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## **Status of Teachers and Teaching: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

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This chapter brings together and synthesises the significant issues presented in the keynote papers and discussions. The synthesis revolves around the following key but interrelated questions.

- What do we mean by “teacher status” and how do we know it?
- Why are teachers and teaching perceived to have a low status?
- What are the implications of low teacher status for the quality of schooling? Where do we go from here?

### **Teacher status: indicators and inferences**

Teacher status is a complex, multi dimensional concept rooted in the socio-cultural context and, hence, not easy to define. This was well illustrated throughout the course of the symposium. To unpack the notion of status, the following ILO/UNESCO (1996) recommendation concerning the status of teachers was employed:

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.

Deconstructing the statement above provides us with key phrases and indicators to help us understand the term “status”. But, these phrases and indicators such as “standing” or “regard accorded to teachers ”are non-tangible and have to be inferred from the context and the circumstances within which teachers are situated. The papers and discussions provided ample contextual and circumstantial evidence to show that, in the case of Pakistan, teachers and

teaching are perceived to have a low status. For example, it was pointed out that these days not many young and newly-qualified persons want to join the teaching profession.

Akhtar (Chapter 3) provided figures to show that over a period of six years starting from 2000, the share of remuneration of all other professional has increased at the cost of teaching professionals. The latter's share has come down from 50 to 25 percent in the sample. This suggests that the fact that a large number of newly-qualified young people are going to professions other than teaching could be partly due to the low status that teaching enjoys.

Similarly, panellists comprising parents, educational managers, a teacher from a rural school, and students, provided experiential evidence to show that teachers and teaching were increasingly held in low regard. A teacher from a rural school in Sind illustrated through her life history the trials and tribulations emerging from a highly bureaucratic structure and political meddling in the schools that led to transfers and other issues which affected the morale of the teachers.

Vazir and Retallick (Chapter 1) also confirmed that political meddling and "*source*" has led to recruitment of teachers who do not necessarily meet the criteria of merit. Participants in the seminars also confirmed that political interference was a greater issue in rural schools where those who were powerful locally used their influence in matters of teachers' recruitment, deployment and transfers.

It can be inferred from this situation that teachers in a local rural setting are unable to withstand and resist pressure from those in positions of influence and power. However, the discussions also yielded an alternative interpretation that teachers also use the local influence to their advantage and not necessarily in the interest of professional conduct and ethics.

Halai, through her life history studies of three teachers (Chapter 4), provided conclusive evidence that society does not perceive teaching (particularly at primary levels) as a high-status profession. For example, the science teacher who was one of the teachers studied by Halai considered her teaching position as a transitory phase in her life. She was constantly on the lookout for better career opportunities and options, and continuing her teaching role was not an option that she considered.

In conclusion, it was established that low status of teachers and teaching is reflected in the inadequate and low level of teacher preparation, qualification and

professional development. However, as the following discussion will show, the indicators of low status of teachers and teaching described above are also the factors that contribute to it.

## **Factors contributing to low status of teachers and teaching**

Deliberations in the symposium established that teachers and teaching are accorded a low status in Pakistan. More significantly, these deliberations provided some understanding of the range of factors and the complex inter-relationship between these factors that contributes to the low status of teachers and teaching. What follows is a discussion of these factors, their inter-relationships and the implications they raise for a way forward.

### **Teachers' salaries, benefits and working conditions: inequities, disparities and related issues**

Salary, rewards and benefits are usually seen as indicating the relative position of a profession and the status it enjoys. However, Akhtar questioned the generally held belief that teacher status is low due to the low salary and other benefits provided to the teachers generally. He pointed out that it is difficult to draw conclusions based on salaries and remuneration because the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) databases do not provide information on teachers' salaries. He then went on to employ the data drawn from the labour force survey (for 1999-2000 and 2005-2006) conducted by the federal bureau of statistics, which takes into account remuneration which are earning rather than salaries alone. This data was used to draw inferences about the share of teaching profession as compared to other professions; growth in teachers' remuneration as compared to other professions; and, the disparities and inequities within and across the profession/s. Akhtar problematised the notion of judging the status of a profession on the basis of salary and remuneration alone. Chapter 3 provides a detailed discussion of this aspect of teacher status.

Traditionally, the government has been the major educational provider in Pakistan. Hence, reform initiatives and deliberations on issues of quality in education have tended to focus on public schools. However, the private sector is increasingly becoming a significant player in the field of education. According to the information provided by official sources, 18% of all schools in Pakistan were

private and accounted for 27% of all student enrolment. Private sector participation in education continues to grow, which gives more students access to education and decreases the burden on government (MoE, 2004, p. 8). Hence, issues related to the status of teachers and teaching have to take into account the comparative standing of public and private schools. As it stands, there is little documentation about the private sector in education. In particular there is lack of evidenced-based understanding about the role of tuition centres in facilitating, or hindering, the provision of quality education in our schools, and the contribution to teachers' earning through private tuitions.

Inequities are also found in salaries within the profession and teachers' salaries in the public sector are better as compared to the private sector. For example, Akhtar's analysis (Chapter 3) showed that over the period 1999-2000, mean earnings of teachers in private institutions were only 56 percent as much as those in the public institutions and that these reduced to 46 percent in the period 2005-2006. A conclusion could be drawn that partial privatization of the education sector has lead to 'exploitation' of teachers and has increased the ranks of the working poor in the teaching profession. However, for such conclusions to be made, the disparities need to be seen in conjunction with other factors such as employment contracts, working hours between the two types of institutions, convenience in terms of proximity to residence and working environment. Single females in private institutions may have taken up teaching as a transitory phase in their lives rather than as a career. Current research and national databases do not enable such conclusions to be drawn.

Disparities in salaries, benefits and working conditions in teaching as compared to other professions was also seen as contributing to low appeal of teaching as compared to other professions. There was a general agreement that teaching does not enjoy the same status as compared to other professions, particularly in comparison to newer professions related to media and computer technology. This was evident from the increasing share of remuneration of other professions at the expense of teaching professional. This is also evident from the fact that the younger generation does not aspire to be teachers. Salary and benefits are among the reasons why that make teaching unattractive as a profession. However, comparing intra group earning of teachers with other professionals, it appears that in 1999-2000 the average earnings of teaching professionals were 98 percent of the mean; now, as shown in Chapter 3 (Table 1), they are 16 percent **above** the mean earnings of the group. Hence, it appears that teachers are not really lowly paid as compared to other professionals. However, this conclusion has to be treated with caution because there is paucity of reliable data that can

enable a complex analysis and also because inequities exist within the teaching profession—teachers of science, mathematics and computer technology, particularly at the secondary and higher secondary levels, generally benefit from greater remuneration than their other colleagues.

There are also gender and regional disparities in teacher quality which go beyond salaries, remunerations and benefits, and which have a role to play in lowering the status of teachers. Pakistan is a society with strongly defined gender roles, responsibilities and expectations. Munazza, the female science teacher mentioned by Halai in Chapter 4, illustrated the societal expectations from women whereby science, technology and mathematics are viewed as subjects for boys to study. She reflected the societal attitude that her role was to be a home-maker and her professional and career expectations would take a secondary position. Similarly, in their presentation, Vazir and Retallick showed that cultural traditions and barriers make it difficult for female teachers to equitably access those opportunities that may be available to their male counterparts.

In summary, teachers' salaries and working conditions have to be seen in the context of deep rooted inequities and disparities that include inter-profession inequities, intra-profession disparities and inequities based on gender and region.

### **Is teaching a profession?**

Whether or not teaching enjoys the status of a profession was discussed in some depth by Vazir and Retallick and is covered in Chapter 1. They established that in comparison to professions such as medicine and engineering, teaching does not enjoy the status of a full fledged profession; instead, it is a quasi profession.

One implication of this perception is the commonly prevalent belief that teaching does not require specialised knowledge and that teaching is innate; that is, anyone can become a teacher. On one hand, this situation negates the highly complex nature of teaching which requires specialised knowledge and skills. On the other hand, in the increasing private sector in education there is an increasing proliferation of teachers with little or no professional qualifications.

Employing Shulman's seminal work Iqbal pointed out that there are at least seven different kinds of knowledge that are required for effective teaching. These include:

- Content knowledge or knowledge of the particular subjects

- Pedagogical content knowledge
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- General pedagogical knowledge
- Knowledge of educational context
- Curriculum knowledge
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values (Shulman, 1987, pp. 2-3).

However, as can be seen in Chapter 2, in Pakistan, pre-service teacher education curriculum is outdated and theoretical and does not reflect the complexity of the teaching profession. Teacher education is seen as teacher training with a limited and narrow orientation of teaching. One consequence is that teaching is seen as a routine activity with the teacher's role and function being to transmit knowledge to students who are expected to receive the collected wisdom from the teacher and reproduce it at the time of examination. A direct implication of this view is a "de-professionalisation" of teachers: Teachers are not seen to have a role in policy formulation or decision making. Rather their's is a limited role of transmitting socially accepted and valuable knowledge. To acknowledge the complexity of the teaching profession and to make it relevant to the today's increasingly technological and knowledge-based society, teacher education curricula would have to be completely reformed. To keep up with the fast changing world—a world characterised by an information explosion and a global culture—teachers would need to see themselves as "learners". It is as learners that teachers would be able to maintain an attitude of inquiry and keep abreast with developments in their area of teaching. However, this reformation of teaching and teacher development is made complex by the fact that teacher educators are not exposed to new approaches to teaching and the changing demands on the role of the teacher in the current context. Teacher education should promote the role of the teacher as learner and researcher. These roles would encourage teachers to reflect systematically on their practice, critically analyse it and, hence, improve upon it.

The current quality of teacher education raises questions about the value or premium placed on teacher education in terms of the value added to the teacher and it raises questions about the quality and professional development of teacher educators. Professional qualifications are included in minimum entry criteria for teachers in government schools. However, the quality of teacher education is so low that it is largely seen to be irrelevant and not adding to value (Chapter 2;

Mirza, Hameed, & Iqbal, 1995). The private sector which, according to safe estimates, is responsible for almost fifty percent of school education in Pakistan has mostly dispensed with professional qualifications as entry level requirements for teachers. These issues about the entry level requirements for teacher qualification, nature and quality of the teacher education curriculum and the quality of teacher educators suggest that there is need to put some mechanisms in place to regulate and monitor the quality and standards of teacher education.

### **Teacher agency and voice**

A consequence of the de-professionalisation of teachers is that teachers' agency and voice is not deemed significant in informing the policy formulation and decision making process. However, group deliberations during the symposium and research evidence showed that the teacher is the agent through which reform and development are introduced in schools and classrooms. This is also discussed by Halai in Chapter 4. In the current context of new education policy and curriculum reform in Pakistan, a strong implication of the low status accorded to teachers is that the reform effort may be thwarted if the teacher is not supported in the process of reform. There is a need to recognise the value of the epistemology of the classroom. It is in the classroom that the interaction of educational inputs actually takes place and where the teachers' role is of paramount importance in ensuring the success or otherwise of education reform. Hence, knowledge rooted in the classroom would be crucially important to understand how quality of teaching and learning can be improved.

### **Societal and media perceptions of teachers and teaching**

Symposium participants recognised that teachers play a significant role in preparing future generations for their role in the world of tomorrow. However, this significance is not apparent in the form of high regard and status for teachers and teaching in society and subsequent portrayals in the media. For example, there are factors within society that contribute to the exploitation of teachers such as general poor working conditions and unfavourable contractual agreements. Likewise, the portrayal of teachers and teaching in the media is not complementary—it is common for media to pick up negative stereotypes of teachers but there is little recognition or reward for teachers who continue to work hard and deliver, in spite of difficult working conditions. It was proposed that better linkages and partnerships should be established between schools and various stakeholders so that popular perceptions and images may be improved upon. For example, partnerships between the school and the community or

between schools and government agencies involved in education decision-making could be established for advocacy and better understanding of issues involved in quality teaching.

## **Conclusions implications & recommendations for policy and practice**

To conclude, understanding teacher status is a complex issue because the “status” of teachers and teaching, is rooted in a variety of social, cultural, financial, academic and professional factors. For example, these factors include disparities in salaries and working conditions within the teaching profession and across the professions; gender and regional disparities in the quality and provision of teacher education; and a simplistic view of teaching as a routine activity which adds to the public perception that teaching is not a profession. These factors lead to certain implications and recommendations for policy, practice and research.

### **Policy formulation and implementation**

- A major implication of low teacher status is that teachers are not seen as a valuable part of the decision making and policy formulation process. Rather they are seen as adjuncts to policy making and are expected to implement the decisions taken by forces in the higher echelons of the policy making bodies. Given the significance of teachers’ agency in any reform initiative in education it is crucially important that teacher’s voice be seen as a significant element of the policy formulation process.
- While principles of quality, equity and justice are incorporated in education policies, they are not followed in the process of policy implementation. For example, policies for teacher recruitment (MoE, 1998) are developed to ensure merit, equity and justice but the implementation of these policies is riddled with political interference, lack of monitoring mechanisms and absence of standards and criteria against which judgements of quality may be made.
- Research-based advocacy through media and policy dialogues should be undertaken to ensure that the public perception of teaching is improved and that research findings are shared with policy makers

## **Research**

- To understand and improve the status of teachers and teaching, research is needed in key areas of education including quality of schooling and classroom processes; teacher quality and teacher lives; quality and conditions of teachers' work; and, school community partnerships.
- Research should not be limited to traditional experimental studies undertaken to "measure" quality in education. Rather, action research studies, and ethnographies of schools and classrooms should be undertaken so that the epistemology of the classroom comes to the fore to provide insights into the complex nature of the practice of teaching and related issues.
- Teachers' professional trajectories and decisions are integrally rooted in their social and cultural environment. Hence, teachers' biographies and life histories should be developed to provide insights into factors that facilitate or hinder their professional development and career growth. Published accounts of teachers' lives in the Pakistan context could illustrate some of the deep-rooted socio-cultural issues and biases that lead to low teacher perception.
- Large national databases like NEMIS are being developed to facilitate data-driven decision-making. However, these databases need to include additional modules that would enable researchers and academicians to gather key information about teachers. This should include, for instance, information about teacher's salaries at different levels of education and teacher classification with regard to areas of expertise, such as science, mathematics, computers, and general studies.

## **Teaching and teacher education practice and standards**

- Pre-service teacher education curriculum should be thoroughly revised and made relevant to teachers' needs, contextual appropriateness to the technological and global world, and close alignment with the real world of schools and classrooms.
- The duration of the professional degree course for pre-service teacher education should be extended so that it is in line with other professional

degrees and so that there is scope to cover the key domains of knowledge and opportunities for extended period of teaching practice in schools.

- Basic minimum standards and criteria should be in place for entering the teaching profession.
- Minimum standards and criteria should also be in place for becoming a teacher educator.
- Continuing professional development should be a requirement for all teachers.
- Continuing professional development should also be a requirement for teacher educators.
- Provision of continuing development should be seen as a process of development nurtured through field support.

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<sup>1</sup> The Higher education Commission, Islamabad, has already initiated a reform in the BEd curriculum. [http://www.hec.gov.pk/new/AcademicAffairs/Curriculum\\_Revision.htm](http://www.hec.gov.pk/new/AcademicAffairs/Curriculum_Revision.htm) has details on this.

<sup>2</sup> According to the notification No. 10-25/HEC/A&C/2004/2517, dated 06 December 2006, the Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, has established the Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.

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