewed as an individual with a degree of agency but located within a complex structural, social, cultural, gendered and physical context (Day, et al., 2006). That is to say teacher performance and status are seen to be formed and shaped, in part, by their own personal biographies, decisions and responses though perhaps, in larger part, by the context of their work. The context includes the bureaucracy and policies of the Department of Education, social and cultural issues of language, religious beliefs, gender and family situations along with the physical conditions of schools ranging from shelterless schools to various types of buildings and grounds with more or less resources.

From an international perspective, Hargreaves (1999) comments:

... we have come to realize in recent years that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. The restructuring of schools, the composition of national and provincial curricula, the development of benchmark assessments – all these things are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account ... (it is) what teachers do at the level of the

classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get (and) what goes on inside the classroom is closely related to what goes on outside it. (p. vii)

Teacher performance refers to “what teachers do at the level of the classroom” whereas teacher status is largely “what goes on outside it”. It is important to realize that “the quality, range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth – with the way they develop as people and as professionals” (Hargreaves, 1999, p. vii). As people and professionals, teachers have a range of attributes in areas such as knowledge, skills and attitudes which enable them to perform the work of teaching.

- Knowledge – this refers to what teachers know or their content knowledge. Teachers can only teach what they know, or putting it another way, teachers cannot teach what they don’t know. Teachers’ content knowledge derives from their own educational background (this has implications for recruitment of the right people) along with their pre-service and in-service training.
- Skills – this refers to what teachers can do or their ability to teach using pedagogical content knowledge i.e. the knowledge and skill to teach particular content in ways that produce student learning. Teachers’ skills derive from their pre-service and in-service training and from the in-school systems of supervision and support.
- Attitudes – this refers to the way that teachers view their job and their profession and may be seen in terms of morale or job satisfaction. High teacher morale is a disposition, willingness or motivation to work hard and to the best of their ability with the interests and care of students as the highest priority. Factors such as salary, prospects for promotion, transfer policies and working conditions can produce low morale (or low job satisfaction) but they don’t necessarily produce high morale. High morale is more likely to come from a sense of satisfaction with the job of teaching i.e. producing student learning.

Any consideration of teacher status raises the question of what constitutes quality teaching and learning. A Pakistani perspective on quality may be seen in Jaffer et al., (2001) who conducted research to identify the concept of a ‘good teacher’ from the viewpoint of children, parents and teachers and also to identify factors contributing to good teaching. The findings reveal that:

The ideal teacher is seen by almost all stakeholders as a soft, loving and courteous person who is neat, clean and well dressed,

regular and punctual and upholds high ethical values. The ideal teacher teaches well. S/he establishes a good rapport with children, plans her lesson, explains well, uses AV aids and activities to teach, gives and checks home work, and avoids punishing children to a large extent. (p. 7)

Factors that contribute to good teaching in the view of teachers and heads were a good physical environment (school facilities), a supportive administration (democratic, respectful, cooperative, trusting, guiding), cooperative colleagues and refresher courses. They also identified three types of factors outside the work place contributing to teacher development. They included home factors (good training at home, role model, conducive environment), education (exposure to good teachers), personal attitude of the teacher towards teaching and life in general, and continuous self-development of the teacher, including exposure to the media (p. 61).

Factors Affecting Teacher Performance and Status in Pakistan

The first definitive nationally representative study of schooling in Pakistan was by Warwick & Reimers (1995). Though produced over a decade ago it still captures the essence of many of the problems of teaching and learning in this country. The book sets out to explore:

... what affects student learning in Pakistan's government-sponsored primary schools. It looks at how the student's own background, school organization, teachers, teacher training, gender, school facilities, and educational innovations influence learning.... (p. 7)

Warwick & Reimers (1995) suggest that five conditions are necessary for a successful school system:

- Access – schools available to all children close to home
- Enrolment – all children should enrol in school
- Teachers – sufficient and competent
- Learning – students should learn what is taught in class
- Completion – students should stay at school long enough to become literate.

They argue that Pakistan fails to meet all those conditions, particularly in rural areas and for girls. Regarding teachers they say: “Among the greatest problems facing Pakistan’s primary schools are the shortage, the low quality, and the poor morale of their teachers” (p. 29).

In a recent research study (Retallick, Tejani, & Balouch, 2006) (see Note 1) a number of factors were identified as contributing to weak teacher performance and low status of teachers in government primary schools in Sindh. The factors were recruitment, training, salary/promotion/transfer, supervision and gender. It is likely that such factors are relevant to other provinces as well. The research was a qualitative study involving individual and focus group interviews with key stakeholders of the government sector in two districts. Stakeholders included education officials, teachers, parents and students.

Recruitment

A focus on the status of teachers raises the issue of recruitment of good teachers as an important factor though Warwick & Reimers (1995) state that:

Pakistan faces enormous difficulties in recruiting new teachers and drawing the best talent to the field. Primary school teaching has the lowest status of any profession and offers few chances for promotion ... the heavy use of politics in hiring teachers adds to the stigma on that profession. ... Primary school teaching has come to be seen as work attracting those with dubious academic skills who happen to know politicians. (pp. 29-31)

Prior to 1995 there were many unqualified teachers appointed through ‘source’ (political interference) or poor selection methods/criteria (only based on the interview or written test; other aspects were ignored). The result is that a considerable number of teachers do not have sufficient content knowledge or teaching skills to work effectively as teachers though they have been in the service for many years. There is also a lack of subject specialists particularly in English, mathematics and science.

A recruitment ban has been in place since 1995 and this has caused problems of teacher shortage and closed schools, particularly in rural areas. Some contract-based recruitment occurred in 2000 and they have since been regularized. According to the latest SEMIS data (July, 2006) there are 83,638 primary teachers in Sindh with an average teacher-student ratio of approximately 1:40, which is a reasonable figure. However, there is a problem of deployment

resulting in over-staffing in urban schools and under-staffing in rural schools (Rizvi, Shamatov, & Siddiqui, 2006).

The effects of this situation on teacher performance are:

- Shortage of teachers in rural schools has led to multi-grade teaching for which teachers are not well trained; hence there is a decline in the quality of teaching.
- Many schools have only one teacher with a large student group and some are closed because of non-availability of teachers.
- Because of the low qualifications of teachers they lack the required content knowledge to deliver quality education, particularly in a multi-grade situation.
- Some schools have sufficient teachers but limited classroom space resulting in classes sharing rooms and teachers taking turns at teaching their classes while the other class sits idly waiting for their turn.
- In the past most of the recruitments were politically influenced and the hands of the administration are tied because of the 'source' element when issues of low performance are reported.

These problems have caused a decline in community confidence in schooling and a consequent lowering of the status of teachers. However, the Department is now in the process of recruiting up to 12,000 teachers with some 2,000 already selected. A new policy is currently being finalized for new appointments to be on school-specific, 3 year contracts which can be extended if competency as a teacher is proven. If the teacher tries to get transferred from that school, the contract will be cancelled. In case of applying for another position, the teacher will have to resign from the current position.

To make the new recruitment policy transparent it will be based on points using the following criteria:

- Academic qualification (minimum Intermediate)
- Professional qualification (minimum PTC)
- Competency test
- Residence (this has maximum points)
- Gender (10 extra points in the case of female candidates).

The effect of this policy change will be to increase the number of female teachers who live close to their school. This will improve community confidence in

schooling since it will provide more teachers in rural primary schools, improve teacher attendance and reduce incentives for rural teachers to move to urban areas. The move to local recruitment is generally welcomed because it overcomes the problem of transport to school that many teachers face, particularly females.

These reforms should improve the status of teachers provided that the new policy is implemented effectively and then properly monitored and evaluated over time. In the past an important issue has been a large gap between policy implementation and evaluation, particularly in relation to teacher recruitment and deployment. For example, such policies have not taken into account the subject expertise of teachers and the needs of schools. Hence, it is often the case that teachers with very little knowledge in mathematics and science are called upon to teach these subjects. Likewise, the policy claims to provide equitable access to quality teacher education for both male and female teachers and rural and urban teachers. In practice this is often not the case.

Teacher Education and Training

Warwick & Reimers (1995) found that a teacher's formal education prior to entering teacher training had a much closer relationship than teacher certification with student achievement in mathematics and science. This suggests that teacher training was of very little value as a factor in quality teaching and learning at the time of that research.

More recently, Kardar (2005) describes the arrangements for teacher training as a confused institutional maze which "partially explains their ineffectiveness in achieving the objectives for which they were set up" (p. 6). In Sindh, Government Elementary Colleges of Education (GECEs) provide teacher training courses for primary and middle schools. These institutes along with some other training centres are under the administrative control of the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing (known as BoC). Kardar (2005) comments that they "are characterized by poorly maintained buildings, underutilized facilities (with hardly a few trainees as students) and under-funded for non-salary components ... (they) are contributing little to training of manpower and development of human resources" (p. 6).

Pre-service training

Because there has been virtually no recruitment for the past 10-11 years it is not surprising that there has little pre-service training. Generally, teachers are employed first and then given some initial training though it is not good quality

training. The content of initial training is poor quality when 60-70% of schools are single teacher schools but the training is not covering aspects such as multi-grade teaching or an integrated curriculum approach to teaching.

Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing (BOC): The Bureau of Curriculum and Extension was established in 1972 to develop the curriculum and educational materials and manage in-service teacher education. Subsequently, the Bureau took over the administrative and academic control of the Government Elementary Colleges of Education (GECEs) and also become the certifying and examining body for the entire range of pre-service training courses. Other than the regular pre-service training courses, the Bureau also undertakes short in-service courses on special topics, mostly through donor-funded projects, though it has very limited staff resources now.

Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE): The PITE was established under the ADB assisted Teacher Training Project in the mid-nineties and is an attached institution of the Department. However, it does not have a full-time faculty of its own and is functioning with borrowed faculty from the GECEs. It has just 5 regular staff members - 4 of whom are on secondment from the GECEs. After initial attempts at providing diploma and BEd courses, it has now restricted its operations to provision of in-service training. It does not have a regular program and conducts training on the request of either external donors or under schemes assigned by the provincial government.

Current pre-service training has very little affect on improving the quality teachers' performance as the contents and teaching methods used at the GECEs are the old and traditional ones. The contents of the training do not match with the new curriculum and the present-day needs of the teachers. Teaching is generally restricted to the lecture method with no follow-up tutorial and no use of methods that the students are expected to use in school when they become teachers. Hence, there is a dire need to revitalize and upgrade the pre-service training system.

In-service training

Whilst pre-service training is a bleak picture there has been and continues to be a large effort towards improving in-service training through aid agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF and ESRA. There is some evidence of success such as shown in ESRA Pakistan (2005) which is a quantitative study of the outcomes of professional development in two provinces (Sindh and Balochistan) conducted by assessment specialists. The objectives were to examine whether:

- teacher behaviour changed as a result of in-service training,
- students taught by those teachers showed increased academic achievement,
- headteacher performance changed as a result of in-service training.

Using a pretest-posttest method the study clearly shows that teacher performance improved as a result of training: “The statistical analyses show that overall teachers in Sindh performed significantly better after the training” (p. 6). In relation to gender, female teachers scored significantly higher than male teachers.

Student achievement was also measured using a pretest-posttest method in Mathematics and Urdu and the finding was that students performed significantly better in the posttest than in the pretest for each subject. In Mathematics, female students scored significantly higher than male students with the score *increase* also being higher for females. Also in Urdu, female students scored significantly higher than males though in this case the score increase was similar.

What this study clearly demonstrates is that high quality in-service training can be an important factor in improving teacher performance and student learning. It also suggests that females may benefit more than males from such training.

There are many agencies participating in teacher training activities either directly with district governments or through the provincial government with little coordination being provided by either government on the types and contents of courses. For example, in the case of district Khairpur three different agencies (UNICEF, ESRA, and PITE) are training primary school teachers simultaneously, in some cases the same teachers and headteachers. Another example is that of the headteachers, supervisors, LCOs and RPs attending training conducted by five different institutions.

Some strengths of in-service training:

- Most of the teachers in the districts have attended in-service training courses.
- New learner-centred teaching methods have been introduced.
- Training has been given on lesson planning.
- Some training for multi-grade teaching has been provided.

- Teachers are aware of low cost and no cost teaching resource material.

Some weaknesses of in-service training:

- Many teachers are not implementing the new approaches and ideas due to lack of support and follow-up in their classrooms.
- Different donors are coming with different training packages and taking teachers from the schools creating a problem of teacher absenteeism.
- Lack of coordination between donors and district officials.
- Content and quality of in-service trainings are not always high.
- Sometimes teachers selected for training are on 'source' and are not really interested in learning; they are attending more for the TA/DA.
- Because they are project-based the training programs will be wound up soon and may not have lasting effects.

Whilst there has been extensive in-service training it has largely been located in the major cities/towns and remote areas have not been well served. The training has been offered in central locations and has not been school-based which means that many teachers will drift back to their pre-training practices fairly quickly. The major needs for training in content areas seem to be in English, mathematics and science. The current training is reported to be having some positive effects on lesson planning, child-centred teaching and teachers' use of low cost/no cost resources. However, the lack of proper follow-up makes it doubtful that such practices will continue for long into the future.

The whole system of pre-service and in-service training needs better co-ordination and an upgrade in quality to improve its effectiveness. Such reforms are necessary to improve the quality of teaching and the status of teachers.

Salary, Promotion and Transfer

Primary teachers are appointed in BPS-7 or BPS-9, depending on their academic and professional qualifications. After the revision recently proposed by the Government of Pakistan in *Budget 2006*, the salaries have been raised. However, there were mixed responses received from the field with teachers and department officials saying the salaries are very low to, at best, sufficient. Of course, this has an impact on the satisfaction levels and morale of teachers. Low salary doesn't attract good teachers. It also does not lead to respect for teachers

or decent social status. Many teachers commented that economic pressure leaves them with stress hence it adversely affects their performance.

The current promotion policy does not provide any incentive for primary teachers to pursue a career at the primary level and it actually gives an incentive for good teachers to leave primary school teaching and move to higher levels. With the promotion of a teacher comes the reappointment letter which leads to transfer of the teacher to a middle or secondary school teaching position. The Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system does not seem to be an effective mechanism for promotion as it has become a mere formality.

Whilst seniority is seen to be the fairest basis for promotion, it does not reward competence or merit and is a very slow process. There is no encouragement or reward for meritorious performance as the current policy considers seniority as the main criterion. This has a negative impact on the motivational level of teachers who question the reason for putting in extra effort if there is no tangible return. There needs to be more flexibility in the promotion system to encourage teachers to perform well and be able to stay in the primary school.

Transfer of staff from BPS 1 to BPS 16 comes under the purview of the district governments which have a close understanding of their own teacher needs. Unplanned and unwanted transfers de-motivate teachers and pose difficulties in discharge of their duties which leads to low performance on the part of the teachers. There has been a general ban on transfers though it seems that teachers have been transferred within UCs or sub-districts if they have strong reasons or can access 'source'. The ban on transfers has caused difficulties for females who get married and want to move to their husband's location but are unable to do so.

Inadequate policies on salary, promotion and transfer have a direct affect on lowering the quality of teacher performance. Low performance of teachers results in low social status so it is important to improve the administrative policies that govern teachers' work in order to improve the status of teachers.

Supervision of Teachers

Supervision is generally viewed as a two-pronged process; monitoring of performance and supporting teachers to improve their performance. A recent teacher management study (Issues and Policies Consultants, 2005) concluded that: "The monitoring and supervision activities being performed by the education department tend to be perfunctory in nature, patchy in their implementation and largely ad-hoc reactions to political demands or episodic

complaints or responses to specific needs as and when they arise ... (and there is a) lack of adequate equipment and vehicles to perform monitoring and supervision” (p. 7). Further, “there was little by way of on-going instructional support to teachers, perhaps because the provision of such guidance was beyond the capacity of some district officials and because they saw their role more as administrators than educationists” (pp. 8-9).

The management processes of a school and the system, including supervision, affect how teachers work and how well students learn. Management and supervision are often seen in terms of rules and regulations which impose controls on staff whereas in recent times there has been increasing emphasis placed on leadership in education. Leadership is concerned with inspiring people towards a vision of school improvement and quality education. The notion of ‘pedagogical leadership’ has a particular relevance for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Memon & Bana, 2005).

In the provinces each district has an Executive District Officer (EDO) (Education) who is responsible to the District Coordinating Officer for the functioning of government schools. There is then a number of District Officers for Education (DOE) followed by Deputy District Officers (DDO) at the district level. At the *tehsil* level is an Assistant District Officers (ADO) followed by supervisors of primary schools and in some cases learning coordinators who are supposed to have direct contact with schools. In regard to supervisors Warwick & Reimers (1995) comment that “during their rare appearances at schools they may observe classes and talk with teachers, but they do not have the time or inclination to be managers or leaders” (p. 92).

In 1979 learning coordinators (LCs) were appointed by the Government of Pakistan with World Bank support. It was intended that they would visit ten to twenty schools at least once a month, observe teachers in the classroom, inspect their lesson plans, make suggestions about how they could improve their teaching and take other steps to raise the quality of teaching (Warwick & Reimers, 1995, p. 92). Initially LCs were trained under the World Bank funded Primary Education Project (PEP) and they were separate from the district system which caused some tension, though the intention was that they would eventually be incorporated into the system. From the beginning, the innovation caused problems because LCs were not part of the system and they were not always well accepted. In 1985 PEP funded training ended and the provinces took more control over LCs. Since then it appears that LCs are spending less time supporting teachers to improve and more on routine administration duties. “The system within which they work pushes them away from the role of helper to

teachers and towards actions manifesting authority and control ... learning coordinators thus seem to have had only a modest impact on the quality of teaching” (Warwick & Reimers, 1995, pp. 97-8).

Sindh Education Foundation (2003) studied some of the critical issues associated with the education system from the perspective of the Sindh Government’s Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Ordinance promulgated in December, 2001. The researchers concluded that there are problems generically associated with the system which pose a challenge for CPE. In particular they mention that “the role of the supervisor has emerged as being the most critical link between the schools and the department of education” and “the role of the supervisor needs to be revitalized and they should work as support mechanisms for the schools” (p. 3). However, “contrary to such a vital role, the supervisors are always pushed for time and resources. They can never visit schools frequently and when they do visit, they typically go with a top-down attitude of commanding and controlling rather than supporting the school. Overall, monitoring and supervision is done very sporadically by either observing a few classes, holding random tests or merely relying on the principal’s feedback about the school” (pp. 29-30).

One of the major recommendations of the study focused on the role of supervisors who were initially known as ‘learning coordinators’ with a task of facilitating teaching-learning processes. Now their role has been diminished to mere policing of schools and collecting information. The report says “it is imperative to revitalize the role of the supervisors in the school context as the data from the field suggests that schools are yearning for guidance and can find it nowhere ... not only does the supervisor’s role need to be re-energized but they also need to be provided with the relevant facilities (such as transportation) to perform their functions effectively and efficiently” (pp. 41-42).

The major finding of the research was that the system does not have the capacity i.e. capability and resources, to deliver effective supervision and teacher support to the schools. Whilst some supervisors have a healthy, balanced concept of supervision that includes both monitoring and support though regular school visits, most do not. They are not clear about their role and they are unable to carry it out effectively, particularly in relation to helping teachers to improve their performance in the classroom. They have not been adequately trained to perform the role of providing the school-based support to teachers. They do not have a written job description or proper orientation and there is a shortage of female supervisors. In practice the system of supervision and teacher support is not working effectively in the majority of schools.

The major reasons for this situation are:

- Department officials are not clear about the support aspect of their role and most of what supervisors do is administrative monitoring. They do not have written job descriptions or proper orientation.
- Most supervisors do not have the capability (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to carry out the role effectively, particularly in relation to helping teachers to improve their performance in the classroom. Their understanding of supervision is limited to “inspection” of schools. They go to schools to check what is ‘not good’ or ‘bad’, rather than also looking at what is working well. Because of that there is very limited identification of good practices.
- There are not enough supervisors, particularly female supervisors, to carry out the work required. Some supervisors have up to 60 schools to look after.
- They do not have sufficient resources, such transport, to get to the schools as often as they should, particularly in the case of females. There is a disincentive for them to visit schools because they have to personally bear the cost of travel as no TA/DA has been available in recent years.
- There has been a breakdown of trust and positive relationships between teachers and supervisors. Teachers do not have confidence in their supervisors to provide the help that they need and many supervisors avoid going to schools and doing the work that they are supposed to do.
- Most of the supervision is at the level of headteachers. When supervisors visit schools they mostly meet the headteachers only and do not have a relationship of trust with the teachers.
- There is a feeling of threat amongst supervisors that teachers are now getting training in modern teaching methods with which they themselves are not very familiar. In the past they would throw their weight around by exercising the authority of their position, but they are more reluctant now because of their lack of knowledge about the recent teaching methods and practices that the teachers are fast becoming familiar with.
- An important factor in the power of their position is that of conducting examinations which is totally controlled by the supervisors. Teachers are scared of the consequences of challenging anything that comes from the supervisors as they think that supervisors might fiddle with the examination papers and alter their results.

- Overall, the system of accountability is very weak and therefore both teachers and supervisors are getting away with poor performance with few repercussions as it is very difficult to dismiss a permanent employee. This situation is not conducive to improving the quality of teacher performance and is therefore in need of reform if teacher status is to be enhanced.

Gender

Pakistan explicitly takes account of gender in government schools with mostly separate schools for males and females (though there are some coeducational schools). There are complex and different relationships involving the gender of teachers and the schooling of boys and girls though it is clear that schools are strongly implicated in perpetuating the gender divide, largely to the disadvantage of girls. For example, Qureshi, Pirzado, and Nasim (2007) claim that:

Our observations of schools in rural Sindh and further discussion with teachers revealed that girls sweep classrooms, fetch drinking water and ensure the supply of chalks and maintain blackboards. Boys, on the other hand, lead school assemblies and are in charge of classroom discipline. ... This pattern of boys' and girls' activities in schools suggests that management and leadership positions are for boys (men) and maintenance and house-keeping functions are for girls (women), a reflection of practices in the wider local society (p. 138).

A significant issue in rural girls' primary schools is their inability to retain women teachers with adequate training. Most of the female teachers come from the cities and for them to live in a rural village can be a frightening and uncomfortable experience. Hence many do not stay very long. A girl's access to education depends on her family's willingness to send her to school and that is dependent on many factors including the value placed on education, accessibility to school, school environment, quality of teaching and learning, economic and social costs of sending girls to school. "The overall state of school can play a part in changing a family's perceptions and can contribute to securing their willingness to educate girls. If the school is not ready to cater to the educational needs of the girl child and cannot offer an enabling teaching-learning environment then families alone cannot be blamed for discriminating against girls' education" (Sindh Education Foundation, n.d., p. 44).

The results of a survey reported in Sindh Education Foundation (n.d., p. 44) indicated the following barriers to girls' education in 5 districts surveyed:

- Household constraints and demands for girls to work at home
- Poverty
- Discrimination against girls and in favour of boys' education
- Lack of female teachers in schools
- Accessibility to school/lack of transport facilities
- Opportunity cost of sending girls to school
- Socio cultural constraints.

However, the report also points out "that 86% of respondents were convinced that education is necessary for girls, which means that if schools succeed in offering an encouraging learning environment, communities would take initiative in sending their daughters to school ... any intervention designed for the promotion of education should be geared to *improving the educational processes* in the school rather than being confined to increased numbers of children in schools" (p. 48, my emphasis). Increasing the number of female teachers is also a priority issue.

A broader socio-cultural perspective is adopted by Farah and Shera (2007) in their review of policies and programmes for girls' education and they conclude:

Educational improvement is dependent on several interactive factors. Neither teacher training nor learning materials on their own can ensure better teaching, and neither scholarships nor free meals in school are sufficient to keep girls in school. The range and complexity of critical factors that influence educational access and quality need to be identified and addressed more carefully. Promoting gender parity and equality in education at all levels requires affecting the socio-cultural and economic context. The right to education promised by the policy cannot be claimed by women unless their rights in other spheres of life are recognized and given (pp. 37-38).

The research revealed that gender is an important factor in teacher performance though not necessarily at the level of the classroom. Teachers reported that the issues facing male and female teachers in the classroom are much the same but in the wider family, community and even national context the females suffer discrimination. Further research involving classroom observation of male and female teachers would be useful to validate this point. Some key issues affecting female teachers are:

- Low standard of life and disempowerment due to lack of education of women
- Unsupportive government policies for female teachers
- Lack of family support for female teachers
- Low level of community support for female teachers and sending girls to schools
- Lack of academic and professional development opportunities for female teachers
- Lack of girls schools' especially at elementary and secondary level in rural areas of Sindh
- Lack of awareness regarding the other benefits of girls' education besides getting employment
- Lack of support mechanisms (most female teachers are not sufficiently mobile to get support and facilitation from the system; they need the support persons to come to them)
- Poor access to information
- Fewer opportunities for female teachers to express their ideas and experiences
- School buildings often have no toilet facility and proper boundary wall
- Location of girls' schools is a problem if they are close to boys' schools or any place where there is a lot of presence of males
- Lack of counselling at school and community level especially to address the question; "what will our girls do after getting education?"
- Lack of wide exposure of female teachers and girl students to broaden their outlook and improve their confidence etc (in the case of local teachers there is little opportunity for girls and teachers to experience a diversity of interactions)
- There should be a policy of age relaxation regarding the recruitment of female teachers and admission of girl students.

Emerging Issues and Challenges

It is clear from the above analysis that major reforms are needed to upgrade the quality of school education and improve the status of teachers in Pakistan. To improve the status of teachers the most important emerging issues are:

- Reform the system of pre-service and in-service education and training of teachers
- Develop capacity for effective and supportive supervision of teachers in all schools
- Encourage the recruitment and professional development of female teachers.

In line with these issues the following challenges must be faced to improve the status of teachers:

1. The need to develop an overall strategy for teacher development and improvement at the provincial and national levels based on the establishment of faculties of education in multi-disciplinary universities in each province (where such do not already exist). Existing GECE's could be upgraded to become affiliated colleges of the faculties of education and PITE's need also to be upgraded for the overall improvement of teacher education and training.
2. Provision of a functional and effective system of supervision of the schools at district level with an emphasis on teacher support to improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes.
3. Mobilizing governments at all levels to address the issue of community and family support for female teachers and revise policies to encourage the recruitment and development of female teachers.

Conclusion

The importance of teachers cannot be overestimated. They are the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. Schools, systems and ministries spend large amounts of time and funds, besides inviting foreign donors as experts who are far removed from the realities of the context, deliberating the restructuring of schools, the composition of national and provincial curricula, and the development of benchmark assessments. However, all these things are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. It is important to

understand that teachers do not merely deliver the curriculum. They develop, define and reinterpret it too. It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do in the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get (Hargreaves, 1999). This is the reason why there is a growing need to place the status of teaching at the top of our research, policy studies and improvement agendas.

Policy-makers often have superficial, stereotypical, and one-dimensional views of the work of teachers. They can become so obsessed with neat and tidy reform programmes in teaching strategies or in curriculum content, that they overlook all the complex, messy and multifaceted aspects of teaching, working, organizing and caring that are both integral to and unavoidable aspects of a teacher's day. As Acker (1999, p. viii) points out in her intensive ethnography spanning several years, the life of difficulty, the dedication, the complexity, the busyness, the messiness, the agony, the ecstasy and sometimes the sheer rib-cracking hilarity of teachers' working lives needs to be understood by policy-makers.

For some reformers, improving teaching is a matter of developing better teaching methods, of improving instruction. Training teachers in new classroom management skills, in active learning, co-operative learning, one-to-one counselling and the like is the main priority because educational conferences recommend such to successive governments in Pakistan. These things are important, but we are also increasingly coming to understand that developing teachers and improving their teaching involves more than giving them new 'tricks of the trade'. We are beginning to recognize that, for teachers, what goes on inside the classroom is closely related to what goes on outside it. The quality, range and flexibility of teachers' classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth - with the way in which they develop as people and as professionals. Unfortunately, most teachers do not think about teaching as a career, therefore professionalism lies only with a few committed persons.

Teachers' lives studies conducted in Pakistan e.g. Bashiruddin (2002) and Halai (2001) reveal that teachers teach in the way they do not just because of the skills they have or have not learned. The ways in which they teach are also rooted in their backgrounds, their biographies, which largely determine the kinds of teachers they become. Their careers including their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustration of these things, are also important for teachers' commitment, enthusiasm and morale. Also important are relationships with their colleagues, either as supportive communities who work together in pursuit of common goals and continuous improvement, or as individuals working in isolation with the insecurities that sometimes brings.

Teachers of children in the years before adolescence have a profound influence on their learning and their lives. In primary schools in Pakistan, children spend most of the school year with a single teacher in a single class as members of one community. In their waking hours, they see more of their teacher than they do of their parents. Teaching in primary and elementary schools is without a doubt one of the most important roles in society in terms of its capacity to shape the hearts and mind of our future citizens. This is often overlooked because in an exam-oriented Pakistan whatever status teachers have, to a large extent, comes from teaching secondary classes (Vazir, 2003).

As we are coming to understand these wider aspects of teaching and teacher development, we are also beginning to recognize that much more than pedagogy, instruction or teaching method is at stake. Teacher development, teachers' careers and teachers' relations with their colleagues along with the conditions of status, reward and leadership under which they work all affect the quality of what teachers do in the classroom. The status of teachers in Pakistan must be improved.

Note 1: At the time of the Symposium the final report of the research project was still under review.

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