11-1-2014

In Search of Relevance and Sustainability of Educational Change: An International Conference at Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development
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An International Conference at Aga Khan University Institute for Education Development

November 1-3, 2012

Conference Proceeding
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AKU-IED organized its 9th international conference “In Search of Relevance and Sustainability of Educational Change” on November 1-3, 2012. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the developments in the discourse of educational change during the past few decades. The country has witnessed and experienced educational reforms in curriculum, examination, teacher education, and community engagement. These reforms have been conceptualized and initiated by various stakeholders both internal and external to the country. The conference called for a critical reflection on the extent of the relevance of educational systems in the contemporary world; the gaps inherent in these education systems; and alternative/innovative ‘solutions’ for effective, relevant and sustainable systems. Key questions addressed by the participants also delineated ways to promote peace, resilience and societal harmony through innovative pedagogies, learning spaces, assessment techniques, curriculum, and effective governance and management practices.

AKU Provost Dr Greg Moran delivered opening remarks which was followed by the inaugural speech by Dr Pervez Amir Ali Hoodbhoy. Eminent national and international scholars who contributed in the conference included:

Dr Andy Hargreaves, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, USA
Dr G. I. Chandralatha Gunawardena, Open University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
Dr Joshua Muskin, Aga Khan Foundation, Switzerland
Dr Thomas Christie, Aga Khan University-Examination Board, Pakistan
Dr Bernadette L. Dean, St Joseph's College for Women, Pakistan
Ms Sadiqa Salahuddin, Director, Indus Resource Centre, Pakistan

Conference themes
The over-arching theme of the conference ‘In Search of Relevance and Sustainability of Educational Change’ was complimented by seven subthemes. Key discussion points by the presenters under each sub-theme have been discussed as follows:

Innovative Pedagogies: The theme invited works from academicians, practitioners and researchers, which critically analyze the relevance of pedagogies used to respond to the changing context of teaching and learning. In particular, reflections on the use of innovative pedagogies integrated with localized practices were the center of deliberations in the scholarly work presented under this theme. Modern as well as traditional pedagogies used were critically analyzed to determine how they respond to the complexity of cultural, political and socio-economic contexts faced during educational provision. The presenters emphasized on the need to reconsider the understanding of teaching and learning processes, on ground contexts and the profiles of various stakeholders. Several papers concerning innovative pedagogies established that traditional pedagogies only serve as an instrument for reinforcement of age old educational practices and policies, hence, serve certain groups or persons. Meaningful and relevant pedagogies would enable students to critically interpret changing phenomena such as market economies, privatization, competition and the positive and negative outcomes of these changes. These pedagogies could also foster growth and development in students in order to respond to major global challenges.
Learners and Learning Spaces: During the discussion scholars mainly inquired into the changing profile of learners through the multiplicity and diversity of learning spaces. They highlighted how conventional learners have been replaced by more robust learners which warrant change in the space/milieu and location required for learning. In particular, scholarly works on the use of innovative and alternative spaces for learning were discussed. The presenters commented that the challenge facing teacher education is the lack of change in teacher education programmes which inhibit the changing profiles of modern learners. Papers concerning learners and learning spaces emphasized on school repositioning for better alignment with the needs of a knowledge society. To create new learning environments, educators need to prioritize learners and their needs. Learning spaces should be designed in ways which accommodate a multitude of learning styles and employ learning strategies which not only promote ICT use but also integrate collaboration, connection and creativeness for 21st century learners.

Assessment for/as Learning: The theme invited discussions on perspectives around assessment practices and their bearing on the robustness of learners and learning processes in contemporary society. Scholars critiqued the use of conventional assessment methods and highlighted lessons learnt from the practice of using alternative assessment methods as a means to promote lifelong learning. The discussion also accentuated the teaching along with the use of varied assessment strategies not only help highlight student achievement but also enable educators to meet the needs of learners with diverse abilities. The presenters also highlighted various barriers which hinder the practical use of alternative assessment strategies. For example, over-emphasis on public examination performance, specially at secondary levels, as an exclusive indicator of school quality was seen discouraging use of alternate assessment strategies.

Relevance of Curriculum in Changing Times: This theme invited deliberations around the relevance of curriculum for changing times. The presentations emphasized the role of curriculum as a driving force that defines the course of educational processes and outcomes. Issues on curricular reforms, decentralization of curricular design and school-based curriculum development, curricular ideology, textbook knowledge, intentions and realities of curricular change were important topics which came under discussion. As an alternative, the presenters highlighted innovative approaches and frameworks for designing curriculum and curricular materials.

Responsive Governance and Management: This theme generated wide-ranging debates on the response of governance and management systems to tackle changing scenarios. Papers and scholars focused on the changes in theoretical and practical knowledge of educational governance systems. The deliberations also included critique on the approaches adopted for the management of finances in education. The presenters called for increased autonomy and decentralization of schools and argued that school autonomy promotes ‘desired choices and outcomes’ in educational provision, in a quasi-market environment. The debate emphasized on bringing the voices of teachers, parents and students at the center of the discourse around educational reforms if relevance and sustainability in educational change is desired.

Education for Promoting Resilience and Social Cohesion: This theme focused on the critical role and relevance that education may present for societal wellbeing. Sessions here were inclusive of critical reflections on the values, and attitudes which underpin the curricular and pedagogical changes. Presenters deliberated on educational policies and practices which had potentials to promote peace and social harmony. It was envisaged that the careful juxtaposition of core purpose
and processes of education with the questions of educational relevance in ever-changing times would help bring communities together around common good.

**Theorization of Educational Change for Relevance:** This theme invited reflections on theorization of the intentions, processes and outcomes for educational change also to question if change can be sustained. The presenters offered critique on the changes in educational initiatives of past and present. Concerns regarding equity, equality, access, and quality underpinned this discussion. Scholars commended reform initiatives which have the potential to influence policy and practices in education from the region. Furthermore, this elaborate debate is also expected to contribute to the development of theories regarding theorization of educational change for relevance.

**Synthesis of Conference Deliberations**

The conference concluded with a panel discussion on the views presented by the esteemed panelists who represented public and private education systems, policy making bodies and educational experts. While concerns were raised about repeated experiences of failed reforms and dead ends, the panelists shared their optimism about the changing policy grounds for better quality and relevant reforms. In particular, the speakers reminded the audience that discussions on problems of change in open and nonthreatening environments during this conference promise better times for future educational reforms. The panelists proposed multidimensional perspectives as departing point for developing insights into complexity of educational processes for purposeful, meaningful and relevant change initiatives.

The relatively broad thematic scope of the conference offered insights into different aspects of education and educational reform initiatives. Collective wisdom of the speakers and presenters of the conference is presented here.

- Emphasis on broad educational reforms (classroom teaching-learning, school management, curriculum and policy) is important for the sustainable improvement in education.
- Teacher quality as a central factor in the process of educational change matters.
- Teacher empowerment is an important construct which should be understood.
- Education needs to develop active citizenry.
- Collaboration between civil society, academia, researchers and the public-private sectors is required for imparting education which leads to social harmony.
- Quality education is fundamental for preparing young generation as global citizens.
- Change is inevitable; however, it has to be aligned with national, regional and global needs.
- Change without sustainability is meaningless.
- Educational systems require resilient drivers of change at all levels for creating a community of reflective practitioners.
- No need for ‘re-inventing the wheel’; we should benefit from the existing knowledge and successful practices adopted for educational change.
- Changing education without improving professional capital (human, social and decisional) would not make a significant difference.
- Critical, resilient and relevant pedagogy can contribute to student learning and achievement and teachers’ professional image and status.
- Student performance is directly associated with teaching quality, relevant pedagogy and various other tools.
Small-scale educational initiatives can contribute towards best practices for further adaptation/scaling-up.

Slogan of free and compulsory education will not become a reality unless parents trust educational systems and outcomes.

Parents and society as a whole should demand for quality education.

Collaborative learning frameworks can enable learners to appreciate each other’s point of view.

Teachers, students and parents can work together to promote peace, social harmony, social justice, democracy, tolerance, and pluralism through good practices/examples.

**A Way Forward**

- Educational system needs overhauling including re-envisioning of education and its pillars.
- Public and private sector should work collaboratively for the implementation of 18th Constitutional Amendment of Article 25-A on ‘free and compulsory education up to age of 16 years’.
- Educational reforms and sustainability need to be taken up as continuous debate with key actions identified.
- Developing networks of schools and teacher education institutions will help develop a consensus around nature and quality of educational reforms with respect to teacher development initiatives.
- Creating a national / regional / global network of educational reforms will allow sharing and adaptation of best practices. Initiating research to assess the impact of educational changes will help the education stakeholders to make some informed decisions around change initiatives.

This three-day conference was attended by about 400 national and international participants who represented academia, research institutes, teacher training institutions, educational development agencies, public, private education sector, international donors. Total 100 presentations were made at the conference from which 77 papers, 11 symposia and 12 poster presentations.

This proceeding would not have been possible without the hard work of our contributors. We were fortunate to have had a diverse group of students, teachers and scholars presenting at the conference. They have made an invaluable contribution to expending and explaining the concept of search, relevance and educational change in education. We thank each of the contributors whose work is included in this book from the bottom of our heart.

We hope that these conference proceedings make a valuable contribution towards indigenous scholarship in the field of education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It was indeed overwhelming to get such an exceptional response of the researchers, academicians and practitioners to the call for participation in the conference titled “In Search of Relevance and Sustainability of Educational Change”. Rigorous review criteria were applied and around one hundred abstracts have been selected for the conference programme, which will reinforce the discourse on educational change, and relevant and sustainable reforms.

The organization of conference would not have been possible without the unrelenting commitment and dedication of colleagues within and outside AKU-IED. Here we make an attempt to acknowledge their valuable contribution to the conference.

We would like to acknowledge valuable contribution made by Dr Almina Pardhan, Cassandra Fernandes-Faria, Dr Alkarim Datoo, Azra Naseem, Noman Saeed, Melaine Dcruze and Khurram Iqbal for conducting pre-conference workshops. Interactive approach by these facilitators was truly great beginning of conference’s intellectually stimulating discourse.

Our foremost and special thanks go to all the presenters who have added great value to the conference. We wish to thank distinguished keynote speakers, panelists and conference participants whose active engagement in the various sessions has added richness to the discourse around educational change. Their well-grounded scholarly arguments certainly guided the lines of inquiry, debates and discussion that contributed towards the broader goals of the conference.

We wish to acknowledge and appreciate the members of Conference Organizing Committee for their untiring efforts: Dr Muhammad Memon for guiding the process through his wisdom and experience; Dr Mir Afzal Tajik, Dr Takbir Ali, and Khush Funer for their critical feedback on overall programme; Dr Parveen Roy for organizing and leading the team of reporters; and Zubeda Bana for supervising critical work of the abstract review committee.

Our special thanks to the support system that helped us to materialize the organization of the conference meticulously: Farah Kaleem and her team including Nadia Mir and Farhat Merchant deserve our appreciation for creating website, marketing and for the management of inaugural and concluding sessions; Maqbool Khalfan and Karim Salam for paying careful attention to logistic arrangements; Salima Sherali for her financial management; Farooq Morani for IT details and Aman Pirani for audio visual and photography provisions. We also wish to acknowledge hard work done by Nadia Amir for developing user-friendly conference website. Our Special thanks to Ambreen Ishrat for editing abstracts and to Karim Khan for compiling the abstract book. We owe sincere gratitude to Rafiq Bharwani for his tireless efforts, and for playing a critical role in developing the programme, and coordinating with colleagues from various departments at AKU-IED for the facilitation of guests and for the preparation of conference materials.

Our special thanks also go to various units at AKU-IED: Information support unit, library, director’s office, secretaries, department of public affairs, housekeeping and security staff. We appreciate efforts of every members of the conference secretariat that comprised of colleagues from RAPS and other offices including Zeeshan Arif, Shahrukh Shahid, Mariam Khan, Manzoor Hussain Changezi, Sameena Khan (volunteer), and Arifa (volunteer).
Our deepest appreciations go to the representatives of AKU-IED’s student body for their active participation in the conference. Special thanks go to Zahra Virani, Mahwish Kanwal, Arif Ahmad, Mariam Farooq, Qalanader Bakhsh Memon, Zaheer Abbas, Sadia Bano, Sumbul Yezdan, Rukhsana Ahmed, Kamran Malik and Abid Hussain for the creative rendering of “Saber-tooth Curriculum” that conveyed effectively the message of relevance of educational change. We would also like to appreciate efforts of our team of student reporters: Nasima Shakeel, Riaz Hussain, Naghma Rizvi, Sajjad Ahmed, Muhammad Issa, Kamran Malik, Kausar Khuswali, Bibi Amina Nigar, Gul-e-Hina, Mohammed Yusuf and Qurban Ali.

Our sincere gratitude to the chairs, who made each session special. Reporters of the sessions deserve our special appreciation as their work was instrumental in consolidating the extensive deliberations of the conference.

We also wish to thank United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) for their generous financial support to organize this conference.

Finally, we wish to thank all those who remain unmentioned here, but have somehow contributed to this conference by touching our hearts and minds through their examples of resilience and generosity, and by doing so have strengthened our resolve to “transform” the educational scenario for a peace loving and resilient next generation.

Dr Kulsoom Jaffer  
Conference Chair

Dr Dilshad Ashraf  
Head, Research & Policy Studies
KEYNOTE SPEECHES
RELEVANCE OF CURRICULUM IN CHANGING TIMES: SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE

Chandra Gunawardena, Open University of Sri Lanka

Introduction
The right of all children to education was recognized in Sri Lanka in the 1940s, many years before International Conventions were introduced, universal goals were set and even meeting 'basic needs' was perceived to be a priority. Free primary, secondary and university education was introduced in 1945. Policy makers in Ceylon’s State Council administration in the years preceding the recovery of political independence established 54 Central Schools in rural locations to provide secondary education, linking them with primary ‘feeder’ schools in the locality through a system of Grade 5 scholarships that provided an avenue of educational opportunity through secondary and university education offering 10,000 places in well-equipped post-primary schools on the basis of a scholarship test.

The objectives of this policy were to ensure the right to education to all strata in the population. Free mid-day meals were provided at different times as well as subsidized transport. These incentives were increased with the provision of free textbooks from Grades 1 to 11 in 1980 and materials for a school uniform for each child in 1993. The mother tongue was enforced as the medium of instruction in the primary school in 1945 and progressively in the secondary school from 1953 to 1959 in an effort to eliminate privilege through language.

The above initiatives undoubtedly had an impact on improving access to education in the country, with the mean years of schooling at present being 8.2, the inequality adjusted education index for education of 0.558, an Adult literacy rate 90.6%, and high Gross enrolment rates in primary (96.9), and secondary education (87.0). Sri Lanka has an enrolment rate of 97.8% for both boys and girls, and 91% in the historically disadvantaged plantation schools. In the 5-14 years age group covered by the compulsory education regulations, 98.2% were found to be enrolled in schools in 2010 (HIES, 2009/10) and 50.5% were girls (School Census, 2010). The retention rate by Grade 9 was 89.5% for boys and 94.3% for girls (Ministry of Education, 2008).

These achievements in education have also contributed to human development, with an Index of 0.691, ranking it 97th among 187 countries (UNDP 2011). Sri Lanka is now categorized as a medium human development country, with a per capita GDP of US$ 4,772 in 2009 and has performed best among South Asian countries. Improved education has also impacted on areas of health, life expectancy and gender equality, with an inequality-adjusted life expectancy Index of 0.785, Gender Equality Index of 0.419, Maternal Mortality ratio of 39.

Issues Demanding Reforms in Education
The above statistics reveal Sri Lanka’s achievements of in democratizing education. However, in the area of enhancing educational quality, her experience has not been equally successful.

The most recent census data (2011) shows that the unemployment rate for 15-24 years was 17.2, and for 25-29 years 7.6. It is significant that these rates have halved from 2002 to 2011. However it is pointed out that the unemployment rates are higher for GCE (AL) qualified (9.0) than for GCE
(O.L) qualified (5.2), there was also a disparity between sexes, with GCE (AL) males having an unemployment rate of 5.4 as against 13.1 for females. Thus gaining more qualifications was not reducing unemployment.

In addition, there was concern regarding the congruence between education and the economy with the findings of the World Bank study on Education – Employment Linkages (Marga, 1990) and even later studies which highlighted the demands of the private sector for employees equipped with general transferable skills and communication skills in English.

**Landmarks in Curriculum Reform in Sri Lanka**

It was only in 1972, almost 25 years after regaining independence, that Sri Lanka initiated its first curricular reforms in general education. The major features of the 1972 reforms were:

1. Introducing activity-based education at primary school level,
2. Introducing a common general education for all students, without streaming, at Junior secondary school level (Graded 6-9), and
3. Attempting to link education with the world of work by introducing the subject of Pre-Vocational Studies from Grades 6-9 and adding Project Work to the core subjects.

Overall, the 1972 reforms, especially at primary level, were implemented effectively and the common curriculum is in operation even today. The third initiative was modified with almost every change of government, with Pro-Vocational Studies being replaced by Life Skills, and then by Life Competencies, which is continuing in the present curriculum.

By 1990, an insurrection by youth groups and employer perceptions regarding the output from the school system, paved way for new curricular changes.


These were

i. National Cohesion, National Integrity, National Unity
ii. A Pervasive Pattern of Social Justice,
iii. A Sustainable Pattern of Living
iv. Generation of Work Opportunities
v. Human Resource Development
vi. Partnership in Nation Building Activities to ensure a sense of Deep and Abiding Concern for One Another
vii. Learning to Adapt to Changing Situations.
viii. Capacity to cope with the Complex and the Unforeseen.
ix. Securing an Honourable Place in the International Community.

The NEC also identified five competencies that would contribute to the achievement of National Goals. These were

1. Competencies in Communication
2. Competencies relating to the Environment
3. Competencies relating to Religion and Ethics
4. Competencies in Play and Use of Leisure and
5. Competencies relating to ‘Learning to learn’.

In December 1996, a Presidential Task Force on Education was appointed and 12 Technical Committees prepared policy proposals for implementation in general education. The areas considered for reforms spanned a wide range from early childhood development and pre-school education, compulsory education, all levels of general education, promoting teaching of English, development of technical and practical skills, special education, value education, counseling and guidance, to strengthening educational management (Presidential Task Force on General Education, 1997).

In 2001 the NEC felt it was opportune to review the progress of the reforms through independent evaluations and public consultations. This was perhaps the first deliberate attempt to commission research and use research findings to make new proposals for reform.

Thus Gunawardena et al’s study (2004) found that that the primary education reforms were well-designed and implemented systematically and that curricular materials and books were of high quality though they tended to be uniform and too much teacher-directed. Lack of resources, large classes, time consuming record keeping and evaluation tasks affected teacher performance and wide disparities among different types of schools continued and a lack of effective monitoring and supervision was noted.

Junior secondary level reforms were found to be conceptually and implementation-wise weak. Studies (Gunawardena and Lekamge, 2004; Perera et al, 2003) expressed concern about the new subjects in the curriculum, adequacy of human and material resources available for implementation, the teaching-learning process and the supervision and monitoring. In addition, deficiencies in formulation of objectives, development of content, teacher preparation to teach integrated subjects, were pointed out in respect of subjects of Environmental Studies, Science and Technology, Practical and Technical Skills, Life Competencies and Social Studies.

At senior secondary level, studies by SLAAED (2000), Wijetunga and Rupasinghe (2004), and Karunaratne (2004) revealed that the reforms were well-accepted and implemented though there were certain constraints such as integration of Botany and Zoology into Biology, difficulty of completing practical work in Science subjects.

Based on the review of above studies, the NEC in 2003 made new recommendations. The eight Goals of Education identified by the NEC in 2003 echoed similar priorities as NEC did in 1972. It added two competencies to the list of 1992: (1) Competencies relating to Personality Development and Competencies relating to Preparation for the world of work obviously being influenced by the continuing concern about the products of the school system.

**Introduction of a Competency-Based Curriculum**

Following the recommendations of the NEC the National Institute of Education (NIE) has revised the secondary school curriculum as a competency based curriculum from 2006.

The NIE has accommodated some of the recommendations of the NEC on curriculum revision, from Grade 6 – 11 with the following objectives:

(i) to encourage activity based learning
(ii) to facilitate students in ‘Constructing Knowledge’
(iii) to foster the development of higher order academic abilities and skills and
(iv) to provide for non-cognitive aspects of student development.

The NIE in developing the new syllabuses and the Teacher Instructional Manuals have identified the Competencies and the Competency levels that a pupil should attain different grades. In a competency based education, the main focus is on student activities and the teacher becomes a resource person. To develop competencies, the five “E” approach has been recommended. The steps in the process are:

1. “Engagement” (where the teacher gets the children involved in learning by dialogue)
2. “Exploration” (the teacher organizes teams to explore the problem from different angles and the students engage in different activities to develop self-discipline, ability to work with others, help each other, manage time, work to achieve targets which are essential skills for life),
3. “Explanation” (where students present their findings and thus help develop self-confidence, communication skills and social skills),
4. “Elaboration”, (where students discuss and make proposals further elaborating the findings), and
5. “Evaluation” (where the teacher assessed the students’ performance).

Persisting Challenges in Curriculum Development and Implementation

Curriculum Focus on National Goals

A recent study (SLAAED, 2010) found that neither the textbooks nor the Teachers’ Instructional Manuals make any reference to the National Educational Goals in the preliminary pages or in respect of lessons. The textbooks published after 1997 contained these Goals, but the present textbooks and Teachers’ Instructional Manuals had left these out. It could have been primarily because these National Educational Goals were not specifically stated as curriculum goals.

A content analysis of the curricular materials (syllabuses, textbooks and Teachers’ Instructional Materials) was carried out to examine the extent to which the content and process advocated for teaching the content had taken into consideration the National Educational Goals formulated by the National Education Commission in 2003.

Table 1
Summary Table on National Goals, Subjects for All Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Total No. of lessons</th>
<th>National Educational Goals (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>(01.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>(02.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>(00.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>(19.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>(11.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above analysis indicates that some subjects appear to focus on a limited number of National Goals only, which could be a result of the nature of different subjects in the curriculum, with certain subjects being inherently more biased towards certain goals than others. Almost 60% of the total lessons focus on Goal 5 - Developing creativity, initiative, critical thinking, responsibility, and other positive elements of a well-integrated and balanced personality.

Goal 5 is closely followed by Goal 4 - Promoting the mental and physical well-being of individuals and a sustainable life style based on respect for human values, with 56.9% of the total number of lessons attempting to achieve this Goal. Once again the subjects which are strong on this Goal are Mathematics, Health and Physical Education and Practical and Technical Skills (100%), Life Competencies and Citizenship Education (97.7%). Roman Catholicism is also shown as focusing 75% of its lessons on this Goal.

In comparison to the above two Goals, the emphasis on other Goals appear as relatively low. Goal 7, Preparing individuals to adapt to and manage change, and to develop capacity to cope with complex and unforeseen situations in a rapidly changing world, is being given a certain amount of emphasis with around 30 per cent of the lessons focusing on this goal.

It is also noteworthy that three goals – 1, (Nation Building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity – 21.1%), 2 (Recognizing and conserving the best elements of the nation’s heritage while responding to the challenges of a changing world – 23.2%), and 8 (Fostering attitudes and skills that will contribute to securing an honourable place in the international community– 13.7%) which are of paramount importance in the current context of the country, and emerging global trends have been neglected to some extent. The skewed manner in which subject curricula have been developed
Development of a Competency-based Curriculum

Competency is defined as an individual’s actual performance in a particular situation. Actual performance is the gold standard for demonstration of competency. In the Competency Assessment Process, performance tests which consist of evaluation entries embedded within a checklist are used. A performance standard is used to compare actual performance against expected performance, in order to assess competency. A performance checklist is used to determine presence of performance. Demonstration of knowledge does not equal demonstrated performance. A Competency statement describes (1) a general category of behaviour or performance, (2) describes behaviour that is observable or measurable (McKee, undated).

The SLAAED study found that the need to develop a competency-based curriculum had been accepted by the curriculum development teams but that formulation of competencies had not been carried out properly. Non-identification of levels of mastery in the achievement of competencies the subjects focus on, appeared to be a major deficiency. It is imperative that care should be taken with regard to the formulation of the levels of competency when a competency based curriculum is designed. The formulation of specific, assessable competencies is mandatory especially in relation to vertical integration, as there needs to be a progression in attainment of competencies as the student gains maturity and moves from grade to grade.

The study also examined whether the progression in skills from lower order to higher-order cognitive development as the student progresses in the secondary school cycle using the Taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwol. The procedure followed was to categorize the student activities/exercises which appear in the textbooks according to the above taxonomy in every grade and subsequently, to obtain the cumulative classification for all six grades in a subject. Analysis of student activities showed that progressively percentages of activities focusing decrease from knowledge, comprehension and application to analysis and evaluation. The relatively higher percentage of activities focusing on synthesis/creativity can be explained by the fact that we included even activities such as essays, drawing maps into this category.

The analysis revealed that thematic vertical integration appeared to have been maintained, but concerns were expressed regarding integration in the subjects of Tamil Language, Roman Catholicism and History.

Curriculum Reforms: Achievements and Issues

The decision to identify National Goals which should be achieved by general education was a landmark in Sri Lankan education. It provided the directions for curriculum reform at different school levels and also the desired approach for teaching-learning, moving from a teacher-centered to a student-centered participatory, interactive process.

Yet despite the formulation of National Goals, sufficient care had not been taken to align the curriculum to the National Goals. The emphasis on different Goals differed from subject to subject as well as grade to Grade. While it may not be possible for every subject or every grade to focus
on every Goal, what is noted is that even when it is possible and desirable the attempt for alignment has not been attempted.

Especially in the context of the critique of the products of the education system as not possessing the desired competencies, it was timely for Sri Lanka to introduce a competency-based curriculum. A competency-based curriculum also facilitates vertical integration from grade to grade.

Yet it is imperative that in a competency-based curriculum, extra care is exercised in formulating Competencies and levels of competencies. Curriculum development teams also should discuss and decide whether they want the competency-based curriculum to be enforced in all subjects or only in selected subjects. Especially where subjects such as religion are focusing more on affective development, when competencies are formulated, whether assessment of such competencies can be undertaken by the teacher at the end of each school period, should be carefully studied.

It is therefore mandatory that all curriculum developers be given a thorough training on formulation of competencies if the competency-based curriculum is to be continued.

A major objective of the reformed curriculum of 2007 had been to veer education from mere transmission of information and resulting rote learning. Mere transmission of information occurs when assessment and evaluation focuses mostly on knowledge reproduction at examinations. The study of the structure of student activities, however, does not predict a radical transformation of the teaching-learning process, even though the 5-E model has been extensively promoted through the Teacher Instructional Manuals. As such it is recommended that serious attention be devoted to how, especially in the higher grades, more weightage can be given to higher order cognitive skill development.

If successful implementation of a curriculum is envisaged, it is necessary that all teachers who are responsible for its implementation are sufficiently made aware of the need to ensure vertical integration. Especially when curriculum reform is being launched at the national level, in all state schools, and when the curriculum has been designed and developed on novel concepts such as a Competency-based model and a 5-E model, of which the average teacher may not be aware, awareness-raising regarding these concepts are essential for effective implementation. The cascade model of teacher training on curriculum reforms may not be adequate in relation to the above concepts.

References


Ministry of Education, 2008) School Census


Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education (2010) A Study to Examine the Vertical Integration of the Modernized Curriculum Introduced at Secondary Level (Grade 6 -11) since 2007.


The Research Opportunity

Some 4000 students apply for entry to AKU’s MBBS degree every year although there are only 100 places available. These students are unlikely to consider themselves average. They are applying for the most sought after course in one of the three top ranked universities in Pakistan. Moreover, entry is ‘needs blind’ so financial considerations need not influence the decision to compete except in relation to the not inconsiderable cost of sitting the Aga Khan University Admissions Test (UAT). Student motivation can be taken to be fairly uniform. The admission process is in two stages. In Stage-1 the top scoring 10 percent of applicants in UAT are identified, 431 in 2011, 320 in 2012. At this stage the selection decision is based purely on test score: no demographic data are available to the constructors and scorers of UAT. The selected candidates then go into a detailed second phase scrutiny which comprises school performance, achievement in external examinations and two independent interviews to identify the 100 candidates who will enter the University. This research explores how the secondary school examination system conditions candidates’ chances of accessing a highly desired educational opportunity. Final admission decisions will have taken account of Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) and A level examinations but here we are simply concerned with how preparation for different examinations at the end of secondary school stage, Grade X for SSC and grade XI for O level, relates to performance in the UAT.

The University Admissions Test (UAT)

Table-1 seeks to establish the credentials of the University Admission Test as a measure of educational potential. There are two English essays, one double marked, to yield a total possible score of 18 derived from a common six band scale ranging from Novice with ineffective communication of ideas to Superior with fluent and natural use of English with minimal errors. The English MCQ tap reading skills. The science items derive from the syllabus elements common to the 2006 revision of the National Curriculum for grades XI and XII and the Cambridge A level topics and outcomes. This section alone deploys negative marking.

The third group, the reasoning items, are of the type commonly referred to as ‘word problems’ in Mathematics examinations. In both 2011 and 2012 science reasoning items have the highest correlation with the total UAT score. Not that the superiority is significant but the repetition in two different tests of the top place is a very strong indication that the UAT calls for more than the mere recall of information. Table-2 displays the first principal component of these two incompletely parallel versions of the UAT. A principal components analysis indicates how many underlying attributes are being measured but not what they are. Between 2011 and 2012 there was one change of UAT structure. While in the short writing task, “Explain the meaning of the given Urdu saying in a paragraph”, only the saying differed, in the argumentative essay there was a change of format as well as topic. Both topics were well rehearsed in newspaper op-ed pieces, 2011 from economics and 2012 from medical ethics, but the economics argument offered no ideational support whereas in 2012 candidates were given a range of eight assertions to draw upon. The essays were more
homogeneous as a result and the writing loading in Table-2 reduced in consequence. The fluctuation in physics is also a function of reduced variance. The physics test in 2011 was too demanding and therefore contributed less variance to the UAT as a whole. Nevertheless although the analysis is sensitive to these variations the test does remain stable overall. Clearly one can entertain a range of hypotheses about what is being measured but the test constructors set out to capture readiness for medical education and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the UAT is measuring the ability to think through problems encountered in short order, some of them for the very first time, just as in an Accident and Emergency Unit. However the problems set have to be sufficiently challenging to identify the top ten percent of a highly (self) selected population. These candidates are part of the intellectual capital of the nation. The creation of intellectual capital is traditionally the guiding purpose of schools and the recognition of these outcomes is the task of school examination boards working within the confines of the social expectations codified in the national curriculum.

**Comparison of Academic Standards**

There are three secondary school curricula in circulation in Pakistan, the National Curriculum of 2002 and earlier which was characteristic of the SSC while the candidate group under review was being educated, the revisions of 2006 through 2008 which are now recognised in part through revised question paper formats but implemented in full only by the two boards with a national remit, Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) and Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB), and finally the GCE syllabuses examined by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). Admission to a university medical school is conditional in all three curricula on a common subject combination, the premedical group, which comprises English, Urdu, Mathematics, Pakistan Studies, Islamiyat, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

In the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) which run the national school achievement certificates, great reliance is placed on the syllabus, or to be precise, the single text book approved for the course. Any departure therefrom can render the examination null and void. The FBISE, AKU-EB and GCE examine syllabuses and do not disallow any textbook. The choice of learning material is at the discretion of the schools. The BISE submit to further control of examination format with agreed numbers of MCQ, short response, essay and where appropriate practical marks with rather looser control of question choice while in O levels question choice varies from subject to subject from none at all in O level mathematics to a free for all in the general paper. Within these restrictions the marks of the BISE are treated as fixed and unchallengeable, grades are derived mechanically from the marks and any suggestion that they might be scaled is seen as tampering with a revealed truth. The grade boundaries, 80% of available marks down to 33% are treated as benchmarks, a kind of gold standard “untainted by values, culture or power” (Bloxham & Boyd, 2012, p.617). Certainly the candidates are essentially powerless. They cannot appeal against the marks assigned by the BISE.

There is only one softening of this absolutist stance. The award of an SSC is based on the raw mark total of eight subjects though failure in any one means failure overall. However it is well established that “decision rules which do not allow any compensation at all tend to show the worst results in terms of classification accuracy” (Van Rijn et al, 2012). This is presumably the rationale for ‘grace marks’, 5 marks out of 550 deployed over two subjects at the pass/fail borderline to the candidate’s best advantage. Otherwise standards are absolute and absolutely the standards of the
BISE. The candidates play no obvious part in establishing standards. The cut-offs are determined before a single candidate is examined and will remain fixed until IBCC chooses to change them.

How different are O level standards. They are essentially subject based and as subjects are intrinsically different fall back upon man, or at least boys and girls, as the measure of all things. The O level standard was initially that about 60% of about 15% of the population who stayed on beyond the school leaving age, should be awarded a pass. So O level standards were based on percentages of candidates, not percentages of marks. It is the candidates and of course their schools who set the standard in “a socio-cultural paradigm [which] recognises assessment as a context-dependent, socially-situated, interpretative activity” (Shay, 2004). No wonder that where parents can afford it schools flock to O level. When CIE approached IBCC for recognition of its new A* grade as equivalent to 95% of available marks, CIE recognised the inherent improbability of such a mark in any subject which leaves room for examiners’ judgement with the reassurance that this would be a rare award to a few outstanding individuals. But in the socio-cultural paradigm, the grades are in fact examiners’ judgements of what the marks may mean. It sometimes seems that in Pakistan’s private schools it is grades other than A* and A which are rare awards these days but we do not know. Contrary to the guidelines laid down in Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999) which encapsulates the combined wisdom of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association and the National Council for Measurement in Education, CIE does not publish its Pakistani grade or score distributions. It does not reveal the social impact of its grading decisions. They are a commercial secret.

There are thus two approaches to standard setting in Pakistan, standards defined by the questions and their mark schemes which are determined in advance and standards defined by the examiners who ensure that the best candidates’ performances are deemed worthy of 95% of marks regardless of subject. The Cambridge approach betrays its origins in norm–referencing, whereas the BISE are operating a kind of absolutist criterion referencing: a competence is demonstrated or it is not, and that is that. The BISE standards are embedded in the construction of the paper.

The educational impact of the two examination systems can be evaluated by reference to AKU’s University Admission Test but only for a self-selected group of high flying candidates. Candidates know their SSC results when they make the decision to apply. Most of them will also have an impression that to get into AKU medicine you have to be a pretty high achiever, but the strength of that impression is not known and is certainly not uniform given that applicants are distributed nationwide. The conventional approach to equating results through a common calibrating instrument is to scale each Board’s distribution of scores using the means and sds of the calibrating test, in this case the UAT, but the accuracy of that procedure depends upon the representativeness of the Board samples. If the students attempting UAT are a biased sample of the students from the parent board and the bias is not a constant across boards, the measures of central tendency upon which such comparisons are based will be differently centred, rendering the comparison untenable.

Competitive Edge

In seeking an alternative to scaling, we return to the notion of “being in with a chance”. The various boards have been compared by considering whether they confer any competitive advantage on their students, that is whether students at the same grade level experience different fates. CIE with a top grade equivalent, they claim, to 95% of marks occupies a space for which the BISE do not even have a name. Their A1 grade starts at 80% of marks though the Federal Government of Pakistan makes a cash award to every candidate who scores more than 90% SSC marks. Given the
prevalence of O level students in the applicant samples, the analysis has had to play in O level territory. Candidates recorded as scoring between 90% and 100% and between 80% and 89.9% are located in ‘bounded’ categories, that is the top and bottom of the grades is known and what lies between the cut-offs shares a common designation in all BISE. While we cannot evaluate the general educational standards of the BISE by reference to UAT we can establish whether any board gives talented candidates receiving the same overall SSC grade a competitive edge in pursuing an academic education in medicine.

Table-3 sets out the odds on being considered for an MBBS place for candidates with SSC scores in the same grade interval. Not included are 52 applicants from the US of whom 4 were shortlisted, nor 43 applicants, none successful, taking school examinations from other countries.

There are four noteworthy features of Table-3 in relation to public examination standards in Pakistan. The first is the consistency in the pattern of outcomes between years. In every board the examination questions are different in consecutive years but the educational value of its top grades in the premedical group remains remarkably stable even though the number of top grade candidates applying for AKU fluctuates quite widely. There is clear evidence that a standard is being maintained in consecutive years, but unfortunately it is not the same standard in every board.

Karachi and the Sindh BISE are at one extreme. Not a single applicant has reached the shortlist in 2011 and only two in 2012. The Sindh boards examine half of the elective subjects in Year IX and the remaining subjects in year X. All other Pakistani Boards examine every subject twice, covering half of the subject syllabus in year IX and the rest of the subject syllabus in year X. Sindh has never offered a rationale for not falling into line with the other provinces but the implicit message that subjects are bodies of knowledge to be mugged up just for the short term is associated with extremely deleterious wash back effects. In each of the three sciences the Karachi mean UAT score is more than half a standard deviation below the overall mean of all applicants and in science reasoning it falls more than a full standard deviation short of the overall mean, a huge effect. It is not that there is no talent in the whole of Sindh. These young people have been misled by the apparent value of their BISE marks.

At the other extreme we have O levels which certainly dominate the pursuit of places. The effect of grading as an interpretative activity (Christie and Forrest,1981; Gipps,1999) is clear to see. O level borderlines are drawn by very senior examiners who have educational values, by no means always venal. They clearly have a view of A* as having much less to do with 95% than with potential to benefit from a high quality university education. It is notoriously difficult to capture that potential in a verbal description but they seem to share much the same assumptions that underlie AKU’s UAT. The O level examiners are spotting talent that has flowered into remarkable educational achievement in very privileged schools and they are good at it. Look at the fate in 2012 of those they have passed over from the same privileged schools: it is no different from that of high grade SSC candidates who have had one fewer year of rather more mundane schooling. This is not the educational diet for everyone.

“A deep strategic approach to studying is generally related to high levels of academic achievement, but only where the assessment procedures emphasize and reward personal understanding. Otherwise surface strategic approaches may well prove more adaptive.” (Entwistle, 2000, p4)

That leaves the fourth feature of Table-3, the noise in between which is gradually taking on a more structured appearance. The two BISE with a national remit, the Federal Board and AKU-EB, are at
the moment clearly distinguished from the BISE with a provincial identity. The distinction is at least in part curricular. Examining across provinces the national boards have to examine not text books but syllabuses, the 2006 revision of the National Curriculum in both cases. Its emphasis on understanding and the application of knowledge is clearly paying dividends in the expansion of genuine educational opportunity beyond the deep pockets required for O level schooling. But the distinction is not permanent. The Lahore BISE is just two years behind them in adopting the 2006 syllabuses and the benefit is being further reinforced by the reorganisation of the Punjab BISE. They have adopted a new strategy of giving each Board sole responsibility for a few subjects for the whole province. The emergence of a subject focus within the Punjab Boards is an important counterpoise to the “one strategy fits all” that underlies rote memorisation. If standards are associated with subjects rather than an overall aggregate, distinctive features of subject performance come into play and examiners begin to look for subject appreciation rather than excellent recall. There is some evidence that such a shift is occurring in Lahore. The top tier are getting a sound preparation for university education. There is a qualitative difference between these students and those who fall in the 80 – 89% grade. The hope for education in Pakistan is that as the exam boards get better at identifying the skills which are relevant for higher education the students they identify will be able to sustain their performance levels for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

References


Table-1: Internal structure of the AKU University Admission Test

*(Correlations above and to the right of the diagonal relate to 2011, below and to the left to 2012.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eng. Essay (18 marks)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. MCQ (30 Marks)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology (20 marks)</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry (20 marks)</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics (20 marks)</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science Reasoning (30 marks)</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maths Reasoning (20 marks)</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012 Total (158 marks)</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
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</table>
Table-2: First principal component of UAT in 2011 and in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>2011 (n=4879)</th>
<th>2012 (n=3196)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marks</td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Essay</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.23</td>
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<td>English Reading</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.08</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.66</td>
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<td>Chemistry</td>
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<td>9.05</td>
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<td>Physics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science Reasoning</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maths Reasoning</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>63.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Variance explained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table-3: Probability of being included in the top 10 percent of applicants to AKU’s MBBS of the top two grades of school achievement scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BISE</th>
<th>School marks 90 – 100%</th>
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<th>School marks 80 – 89.9%</th>
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INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES
TRANSCFORMING PEDAGOGIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION THROUGH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT, BALOCHISTAN

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Mumtaz Murani and Salima Rajput, Aga Khan University Institute for Education, Pakistan

Introduction

Pakistan’s education system is experiencing reforms in early childhood education (ECE) through policy and direction by the Government. With the introduction of the Pakistan National Curriculum in Early Childhood Education in 2002 (revised in 2007), there is evidence of a shift in emphasis from teacher-directed to child-centered practices that involve active learning, problem solving, critical thinking and play.

While there is great need and demand for quality and effective ECE provision in the context, there is a shortage on the supply side of expertise in ECE both in the public and private sectors, adequately trained teachers, ECE managers, availability of teaching learning material and physical facilities, and a critical mass of effective institutions that can promote ECE across the country (Juma, 2004; Pardhan, 2010). Nonetheless, education reforms to address the issue of capacity development in ECE are evident in a variety of ECE resource development initiatives emerging in the country through public sector, private sector and NGO agency initiatives. A key aim is for teachers to shift their current teaching which emphasizes knowledge acquisition, drill and practice to engage young learners in constructivist learning experiences that involve direct experience, exploration, discovery and social interaction (Pardhan, 2012).

This brief paper presents an example of transformative pedagogy through the in-service early childhood education teacher development programme undertaken by Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) as part of Early Childhood Development Project, Balochistan (ECDP-B)1. Through the ECDP-B, trainings are being undertaken for the capacity development of early childhood teachers. In addition, short trainings are being carried out with other key stakeholders like government officials, implementing partners and head teachers who play an integral role in supporting teachers. A key aim of these trainings is to enhance these stakeholders’ understanding of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, including supporting early literacy, required by early childhood teachers. The model used in the trainings with teachers and other stakeholders was to explore their existing beliefs and to provide interventions to facilitate teachers with shifting their beliefs and practices. McMillan (2004) asserts that teachers’ beliefs play a central role in their decision-making about classroom practice. As part of the training programmes, the course participants’ existing beliefs and their beliefs following the training were explored. This paper addresses aspects related to beliefs about children, literacy, numeracy, play and school management systems which were covered as part of the teacher education programmes. The paper concludes with

1 Funded by AusAid and coordinated by the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan.
implications of a way forward to support children’s learning and development in diverse contexts like Pakistan.

**Beliefs about Children**

Through the use of metaphors, course participants in the programmes reflected upon their beliefs about a child. They represented a child through metaphors of a stone, blank paper, clay and water which can be molded by adults. Their metaphors seemed congruent with their deeply espoused perceptions of children as blank slates and their responsibility being to transmit knowledge to young children. The training objectives were to bring about change in their existing beliefs about teachers being knowledge givers (Bana, 2010), and to espouse an understanding about the prior knowledge which children bring and upon which teachers build to scaffold their learning. During the in-service programmes, aspects of early brain development, child development, curriculum in the early years and how teachers can transform their pedagogies to support young learners were addressed.

At the conclusion of the training programmes, teachers reflected that their existing beliefs had been challenged and that they had begun to view children differently. Their representations of a child were now through metaphors of a seed, plant or tree that requires a healthy and nurturing environment where children’s ideas and experiences are valued. The transformation in the teachers’ beliefs about children has been observed during field visits. Their observed practices reflect consideration of young children’s learning needs through the active learning approach being implemented in their practice.

**Early Literacy**

Literacy development begins early in life and is on-going. Literacy development occurs in everyday contexts of the home, school and community through meaningful and functional experiences that require the use of literacy in natural settings, for example reading a newspaper or book, writing a letter, and making a greeting card (Morrow, 2012). At school, literacy skills can be supported by instruction which reflects real-life experiences, taking into account students’ background and knowledge. Instruction should be sensitive to a child’s stage of development socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. Organized and systematic explicit teaching of skills is necessary for literacy development (Morrow, 2012).

Through the ECDP-B training programmes, course participants’ existing beliefs and practices of literacy development were explored. Their beliefs and practices showed an understanding that children learn through rote memorization, by reading and copying alphabets and by singing nursery rhymes. Course participants were introduced to a number of strategies to support children’s literacy development, including the process approach to writing. During the training programme, the process approach to writing was located within other strategies to make it a meaningful and functional experience. To introduce the writing task, the reading aloud strategy was used with a storybook. The participants were then guided through the process approach to make their own storybooks based on the story read during the read aloud. The participants began with the pre-writing where they brainstormed their ideas related to the story as a group. A course facilitator scribed their ideas. The participants were then guided through the drafting of their story where they collectively developed an outline and the draft with facilitator support to extend the organization of the ideas. After completing the draft, the
course facilitator supported the participants with editing through the help of a pictorial and text word wall. Thereafter, the course participants wrote the revised version with the course facilitator as the scribe. The participants then had an opportunity to individually to write their own storybooks following the steps in the process approach to writing modeled by the course facilitator. Field visits reflect the teachers’ attempts to use the process approach to writing in their classroom practice. This is an important shift away from traditional practices that have focused on rote memorization rather children thinking about, organizing and expressing their ideas (Morrow, 2012).

**Numeracy**

Children learn different mathematical concepts before entering into formal schooling (Griffin, Case & Siegler, 1994). Charlesworth and Leali (2011) argue that it is important to focus on children’s understanding of informal mathematics experiences rather than rote memorization of numbers. In this regard, Griffin et al. (2011) stress upon teachers’ support to enable children to connect their existing knowledge and understanding of different mathematical concepts.

Through the ECDP-B trainings, course participants’ existing beliefs and practices of numeracy development were explored. Their existing beliefs and practices reflected an understanding of children’s early numeracy development taking place through rote counting, reading and writing numbers in sequence as well as counting pictures. Moreover, their views seldom reflected any connection between their practices and understanding of how young children use mathematics in their daily lives.

During in-service programmes, various active learning, child-centered pedagogies were used to transform the teachers’ existing practices of teaching numeracy to young children. The training programmes focused upon teaching mathematical concepts like one-to-one correspondence, number recognition and counting, seriation, graphing, addition and subtraction of one digit number, shapes and patterns through concrete materials, stories and rhymes. Field experiences show that these activities are being replicated in classrooms with the help of locally available resources to facilitate children’s conceptual understanding of mathematics.

**Play**

Play is a pleasurable and enjoyable activity for children and it is an important part of children’s development from birth onwards (Berkhout, Bakkers, Hoekman, Sienieke, & Brouwer, 2012). According to literature, well-organized and well-resourced sand and water play enhances different science and mathematics concepts like shape, space and size, measurement, volume, and area (Lawton, 2008; Pardhan & Juma, 2011).

During the ECDP-B trainings, course participants’ existing beliefs and practices about sand and water play were explored. Their existing beliefs about sand and water play were that these are: a waste of time; create a mess inside and outside the classroom; unsafe, unclean and unhygienic; unavailable; and create classroom management issues.

Course participants were introduced to strategies on including sand and water play in their practice. Different sand and water play stations were set-up during the training programme
sessions where the teachers were actively engaged in making bubbles, washing dishes and washing clothes. The participants reflected upon how strategies like these could be integrated into their practice. They shared that their practical experiences with different sand and water activities has transformed their beliefs about sand and water play. Their reflections suggested their understanding of the range of skills children can learn through sand and water play and which are important for their development. Field experiences showed replication of some of the strategies around sand and water play in the participants’ classrooms with the help of locally available resources.

School Management Systems

Research in educational leadership and school improvement across the world indicates that school leadership has strategic importance in any education system. Memon (2010) notes that, “The school head plays a pivotal role in making a school successful; and such leaders are not necessarily born, effective school heads are rigorously prepared through well designed programmes” (p. 286).

The existing beliefs and practices were elicited from the participants in the “Mentoring, Leadership and School Management” course of the training programme. The participants expressed views which reflected a hierarchical relationship with teachers and young children. According to them, within the norms of the context, it would undermine the status of stakeholders at the management level if they taught young children. The course participants were introduced to a range of ECE classroom pedagogies in a practical manner to enhance their understanding of how to effectively support young children’s learning. This course objective of having the school management stakeholders experience learning as young children was critical in helping them to transform their beliefs about the nature of support which early years teachers require. During field visits, the link between theory and practice has been observed. The school management stakeholders have made attempts to support teachers with creating learning spaces, collecting and developing material, implementing the daily routine as per the Pakistan National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, and mobilizing the Parent Teachers School Management Committee (PTSMC). Moreover, there is evidence of school management stakeholders attempting to balance their managerial role with their academic role.

Implications

The experiences of the training programmes under the ECDP-B have addressed teachers and other stakeholders’ knowledge and skills to effectively support young children’s learning (Pardhan, 2012). In the case of the school management stakeholders’, the training programmes have also helped them to consider and implement leadership practices to effectively support early childhood teachers. Pardhan (2012) has noted that in contexts like Pakistan where many untrained or poorly qualified teachers work with young children in classrooms, focused in-service professional development, which aims to understand teachers’ beliefs about early childhood education to challenge and support them to transform their practice is critical. The pedagogy of the ECDP-B training programmes through critical reflection reflects the careful consideration which has been highlighted to ensure effective and appropriate practice to support young children’s learning (Breffni, 2011; Pardhan, 2012).
This raises important implications for consistency in policies and practices to encourage and support effective pedagogy. School reforms which are emphasizing a shift from traditional practices to those which consider contemporary notions of children’s learning as well as the diversity of their experiences are crucial to bringing about change and to ensuring that young children’s learning needs are adequately and effectively supported (Pardhan, 2012). The ECDP-B has presented one such example of efforts in school reform.

References


PLAN-DO-REVIEW PROCESS WITH A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE
AT EARLY YEARS

Arif Karedia, YEN Academy

Introduction

All the practitioners of early years agree that children learn through play. What a child thinks and how he/she perceives the world can easily be seen by observing them while playing. It has been observed when children are engaged in pretend or imaginary play like “doctor – doctor” they exactly know what doctor does and how patients actually feel the pain. Similarly, when they play popular traditional play “gariya ki shadi”, they actually perform marriage rituals. These common examples reveal that children learn by perceiving things around them.

As a Principal, I thought to apply a Plan-Do-Review process for this kind of imaginary play, at an ECD Level (Pre Nursery till Grade 2) in my school. Plan Do Review is a High Scope approach where children learn to articulate their intentions in their actions, they learn to reflect on their work and realize that they are competent thinkers, problem solver and decision makers. Based on this approach, I and my team chose theme “Profession”. We did extensive planning for this activity and actually did it. We observed that when students engage in experience they not only enjoy it but also learn to initiate, participate in social setting, do problem solving and construct knowledge.

Literature Review

Pretend Play

According to early childhood researchers, role plays are more than fun; they are the key component of learning and help children acquire all kinds of skills and knowledge. They encourage children to explore imagination, think in the abstract, acquire language skills, build social skills, solve problems, understand someone else’s perspective, learn essential life skills and acquire self confidence. Moreover, it engages emotion, cognition, language, and sensory motor skills of children. Scientists theorize that it actually creates synaptic connections between parts of the brain. The more synapses result the greater child's intelligence. Realizing the importance of such role plays, as practitioner, I tried to see how it can efficiently be used to scaffold children thinking and take their knowledge to the higher level.

Lillard (1998) has pointed out that children begin to engage in pretend play, develop receptive and expressive language, and use mental representation at approximately the same time in their development. Thus researchers have hypothesized strong relationships among these processes. Pretend play requires the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically; it is carried out through interactive social dialogue and negotiation; and it involves role taking, script knowledge, and improvisation. It involves negotiation between players with differing views, simultaneous representation of objects in two ways (real and pretend), role play
requiring acting out others’ thoughts and actions, and portrayal of emotions appropriate to varied situations and actors—all actions that suggest that the pretenders have mental representation abilities. However, substantial research on how children understand the thinking of others indicates that even though children can pretend through actions earlier, they do not gain the ability to understand that others may not know what they know until they are age 4 or 5. Many cognitive strategies are demonstrated when children pretend, including joint planning, negotiation, problem solving, and goal seeking. Researchers have questioned whether the co-occurrence of these developing abilities is evidence of a reciprocal or of a cause-effect relationship. Bergen (1998) says that it is clear that pretend play has a vital role in young children’s lives, and that its importance extends through the primary school years as well.

**Plan-Do Review**

Plan-Do-review is a critical and unique approach that builds on children’s interests and intrinsic motivation. It is for an hour in length includes plan, do and review. In planning time, students meet with a teacher, with her guidance child decides what to do? By sharing that child gives his/her plan. Depending on their age and development, children might express their plan in actions (e.g., picking up a block), gestures (pointing to the block area), or words (e.g., “I want to make a tall, tall building — like where my mommy works”). During work time (Do) they play as per the discussed plan. Children use materials creatively at work time, repeating and building upon activities that interest them; there are no preset activities. They solve problems encountered in play and work independently and with others. At the end in review time, they share and discuss what did they do and learn? This whole process encourages students to take initiative, work with others, and develop self-confidence and sense of control. In addition, it also enhances their language skills and improves their vocabularies.

**Methodology**

Before implementing this exercise in my school, I conducted a workshop for my ECD Teachers on power of play where we disused the importance of play in child’s development. In that session, we had also explored the significance of Plan-do-review in child’s learning. After the workshop, the idea of integrating Plan-Do-review with pretend play was shared with them which they appreciated and agreed to apply for our upcoming theme of “Profession.” With this rationale, my team set up environment of different areas that represent places of professions like Hospital, Pharmacy, Salon, Supermarket, Garage, Laundry, School and Restaurant etc. We had also involved parents and asked them to share with us all unused items like empty boxes and bottles of medicine, food products cosmetics, unused toys, clothes, shoes and different accessories. Teachers were assigned different places of profession. Each teacher was responsible to arrange place, prepare vocabulary charts, signboards and other required things for the assigned profession.

Once the setup was completed, first we invited children to visit all areas with their teachers so they can get the opportunity to inquire about things they don’t know. We had scheduled days and timing for all sections. Pre Nursery (children of 2.5 to 3.5), Advance Nursery (children of 3.5 to 4.5) and Kindergarten (children of 4.5 to 5.5) got opportunity to go to the learning area.
thrice a week for an hour, while Grade 1 and Grade 2 visited twice in a week for the same period of time. This process was continued till one month. After completion of this activity, I had informal interviews with teachers to get their insight and reflection.

Findings and Analysis
I have divided my findings into three main headings i.e; plan, do, review, the way I followed this activity. For each part I collected teachers’ reflections.

Stage of Planning
Every class who came in learning areas first did the planning with their teachers. They planned that where they want to go and why? It had been noticed that most of the children want to go to hospital and become a doctor. When I asked teachers “why this is so?” They replied, it is due to two reasons, first is because their parents want them to be doctor and second is their exposure to a clinic/hospital is higher than other profession and places. The other popular areas for girls were salon and for boys were garage.

When I asked teachers that “is planning important for children’s learning and development?” I received numerous responses from my teachers. A grade one teacher replied that “This activity helped us to know what a child is thinking and what are his/her interests and skills.”

She further said, “There are many students who always wanted to go to one area and they have to motivate them to go to other areas as well.”

Another teacher from Pre Nursery told that “There are three children in my class who told during planning time that their mom wants them to be a doctor.”

The Grade 2 teacher said, “From this stage children started learning how to plan and how to achieve them, by doing this a child focus more on their planned work.”

A kindergarten teacher told that “When I met a parent, she said that her child came home and told her that she was a beautician today and tomorrow she will be a pharmacist. Her child asked her to give some empty medicine bottles and boxes so she can take them to the class tomorrow.”

From above findings, it is evident that planning plays a critical role in child’s development and enables them to articulate their ideas, choices and decisions. In addition, it also promotes their self confidence and sense of control. Moreover, it leads to involvement and concentration for instance, a child who plans play for longer periods than a child who did not plan.

Stage of Working
About the work time, teachers observed and reflected as following:
A Grade one teacher said
“There were two girls in her class whose mothers were beautician and TV artist. The TV Artist daughter always went to salon and became model while the beautician daughter always want to be a makeup artist. She was acting for ding massage, giving appointments to the clients which was same as professionals do.”

A Kindergarten teacher described
“Girls were vigilant when they were doing make up; they were matching it with school uniform color.”

The same interests were seen for boys when they were in garage. A Pre-Nursery teacher told
“One of my student went in a car workshop area, picked up the tool and started working in car tyres when I asked him what are you doing? He replied, I am fixing a tyre. When I talked to his father about this he said that he is very much interested in cars. He further said that his son asks him different questions regarding cars and enjoys his company when he takes him to workshop.”

Grade 2 teachers mentioned that
“In Pharmacy children were asking prescription and in market they were yelling to sale their product and also doing negotiation when costumers were bargaining.”

A kindergarten teacher shared,
“Some of the children in school area were imitating just like their own teachers.”

When I asked teachers for overall learning in work time, they said that during this play time children learned a lot of new vocabularies related to different professions. They got exposure of new jobs which they are not aware of. They started respecting all profession and came to know that all professions are important for our living. They also found sharing their toys and materials with their fellows which they don’t usually do in other activities which in result leads to cooperative learning.

Above responses reveals that children are keen observers. They observe the environment and learn from it. Whatever they observes in their surrounding, it depicts in their play for example the way children sells products, negotiate, mimick any character and solve their problems. Apart from this, they also learn social skills like sharing and working with tolerance.

Stage of Review
In a review time children shared stories of what they did during work time. Grade 2 teacher reflected that “review time helped in developing children’s speaking skill, as they tried to narrate the whole story in English”. Another teacher said, “it’s an opportunity for children to reflect on their work whatever they have planned and done.” A teacher from Grade one said, “Children discuss the problem they faced and also told us how they resolved it.”

Discussion and Conclusion
Plan-do-review is a new approach for my teachers and they greatly learn from this exercise. They found it useful and want to do it on regular basis. However, I felt that they need further
facilitation and hands-on experience to better scaffold children thinking and take their knowledge to the higher level. This activity also immensely helped children in learning new vocabularies, getting exposure of new jobs, respecting all professions, developing spoken skills, sharing and many others. It also brings in light the bias attitude of parents towards some professions which reflected in students’ choices and practice which need to be addressed.

As practitioner-researcher, I learned greatly from this exercise. It taught me how to introduce, implement, a new teaching approach and handle its successes and challenges. In addition, it helped me reflecting on my role as change agent to equip my school teachers with new approaches of teaching and learning.

Besides me, teachers, and children, this experience of mine could be helpful for early year’s practitioners in many ways. Firstly, it will help them to see plan-do-review process with a different perspective. Secondly, it will enable them to reflect the role of imaginary and pretend play in child’s development. Lastly, it will also give them opportunity to learn how themes like profession could be introduced in an integrated way through an active learning approach.

References


PROMOTING EFFECTIVE LEARNING IN THE REC CLASSROOM OF KARACHI-Pakistan: FOLLOWING A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH TO THE LITERATURE MODULE

Asmita Zeeshan, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Abstract
The aim of the study is to determine the impact of learner-centred approach on students’ learning. The study is carried out in the context of Karachi Religious Education centre where the unique perceptions of students on their learning are not yet acknowledged in the learning process. Different studies and researches highlight the notion of effective learning by recognizing learners’ characteristics, their learning styles, and their approach to learning in the learning process. By using the similar concept of effective learning, this qualitative enquiry encourages and empowers students to take an active role in their own learning. It is found at the end of the study that students’ interest and motivation towards learning increase when a teacher appropriates students’ perspectives and preferences in lessons.

Introduction
I came across with an article “Authorizing Students’ Perspectives: Towards Trust, dialogue, and Change in Education by Alison-Cook Sather. The article is based on the formal education system of United States in which they are trying to authorize students’ perspectives in their Education System. The extremely interesting and important idea of this article is the creation of new forums for students where they can be motivated to participate in their own education constructively and actively.

The whole idea of empowering students made me to think about the education practices in my context where we have not yet acknowledged the unique perceptions of students about education and learning. In fact, my teaching practices in my home country were primarily based on my own conception and approach of teaching and learning. I always brought changes in my teaching pedagogies which were recommended by my head teachers. I have never tried to listen closely to what my students have to say about my teaching pedagogies. Therefore, with the goal of changing perspectives of education among teachers in my context, I decided to take a step towards empowering students’ voice in the classroom. That is why my small scale research study focuses on the idea of authorizing students by examining their interests and perspectives of learning and then incorporates them in lessons for effective learning.

Aims
The aim of my research is to encourage student-focused approach to teaching where a teacher can exhibit a proactive attitude to the differences among students. My study also helps to better understand the ways in which teacher and students can co-construct the knowledge and thus create the community for effective learning (Watkins, 2004).
**Context**

My research was carried out in the Rahimabad Religious Education Centre (REC) of Pakistan wherein I planned to teach 12 grade eight students. The RE classes of students were always conducted under open roof but I did my research in a separate and equipped room. The new and improved physical environment made students excited and pleased towards my research practicum. I taught Literature Module for four weeks to evaluate the impact of introducing student-centred approach in lessons on their learning.

**Literature Review**

The pressure of moving and sustaining into the “Knowledge Society” has a significant impact on the perspective of Education (Hargreaves, 1999: 122). The majority of students view Education as a mean to face the complexity and challenges of the 21st century. Therefore, it is important to help students to become “real-life learners” (Claxton, 2001: 1). In order to equip students with the ability to learn for life, it is essential to view learning with the perspectives of students. Rudduck et al. (1996) suggest a framework which can assert the central importance of learners in the learning process. According to this framework, students can create the sense of self as a learner through six principles. These principles include the provision of respect, fairness, autonomy, intellectual challenges, social support, and security to the learners. Rudduck et al. (1996) further suggest for the inclusion of these principles in the teaching and learning process and one of the ways to accomplish these principles is the awareness of learners’ individual learning preferences.

Pritchard (2005: 95) describes that “the crucial role of catalyst for learning falls to teachers”. It is crucial for teachers to have a detailed knowledge and understandings of the students’ learning interests. As well as knowing about individual learning interests, teachers must be able to apply and interpret their understanding into practice. Teacher can organize learning tasks which match the preferred style of individual learners. In doing so a teacher might face a lot of difficulties. For instance, it would be challenging for a teacher to cater adequately, in every lesson on every day, for each and every individual needs. It is sometimes a big problem for a teacher to plan differentiated activities for each student. Considering these challenges, teachers need to provide opportunities for all students to work with their own preferences. This can allow teachers to practice different teaching approaches at different time and also allow for providing choices to learners (Sternberg and Zhang, 2001).

The focus on considering student centred approach in lessons can have positive effects on the learning process. Riding and Rayners (1998) describe three positive effects on learners. The first impact is the increase in the participation level of students. The high participation not only shows students’ interest in the lesson but demonstrates their curiosity towards learning as well. Another impact on students is their ability to learn independently. While working independently students can become responsive and free thinkers. The third effect described by both authors is the collaboration between teachers and students. The teacher-student relationship helps in building trust and motivating behaviour towards learning. Hence, individual learning differences influence the ways in which students learn and perform. That is why it is important to acknowledge these differences and cater their learning interests in the lesson for effective learning.
Methodology and Data Collection Methods

Action research is a systematic process of dealing with common issues, problems and concerns (Denscombe, 2007). Hart and Bond (1995: 37-8) also defines action research as a “cyclical process” in which “research, action and evaluation” is involved. Based on the above definitions, I participated in the “cyclical process” where I experimented and evaluated the impact of considering students’ learning perceptions on their learning. It is my hypothesis that:

*Effective learning can be promoted when a teacher incorporates student-centred approach to learning in lessons.*

To facilitate this small scale enquiry, I used qualitative methodology. According to Blaxter et al. (2001), qualitative research is a descriptive study which is based on collection and analysis of subjective data. The main reason to choose this methodology is the nature of my study. My study deals with students’ perceptions, experiences, and learning. Therefore, it was useful for me to collect and interpret data based on students’ learning and conceptual understanding. In order to examine the impact of incorporating students learning perspectives in lessons, I used different methods:

1. *Questionnaires*
2. *Learning Journals*
3. *Interviews*

Findings

The data which was collected over the five week period demonstrates students’ preferred learning ways, reflections on the learning process, and the role of a teacher in incorporating these views in lessons in a RE context. I began to carry out my research process with a questionnaire which aimed to map students’ views of their own learning ways. This initial information from students through the questionnaire helped me to plan my lessons.

Findings from the Questionnaire

*Students’ views on how they learn:*

The initial questionnaire provided impressions of 12 students on how they like to learn.

1. *First section*

   In this section, majority of the students preferred:
   - Group work with every student of their class
   - Working in a spacious classroom
   - Sitting at a desk instead of sitting on the floor
   - Visiting places
   - Indoor activities
   - Drawing
   - Videos and learning through experiences.

2. *Second Section*

   Most of the students have selected almost all activities and again few students did not choose reading activity. I also found inconsistency in responses of first two questions. For instance,
one of the students, who favoured reading and writing in the section one, did not select reading and writing activities in the section two. The reason behind the inconsistency between students’ responses was the language. In order to overcome the issue of inaccuracy in the data, the open ended questions were helpful to clearly understand students’ perspectives.

3. Last Section (open-ended questions)
The last three open ended questions which students responded really well. Students were given full autonomy to answer these questions to their own preferred language.

Despite this freedom, only two students answered the questions in their national language, Urdu, and rest preferred to respond in English. The three open ended questions were helpful and effective for me to bring consistency in the data results and to understand students’ actual preferences in the learning process. The first open ended question was:

*I learn best when...* for which I received following responses:

*I learn best when a teacher introduces different activities. I am interested in different activities because it fresh ups my mind. I also like to perform activity in groups because it gives us different ideas.*

*...when someone understands me through painting and visualization but I do not like boring lectures which are without any activity.*

These responses indicate students’ interest in the activity based approach where they can actively participate and can take independent decisions. They also do not favour lectures which, according to their views, are more teacher-centred and where the participation of students is passive.

Findings from my and the Host Teacher Learning Journals

*Students’ engagement in lessons:*
I planned my lessons considering students’ responses in the questionnaire. This can make lessons interesting and can actively engage students in the learning process. The host teacher’s field notes during the class provided rich, useful, and critical data on students’ participation in each lesson. The detailed picture on students’ engagement was also gathered from my own reflective diary which I maintained after every class.

In the first class, the group activity of tower building was conducted. The purpose of this activity was to provide students with the opportunity of team building.

*Students were divided into three groups and were provided similar resources for tower building... A student from one of the groups said to her colleague that your idea is really fantastic. Let’s try that idea. It will work well. This comment represents that students were appreciating and accepting each other’s ideas.* (My learning journal, 4th May 2010).

The host teacher’s field notes expressed valuable descriptions of students’ participation in the tower building activity. She reflected that:
Although boys and girls usually do not prefer to work together but I am amazed to see that they are not only working together but also actively involved in the cutting and making of the tower (Host teacher’s learning journal, 4th May 2010).

The above reflections reveal that students are interested in group activities which positively affected their participation. However, students were creating competition among themselves but at the same time students, who usually participate less, tried to self motivate themselves towards active engagement in activities.

**Students’ reflections:**

*Students’ attitude towards Learning:*

There were many instances when students showed positive attitude towards learning. Although the reflection process was new for students they tried their best to constructively reflect on their learning.

*I liked writing and the creation of our own literary piece because it helped me to reflect my ideas and views. This task also provided me an opportunity to think creatively.*

*When we were working in groups, we explored different interpretations of the same verse which was new for me. I was astonished to see how people think differently.*

The above excerpts demonstrate students’ willingness to learn and their serious and critical attitude towards learning environment. Their reflections further reveal they respected diverse ideas of students to develop learning community and deeper understanding of the content.

**Findings from the Post-class Interviews**

*Students’ feedback on the learning process:*

At the end of the research practicum, one to one interviews were taken. The interview responses enabled me to critically analyze and evaluate the whole learning process. Students’ positive and encouraging responses towards learning are captured by following excerpts:

*How was your overall learning experience?*

*My experience was extremely good because I acquired a lot of knowledge on literature, which I was not aware of.*

*...studying literature was always boring and difficult for me but you made it easy and interesting through activities.*

*...I improved my weak areas especially my confidence and presentation skills...*

What change did you find between your usual classes and STEP classes?

*Our RE teachers use to say that you are now grown up children and you should start learning through lectures but now I realized that they were not completely right.*

How much autonomy and power was given to you in these classes?
You first ask us about our learning interests, strengths and weaknesses and then you planned the lesson. This is best part where I found power in contributing my views in the planning process.

Finally, students appreciated the organized and structured lesson planning. They also liked the classroom environment but their reflections at the end class were affected by the electricity shortage.

Discussion and Conclusion
This research study was able to see the impact of student-centred approach on students’ learning. At the same time, there were some challenges which may have affected the research. First of all, the four week period of research practicum was not sufficient to see the consistency of students’ responses to the learning process. Secondly, students were very excited and willing to be a part of the research and to study the new STEP curriculum. This was the first time they were studying from the STEP teacher along with fully equipped, changed, and improved classroom environment. These newly improved changes in the learning process brought “Hawthorne effect” in my research (Holden, 2001: 65). “Hawthorne effect” refers to the positive behaviour of subjects in response to introducing improved changes in the research process. Therefore, the “Hawthorne effect” made my students positive and enthusiastic towards new learning approach, environment, and the teacher.

Students’ experience of learner-centred approach
Following student-centred approach to effective learning has positive effects on students’ learning. First of all, students started viewing themselves as “crew, not passengers” in their learning process (Watkins, 2004: 3). This view encouraged my students to become a valuable part in the learning process. Students were motivated to participate in the decision making process wherein they contributed their preferences in the lesson planning.

Understanding the Role of a Teacher
Promoting student-centred approach for effective learning has large implications on my role as a teacher. First of all, the approach of learner-centredness challenged my long-standing assumption of teacher being the sole authority in the learning process (Tollefson and Osborn, 2008). Therefore, I shared my power and authority with my students which authorized them to raise voice for their own learning. I also changed my notion of a teacher as an exclusive content expert who possesses complete knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. The change in my notion broadened my role from knowledge transmitter to knowledge constructor.

References


WHAT ARE THE RANGE OF READING STRATEGIES USED AND THEIR RECEPTION IN KARACHI ISMAILI RE CLASSROOMS?

Bilquis Hamid. Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction

The literary skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking have importance in all academic subjects. Jennings et al. (2010) emphasize on reading skills to be mastered by students in order to get success in their educational endeavour. In most of the secular and religious education classrooms of Karachi, reading is the most neglected skill. Teachers find it challenging to motivate their students towards reading tasks, because the traditional teacher centered approach still prevails. According to this approach students depend on their teachers to read and explain the reading texts, therefore, they are unable to make meaning of the content read. Watkins et al. (2002) rightly commented that students are involved in effective learning process if they are able to construct their knowledge and make meaning of their learning. However, to teach reading skills is a challenging task, but teachers could ignite reading habits in their students by adopting various reading strategies according to the interest of their students. The study revealed that teachers need to be well informed about the reading strategies and develop their understanding through ongoing professional development. Hence, the intent of the study is basically to create awareness on practices in the teaching and learning of reading in relation to current developments.

The Religious Education Centre (REC) in Karachi currently runs on a voluntary basis. Teachers are not formally trained and there is still a need for skills development, especially in the area of developing reading skills in students. My class comprised of twenty-five students, each thirteen years old (thirteen girls and twelve boys of mixed ability). The classes were held twice a week in a STEP classroom that is equipped with all teaching resources. The length of each class was two hours. I taught the IIS curriculum module named, “Ethical Pathways to Human Development”.

Research Question

The motivating question guiding the frame work of this study is: “what are the range of reading strategies used and their reception in Karachi Ismaili RE classrooms?”

Literature Review

The literature review survey the pertinent research related to the current practices of teaching reading strategy, which assisted in designing and implementing intervention for the study.

Reading

During a classroom discourse, interactions occur between teachers, students and their textbooks. While interacting with the text, readers are involved in a “process of constructing meaning” (Unrau, 1997, p.65). In addition to various processes, the main process of reading is
making meaning (Cain, 2010; Carter and Nunan, 2001; Hedge, 2008). However, when students are unable to construct meaning, they lose interest in reading. In my home context, teachers in RE classes also face difficulty in enabling their students to comprehend the texts read. Therefore, my working definition of reading in my context is to improve students' reading comprehension and to make the process of reading enjoyable. Teachers decide appropriate process depending on the purpose of reading, whether it is to acquaint their learners with new knowledge, to get specific information, or to get in-depth information about the topic in order to reflect on them.

**Comprehension**

Jennings, Caldwell & Lerner (2010) considered comprehension as the “essence of the reading” (p.17). And Booth (2008) suggests comprehension as a meaning making process of reading where the reader concentrates on the language of the author, relate the information with their prior knowledge and then understand the particular text. Therefore, teachers need to present those reading text to their students which they can relate with their prior knowledge and make sense of it. Although, Probst (2004) posit that only making meaning is not the main purpose of reading a text, but it should allow the reader to create their own understanding out of the text, which could be possible if the reader is involved in thinking and reflecting process. Therefore, during the study my students were involved in thinking process while responding to the questions asked orally during discussions and in written reflections, after reading the texts.

**Research Methodology**

Being a small-scale research to observe students’ reception of reading strategies, which cannot be measured in terms of numbers rather it requires real life experiences of students and teachers, therefore qualitative approach is used for the study (Denscombe, 2007). To observe change in the real life experiences of classroom practices, the study focused on action research. Different reading strategies were designed in which students were assigned reading tasks in individual, paired and group setting to observe their reception of these strategies. In order to assess students’ understanding of the reading texts different questions were asked during debriefing sessions and through reflection sheets at the end of each lesson.

As the research outcome aimed to explore students’ response to various reading strategies, therefore, I selected a sample of five girls and five boys, using the purposive sampling method.

**Methods**

Following data collection tools informed the research questions:

**Focus Group Interviews**

One of the best methods to collect a variety of students’ opinions is a focus group interview (Denscombe, 2007). This method was beneficial for those students who were otherwise shy and reserved in an individual interview particularly when I, the teacher researcher, was
foreign to them (Seidman, 2006). I conducted focus group interviews twice for the study, one before the start and another towards the end of the study.

**Students’ Reflections**

I also collected the data through students’ journals, which not only informed me about my student’s learning but it also gave glimpses of classroom teaching and learning processes, which helped me further improve my lessons. However, some students were reluctant to write in their journals. Therefore, it was challenging to get the authenticity in their responses (Hinds, 2000).

**External Observer**

An external observer was asked to enter the classroom space with the purpose of observing my classroom and commenting specifically on my teaching practice in relation to students’ reception towards different reading strategies. However, the observer was a challenging variable, which caused distraction for students (Kyriakou, 2001).

**Questionnaire**

I asked STEP teachers to fill out the questionnaire about the reading strategies they use while teaching and how their students perceived them. The STEP teachers were those who have used reading strategies in their classes were asked to fill out the questionnaire. Similarly, I asked the students to fill out the questionnaire about the reading strategies they appreciated for their learning. Hence, through filing out the questionnaire, students and STEP teachers were providing me with a rich data in relatively less time (Hopkins, 2008).

**Findings and Analysis**

A thematic approach was used to analyze the findings of the data (Denscombe, 2007). The common themes that were identified going back and forth throughout the data were,

(1) Students’ reception of reading strategies.
(2) Teacher’s role in students’ reception of reading strategies.

**1 Students’ Reception of Reading Strategies**

During six weeks of study various reading strategies were used to stimulate students’ reading for comprehension. Some students stated individual reading, i.e. silent reading strategy as a means to aid in their reading process:

Farhana: “I also enjoyed this reading strategy because we can discuss with our own self and enjoy” (Student’s Reflections, 01-06-2011).

Whereas, some students found silent reading as a “boring stuff”, which is exemplified in the following reflection question:

**Which reading activities you enjoy the least? Why?**

Arshnoor: “Individual reading because it was a kind of boring stuff” (Student’s Reflections, 12-05-2011).
Similarly, external observer also observed the same reluctance of students in individual reading strategy, which is evident in the following comment:

“Everyone except two or three students who were having problems in reading were not showing interest in silent reading” (External observer’s comment).

Due to fact that students were finding individual task boring, therefore I arranged them in groups and assigned reading tasks through performing role-plays, which some students enjoyed, whereas others did not. For instance:

Ali Shah: “No, I did not enjoy reading in-group because there are some group members who are creating problems and by that I do not read carefully the passage” (Student’s Reflections, 25-05-2011).

Shahzain: “But Miss I think the role-play was not a good idea instead you should have given us presentations to do, which would have given us all the opportunity to speak more. And during role-plays we were just performing and not speaking” (Final focus group).

Most of the students enjoyed pair reading strategies, i.e. ‘Pair reading Aloud’, one of the student expressed her feeling regarding the pair reading strategy as,

Muskan: “Yes! Because in “Pair Reading Aloud” it’s easier to understand whole passage.” (Student’s Reflections, 01-06-2011).

Similarly, external observer also observed the same reception of pair reading strategies used in classroom instructions and he commented as follows:

“Students were showing interests because reader was audible and there were only two students, so they paid whole attention.” (External observer’s comment, 26-05-2011).

The findings of the data acknowledge that pair reading strategies used during classroom teaching essentially involved students in reading process and developed their understanding, while discussing the reading texts with their peers.

(2) Teacher’s Role in Students’ Reception of Reading Strategies

Throughout the study an explicit effort was put during interventions to develop a conducive learning environment where students’ reading skills were developed through interacting with their peers and teacher. Vygotsky’s (1978) and Bruner’s (1987) learning theories also stress on the presence of a social and cultural elements in the learning process. During the study I observed that students could be effective readers if they were allowed to work in small groups. As one of the child expressed her views,

Sahmeen: “I like reading in pairs, the Think-Pair- Share activity because it gave us a chance to share our views and thoughts with the classmates and express them well” (Student’s Reflections, 12-05-2011).

I found a similar attitude of few of the STEP teachers regarding the reason for them to utilize reading strategies in class, which states as follows,

“To allow them to work collaboratively”.

Similarly, the external observer comments also highlighted the significance of this collaboration in his comments which is mentioned as follows,
“There were only two students, so they paid whole attention”.

Various hands-on and minds-on activities act as external motivational tools to grab students’ attention towards reading process. For instance, during focus groups while discussing on the strategies that teachers need to use while teaching reading strategies few of the students recommended,

Isbah: “They should give us reading through activities”.

Inshal: “They need to give us reading through games”.

Arshnoor: “They should tell us stories so that we could develop interest to read more stories by our own selves” (First focus group).

Ashmal: “They should keep a reward for the students so that we can be motivated towards reading”.
Anmol: “Reward could be a verbal praise” (Final focus group).

The findings of the data acknowledge that teachers need to incorporate different reading strategies in classroom teaching. Similarly, students would enjoy reading process if teachers involve them in reading activities and appreciate their efforts through tangible or intangible awards. In addition, teachers need to provide them a comfortable environment in classroom interaction.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the data acknowledges the fact that student could be actively involved in the reading process if all their physical and mental needs are catered (Maslow, 1999). Though, I encouraged my students through various reading strategies to stimulate their reading skills, but they enjoyed pair reading strategies. I observed that my students were involved in meaning making process during the follow-up discussions on the reading texts. Nevertheless, these discussions with their peers and teacher played a vital role to scaffold their learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

During six weeks intervention I observed that pair reading strategies had the potential to encourage students to read and reflect critically on the reading texts. However, some students were still facing challenges in reading and comprehending the texts independently and they relied on their peers and their teachers. Firstly, I believe that the time duration of the study was not enough to cater each students needs because they needed more practice of such reading strategies which was impossible in six weeks. Secondly, I believe that the teacher-centered approach provides less opportunity to students to have the ownership of their learning. Haynes (2002) stresses the need to encourage students to evaluate their statements in order to develop their thinking and meaning making capabilities.

By replacing my traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach, I was able to develop a relationship of trust between my students and myself. This changed my teaching approach from “practitioner knowledge to professional knowledge” (Hiebert,
Gallimore, Stigler, 2002, p. 6). This transformation created a learning community between reading texts, students and teachers.

Teachers need training in order to develop effective reading strategies, according to their students needs. Hence, a future research study could be done to explore the impact of trained teacher generated reading strategies on students’ reading comprehension skills. Similarly, in the future a teacher- researcher could focus on single reading strategy such as “Pair reading Aloud” and observe the impact in their students’ reception.

Hence, the findings of this study revealed that students can embark upon the journey of reading skills if they are provided with a conducive learning environment, where they can share their understanding with their peers and teachers.

References


INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ROLE-PLAYS IN
TEACHING THE LITERATURE MODULE

Husna Arif, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Abstract
This action research study investigates role-play activities and how they can be used with the learning of religious literature for students in grade eight setting in Pakistan. Through a qualitative approach with descriptive data tools of teacher and students’ reflective journals, observations and focus group interview, results showed that effective role-play activities can be beneficial to students in exploring significant literary text and ideas with the students. It motivates students and encourages them to engage in reading and thinking about the text critically. The analyses indicate that role-play activities help students to make connection of text with their lives and engage them in social construction of meaning. Moreover, it suggests that comprehensible language of the text; adequate planning of the activity and scaffolding in reading are important factors which need to be considered for the success of the role-play activities.

Introduction
Engaging students in active learning and making it fun and worthwhile is sometimes a difficult task for a teacher. Especially, in the case of literature where students came across to wide range of historical narratives, stories, fables, travelogue, devotional poetry and variety of other literature written in different time and context. The textual language of the literature found rich in use of metaphors, symbols, allegory which at times found hard for students to comprehend. It is observed that students find reading them, less interesting, tiresome and as result, show lack of interest in writing exercises followed by it. Keeping in mind this situation, through this study, I seek to explore the effectiveness of role-plays as teaching tool in promoting students’ interest and engaging them in reading and comprehending the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), literature module in particular context of Religious Education (RE). This research was set out with grade eight students of a REC, in Karachi which spread over four weeks.

Literature Review
For this study, considering definitions of different researchers, I chose to define role-play as a teaching tool which engages students in imaginative exercise wherein they act in different roles and interact with other roles in order to generate better understanding of the text and foster collaborative learning. (Ladousses;1987, Ments;1983, Wilhelm; 2002 & Beach, Appleman, Hynds & Wilhelm, 2002)

Role Plays as Teaching and Learning Tool
Role play and social cultural Learning theory:
Over the last few decades, notions of learning have been changed from transmission to student-centred theories and now to social cultural learning theory. Russian Psychologist Lev Vygotsky, a firm believer in the social construction of knowledge proposed that children learn through interaction with peers and adults. Mc Master (1998, p. 575) in her article “Doing literature: Using drama to build literacy” describes that “drama begins with meaningful communication and provides multiple opportunities to students for social interaction which ‘helps students internalizing meaning’ (Vygotsky, 1978)”. Thus drama/role-play is powerful tool to promote social nature of learning.

Role play and motivation:
Since role-plays are playful and fun, they motivate students for learning. Studies on brain, learning and human potentials have shown that fun leads to better and powerful learning (Wilhelm, 2002).

However, research studies also point out teachers’ reservations for the use of this strategy due it to its time consuming nature, chaos in class and loss of control over students learning (Ments, 1983; McMaster, 1998). In response to these reservations, Wilhelm (2002) in his research studies emphasises on importance of fun in learning by referring to Vygotsky’s work which identified play as the most natural form of learning. Based on experience, Porter (2008) also asserts role-playing an important tool to capitalize on ‘students’ expectations and fondness for game-play. Thus, studies reveal that doing role-play is fun which creates interest and motivation, which are crucial factor in facilitating students’ understanding.

Role-plays and Teaching of Literature
Enactments are said to stimulate students’ interest for reading because they read it with attention in order to act out some part of it. Studies on drama and reading reveal that for dramatization students are not doing surface level reading but they are involved in thinking and imagining process. It engages students in reading between the lines, infer meanings from metaphorical language and develop their ability to understand the others perspectives differ in race, gender and historical period (Mc Master, 1998; Wilhelm, 2002; Beach et al, 2006; Kelner & Flynn, 2006). Moreover, enactments help students to contextualize what they are reading in text to their own experience, feelings, attitudes, ideas, values and life situation (Gungor, 2008).

Role of Teacher
For the success of role-plays, teacher’s role is given high importance by the educationists. Researchers emphasise that teacher must have awareness about their students’ zone of proximal development (ZPD), and devise role-plays, which lie under their ZPD because role-plays devised beyond students’ ZPD result in frustration (Gupta, 2009, Wilhelm, 2002).

Moreover, research studies also highlight the importance of providing clear instruction for the role-play. If students do not know what to do and the purpose behind the role-plays, it turns in to chaos. They also point out that enactments never yield the required results unless teacher encourages students to think and reflect. According to Carr and Flynn (1994, p.39) a teacher can encourage students’ critical thinking by maintaining the drama in motion ‘by questioning, challenging, organizing the group’s thoughts, focusing on the learning area, involving less vocal students, and maintaining order”. This, in result enables students to become critical of
ideas in order to better understand. It also challenges students’ prior assumptions and generalization and make them relentless interrogators to know about the truth (Hooks, 2010).

**Methodology**

Since, the purpose of this research was improving my own practice as practitioner; action research was selected as the investigative approach. To examine the effectiveness of role-plays, I used a range of qualitative data collection methods to assess the effectiveness of this strategy by getting overall picture of students learning (a main indicator to examine the effectiveness of role-plays) through various lenses such as participant, observer and researcher. The tools were; my own reflective journals, observation by an external observer, students’ reflections and focus group interview, which were used on on-going basis as per need of the situation during research. During data collection, I ensure that research was conducted and written in ethical manner.

**Findings and Analysis**

Through triangulated data collection strategy, enormous amount of data was collected which was codified according to it relevancy, out of which following common themes emerged.

**Motivation and Engagement with Reading Text**

Role-play was found as motivating factor during my lessons, which stimulated students’ curiosity and created their interest for the learning. There were numerous occurrences in my class which signified this. For example, I introduced a topic on “Counsel on the Art of Governance”. In this activity, students in their group acted as political party and planned an election campaign. I gave each group different selected text taken from their text book, to read and use in their speech.

Although role-play activity motivated students to read the text but they became uneasy when they found the text difficult to comprehend. They needed teacher’s support to understand the text as well as its context. I put students to this situation by a purpose which defines by Burns and Gentry (1998, cited in Tompkins, 1998) as ‘create a tension to learn’ by this, they imply that you can keep learners motivated by stimulating their curiosity. In this activity, when students put into tension, they tried to learn it. Here the finding suggests the need of getting students ready to understand the text. Once they get ready to learn they absorb it quickly. Thus, due to motivation of role-play activity students became interested to understand the text. Students were supported by sharing meanings of the difficult words and providing background information of the text, which according to Wilhelm et al (2001) solves major comprehension problems.

At the end classroom reflection most of the students wrote that ‘they got motivated to read the text due to creative medium of expression (speech) which allowed them to share their understanding’.

Findings like above showed that role-play is creative medium for expression, which makes activities challenging and fun. It creates excitement in learners for learning new knowledge and encourages them to find purpose of the reading and meaningfully engage with their tasks. Furthermore, it also sheds light on considering issues of difficulty in comprehending text and
scaffolding students’ reading to enable them to interpret the text and construct their own meaning.

**Engaging Students in Critical Thinking**

Findings also suggest that role-plays are an effective tool to promote critical thinking. It did not only engage students in evaluating, analysing and interpreting the text but also analysing inference and assumption (Walker, 2003). For instance, I planned challenging activity for the topic on “Knowledge and the pen”. The activity asked students to imagine themselves as scholars of tenth century, who are invited by Imam-caliph al-Muizz in his court to invent fountain pen. One student who acted as Qadi al-Numan read imam-caliph’s letter to the scholars to invent a fountain pen. Students in guise of scholars group of tenth century became engaged to invent a pen.

This activity was found very interesting as the students recreated the practical challenge and difficulty of inventing pen. One student in reflection wrote, “I learned that in earlier times people were intelligent and they might have faced difficulty in inventing things.” another student said,” It is interesting to know that people in tenth century were thinking about how to make things better”(student’s reflection, 13-05-10). Above responses demonstrate that the activity helped students to think and imagine with a different perspective to them and realize the importance of invention and appreciated the endeavours of Muslim scientists.

**Students Making Connection between Text and their Lives**

I also used role-play as ‘making connection strategy’ (John, 2010) the purpose was to engage students in finding relevance of the literary text to their lives, which is one of the goals of teaching literature. In a lesson on ‘debate versus animals and humans”, I experienced that role-play activity can encourage students to adopt perspectives and thoughts of others in order to understand how other perceive and experience the world which differ to their own perception and experience.

For this activity, students were asked to take on different roles animals or human and try to express perspectives of their assumed roles. In their role whether animals or human, students prepared arguments for debate. Observer noted that “during debate students were very enthusiast and aggressive in presenting and defending their arguments.”(Observer’s note)

One student during focus group interview referred to this activity and shared, “While enacting in animal role, I forgot that I am human...... for some time, I really felt myself like them”. Such experiences, after the activity allowed students to make connection of learned experience with their own lives and also the lives living around them.

The above evidence corroborates that role-play helped students to enact different roles and experienced the world with the other’s eye. It also helped them to go beyond literal meaning to understand the actual message of the text within the context of past and present. In this regard, teacher’s role is crucial to structured activity in a way that allows maximum opportunity to students to reflect upon the text.
Students’ Learning in Social Context
In my lessons, every role-play activity involved group work. I found that it is very social in nature which fosters collaboration and different level of awareness in students while working in the groups. According to the results, students generally found working with team spirit and positive interdependence. My reflective journals entries of different lessons also inform that while doing role-plays activities students gained awareness that they always need cooperation of each and every member of the group to be succeeded. Therefore, it inculcates values of respecting others, cooperating with each other, and valuing others point of view, which is said to be important elements of collaborative learning (Carnell & Lodge, 2002). Following are random students’ views taken from after class reflections on their opinions about working in groups. “We learned in this class how to do group work”, “When we discuss, every group member has different points and we learn from it”.

The findings about collaborative learning also opened up new avenues for me to explore. I found need to work on how gender becomes less relevant for students while working together. How to break this notion in learning place is important to be considered because they all study in one class but do not want to work together. I tried to challenge this notion during my practice by making mix group, though initially they resisted but later due to encouragement they worked together.

The trends across all sources of data indicated that role-play technique not only had been an effective and enjoyable means of teaching but also an effective tool to engage students in the learning. Data also brought in light certain factors which inhibited students’ learning.

Discussion and Conclusion
Based on literature review and findings of the research study, role-play is said to be one of the powerful strategies to engage students in learning the literature module. The practice of role-play activities through an action research brought to my attention many aspects which contributed to its success. These activities provided opportunities to students to think and learn in more dynamic ways than instigated by simple traditional lecture based teaching. It creates interest and also enlivenes the text by allowing students to make connections of the literary text with their life experiences and prior knowledge. However, in the field practice I realized that its success depends more on how it is going to be conducted. It requires thorough planning on part of teacher to decide how to arrange a role-play, prepare thought provoking (critical and reflective) questions to stimulate students’ thinking for deeper understanding and also deal with issues that arise in conducting role-play. It was also my learning that considering students’ desires for the way of learning brings change in their behavior and learning. According to Kyriacou (2001) “effective teaching is concerned with how a teacher can successful to bring about the desired pupil learning by some educational activity”.

In sum, as practitioner-researcher, this study contributed to my personal and professional development by allowing me to reflect on my practice in order to improve it. Besides me and my students, in whose interest the research was undertaken, the research could have significance for others as well. It may be a contribution to any literature classroom in Pakistan, where there is lack of relevant data or literature on this topic. The research was conducted on small scale in the context of a RE in Pakistan; therefore it is unlikely that it could be generalized to other situation and context. However, it can be served as a basic
framework for any teachers who might have interested to use this strategy for teaching literature in their context.

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN TEACHING SCIENCE AT SECONDARY LEVEL: FOCUS ON READING AND WRITING IN SCIENCE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Innovation in teaching may, broadly speaking, come in two ways: One, using new ideas or methods. Two, using old ideas or methods in innovative ways. Also, the ‘newness’ of a method is very much dependent on the context.

Over the years of my learning and practice as a Science teacher at the secondary level, I have come across several new ideas related to the teaching and learning of Science. Of the different ideas I have used in my own teaching, I will be sharing two that I think will be particularly useful and interesting for the conference participants: 1. Using Writing as a Tool for Learning Science; 2. Directed Activities for Reading of Texts (DARTs). I have shared the ideas with other Science teachers and encouraged them to use them in their classrooms.

- I have used writing in my classrooms specifically as a tool for supporting my students’ learning of Science concepts. Writing activities – for example letters, dialogues, poems carry the potential and promise of not only enhancing the learning of English but also reinforcing the learning of Scientific concepts and facts;
- DARTs may not be new in the professional world of teaching, however it is not commonly used in the science classrooms in Pakistan. I have tried it and found it to be a particularly useful idea.

Introduction: Background and Rationale

I started my teaching career as a Science teacher at Al-Murtaza School Network, Karachi about 13 years ago. After being promoted as the Senior Mistress in 2002, in January 2011, I was given the responsibility as a Professional Development Facilitator (PDF) in the area of Science at the Al Murtaza Professional Development Center (AMPDC). My job responsibilities included carrying out a variety of professional development activities – conducting workshops, short courses during summer break, providing ongoing classroom-based support, reviewing test papers, lesson plans, developing teaching-learning materials, and importantly doing classroom teaching. In my new role it became my prime objective to help the learning of my students as well as provide professional support to teachers on an ongoing basis.

In my different roles and designations, I feel lucky that I always continued to be a classroom teacher. Over my more than 13 years of teaching experience, and observing hundreds of science lessons I have noted that:

- Science teaching, like teaching in general, is largely designed as rote learning and aimed at getting good grades in exams. There is no awareness of, and therefore no use
by science teachers of science process skills, scientific thinking, creativity, and practical activities.

- Science classrooms are therefore not much different from classrooms of any other subject. Teaching is teacher-centered and text-book based. Learners’ role is passive. There is no excitement of discovery, the challenge of problem solving, or the joy of independent learning. Obviously, science classrooms become monotonous, predictable, and overburdened with use of heavy scientific terminology.

- Another problem is teachers’ over reliance on textbooks. There is no attempt to use reference books, AV materials, real objects, or ICT materials. Experimentation and hands-on experiences are sadly missing from science classrooms. Science textbooks often use a special kind of ‘scientific language’ - mostly using an impersonal passive voice and relying on expository text. The following words nicely capture the alienation of students from science, “But science teachers are being asked to reach out to youngsters who are disaffected and uninspired by the subject.” (Science for Real, www.realscience.org.uk, 13 February, 2007)

I have come across several new ideas related to the teaching and learning of Science. Of the different ideas I have used in my own teaching, I will be sharing two that I think will be particularly useful and interesting for the readers.

1. Using Writing as a Tool for Learning Science; and
2. Directed Activities for Reading of Texts (DARTs).

In my paper, I will be sharing my experiences related to the two ‘innovations’ in adequate detail, along with samples of students’ work. Comments and reflections of students and teachers will also be shared in the appendices section of the paper.

**Literature Review**

**Literature Review on Writing for Learning in Science**

Supporters for the idea of providing science learners an exposure to a variety of language experiences, have drawn on the research of Vygotsky, Bruner, Barnes, Wells and others (cited in Prain, 1995). These writers advocate a shift from text-and-teacher dominated classroom to more open-ended, speculative language used by students. They believe that as part of active learning in Science, students must be given opportunities “to articulate, defend and explain their ideas within the social context of the classroom.” (Barnett 1992, and Halliday and Martin 1993 cited in Prain, 1995).

For example I have used the following writing types by students in my Science classrooms:

- Narratives:
- Poetry: (Both narrative and lyric)
- Scripts for Debates or Dialogues:
- Interviews and Role plays
- Scientific Reports:
- Brochures:
Literature Review on DARTs

DARTs are outcome of a major research project into reading for learning in secondary schools, carried out under the directorship of Eric Lunzar and Keith Gardner from 1978 until 1982. Florence Davies and Terry Greene were two projects offers specifically studying science text (Lunzer and Gardner 1979; Davies and Greene, 1984). They set out to design activities (DARTs) that would focus pupils’ attention on their reading and make them reflect on its content.

According to by T.E. Editor (2003),

Good readers use what they know about language and the world to interact with what they are reading. This helps them create meaning from the words on the page. Classroom activities that encourage interaction with texts, like directed activities related to texts (DARTs), improve students' reading comprehension.

DARTs can be divided into two groups:

Reconstruction Activities, and Analysis Activities. Brief descriptions of both types are presented below.

A. Reconstruction Activities

Definition: Activities that require students to reconstruct a text or diagram by filling in missing words, phrases or sentences, or by sequencing text that has been jumbled.

Texts used: Modified texts - the teacher modifies the original text, taking out words, phrases or sentences.

Types of activities

- Text completion
- Sequencing
- Grouping
- Table completion
- Diagram completion

B. Analysis Activities

Definition: Activities that require students to find and categorize information by marking or labelling a text or diagram.

Texts used: Unmodified texts
Types of activities

- Text marking
- Text segmenting and labelling
- Table construction
- Diagram construction
- Questioning

Significance of the Study

If both the strategies – that is. Writing and DARTs - are found to be useful, practicable and attainable with desired outcomes, they can be used and implemented with greater confidence by science teachers. This will then have a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching in the science classrooms. Students are likely to develop positive attitudes towards learning and doing science. The combined effect of all these would also contribute to an improvement in the grades of students in exams.

Research Design and Methodology

Given the nature and purpose of my study, and my own previous experience, I chose the action research method. My action research aimed at documenting and sharing the various stages of my work in trying out the two strategies for improving then teaching and learning of science at Al Murtaza School over the two year period, August 2010 to September 2012.

In carrying out my research I used the following methods and instruments:

- Personal teaching practices following a cyclical patter: Plan -> Design -> Implement -> Review and Evaluate -> Plan
- Guide and support to other science teachers
- Own observations and reflections
- Classroom observation of teachers
- Follow up sessions with teachers
- Teachers’ reflections
- Students’ reflections
- Video recording of classroom teaching using these strategies
- Interviews of teachers and students
- Collecting samples of students’ work

Implementation

Implementation of Writing for Learning in Science

As a science teacher I am always in search of type of activities which offer the potential to bring interest and generate healthy discussions among students, where students will get a chance to express their feelings and expressions. When I used writing activities in my teaching they seemed to work really well. I observed that my students got motivated and they
expressed their ideas in a creative manner. It was my exploratory phase. I realized that we can use these activities during different stages of a lesson.

I shared this strategy during the academic session 2010-11, with other teachers through sessions, workshops and in faculty meeting. The course was attended by more than fifteen teachers.

The small group of 6 teachers started using this strategy, from November 2010. It was introduced in both the branches AMS - boys and girls - simultaneously, in classes 6 to 10. During my own teaching, and my lesson observation of other teachers, I could see that students were showing a clearly greater interest towards this practice compared to the normal teaching. Teachers kept sharing with me the various samples of students’ writing. I also found some interesting samples of work in my own classrooms.

In the academic year 2011-12, the same small group of teachers continued this practice. Considering that this was a piloting stage, we continued using the strategy once a month as a minimum. We were excited to be using innovation, but we had our challenges, for example:

- Time factor – or in other words, the problem of syllabus completion
- Some old paradigm teachers believed that teaching from text book was easy, less time consuming and more useful for exam success.
- Some teachers from the core group left, thus reducing the number of teachers prepared for innovation
- Even some of the core group members carried some of their beliefs and practices from the old paradigm.

In my own practice, I found that syllabus completion was possible while using such activities. This confirmed my initial belief that the strategy was doable within the given academic year.

In the academic year, 2012-3 we have also continued using this strategy. This year I am planning to introduce the strategy in primary classes, 4 and 5.

**Implementation of DARTs activities**

Compared with my initiation into the writing activities, I had discovered DARTs a little earlier, in 2009. DARTs promised to address the basic problem related to poor reading materials that science textbooks offered. They would make reading science texts more interesting and productive for understanding the wonderful world of science. Initially I started using DARTs in my own teaching. I found that the activities were simple and easily doable in science classrooms; they were not too time consuming.

Now, I shared DARTs with other science teachers in faculty meetings. The initial response was positive. Compared with the group of teachers using writing strategies, there were more teachers willing to try DARTs. Possibly, DARTs put less demands on science teachers ability in English language than the writing activities did. Designing darts was also quite easy. DARTs seemed attractive, also because these could be used at different stages of a lesson: as a motivational activity, as developmental activity, or during evaluation stage.

The teachers of both primary and secondary levels were using use DARTs as classroom activities as well as for home assignments. These also proved useful as revision activities for exam preparation.
Challenges in implementation of DARTs

As discussed earlier (see above) DARTs offered fewer challenges than the writing strategy. However, the major challenge would now be ensuring that a DARTs activity is designed appropriate to the teaching objective and the particular science knowledge involved. Not every DART activity is suitable for all types of science text. Also, a particular issue of quality assurance would be involved when teachers try to create their own texts for DARTs.

Findings: Impact on Students’ Learning and Motivation

Writing for Learning in Science

During the period of piloting the writing activities in science classrooms, following could be seen as the most obvious impact on students and teachers:

- Most students enjoy the writing activities in their science classrooms.
- They express their scientific concepts and factual knowledge in a variety of modes. These expressions offer a very useful assessment tool for the teacher to judge the accuracy of their students’ knowledge.
- Students in general seem to be more comfortable in dialogue writing, and writing of letters to each other in a series of letters and their response.
- After doing a piece of writing students seemed to have great urge to do some role play, (This is a welcome development for those who believe in the value of Multiple Intelligence)

Below I share some views of teachers and students on their experience with the writing activities.

Reflections by Ms. Rakhsahinda, A Teacher of Secondary Classes

After attending workshop on writing as a tool for learning science, I feel that it has been really an exciting and innovative experience. Learning how science can be integrated with various subjects, defines the amalgamation of logic with its application.

Reflection by Saeeda, a student of class 10:

I am studying biology since class 6 but seriously since class 6 I faced a lot of problems while learning the terms and definitions but these kinds of activities help me to learn the definitions more quickly and easily.

Reflection by Anila a student of class 10:

Biology has always been boring and lengthy. I mean I liked it, but never enjoyed studying it. But this activity made the subject so much fun and interesting. I love the Biology subject.

Findings for DARTs

DARTs have been received very positively by science teacher. They were more comfortable and confident in using DARTs in their classrooms. Students using DARTs found them much more interesting and challenging than the traditional classroom activities in science.
classrooms. Looking at teachers’ reflection, students’ comments, teacher created work on DARTs activities, and students’ responses on DARTs, I can confidently say that the idea of DARTS has been successful at the piloting stage. Below I share some reflections by teachers, and comments by students.

Farheen and Zahida, both secondary science teachers said they were comfortable while using DARTs activities in their classroom teaching. They were using DARTs activities almost in all lesson plans. They personally feel that, while using DARTs students developed some positive habits like:

- enhancement of the reading habit.
- greater concentration on the topic being studied.
- when students read the text with certain focused tasks, their conceptual clarity was maximized.
- these activities were not too time consuming

Getting some Feedback from Students of Class 7
Ahmed said that, “DARTS were a good way to enhance our reading skills”
Iqbal thought that, “It is a vigilant reading activity.” (sicence)
and Mujeeb felt that, ”There is fun element through reading text.”

Conclusion
The major conclusion of my action research is that both the strategies used in the research confirm my initial expectations:

- They are easy to understand, explain and implement
- They do not require any special commitment of physical or financial resources
- They are practicable for both teachers and students
- They introduce variety and interest in the science classrooms
- They are useful for students’ conceptual clarification.
- In addition to improving the science learning of students, they also help improve their learning of English.

I will now plan for a wider, more systematic implementation of these strategies at the level of the Science department. Another important support will come from the group of teachers who have been active in trying out the new strategies in their classrooms. With their help it will be relatively easy for me to persuade other science teachers to adopt the proposed strategies. In the long run I see a greater change in the teaching and learning of science at all levels at AMS and other partner schools. What I have to try to ensure is that the change will be institutionalized and sustainable.

References
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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN A MIXED-ABILITY CLASSROOM IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CENTRE USING IIS SECONDARY CURRICULUM MODULE ON LITERATURE

Naurin Kheraj, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction

It is necessary for educators to maximize the learning potential of their students by attending to differences amongst them. Rather than of expecting learners to adjust to the lessons they plan, teachers need to plan their lessons to adjust to the learners at hand. To do this effectively, it is important for teachers to understand and know their learners’ current skills, strengths and challenges, interests and preferences, needs and goals. It is therefore the teacher who plans, carries out various approaches to content, process and product in prediction and response to student differences in readiness, interest and learning needs (Tomlinson, 1995).

Reflecting my past teaching experiences, within a secular and Religious Education system, I came across wide variety of students’ needs and support that was required of the teachers, which includes individual, social, perceptual, and practical experience. The students needs and support enabled me to successfully differentiate assignments, and to some degree my instruction. However, sometimes the large class size becomes preventive and reason to not differentiate instruction because of varying and many needs of the learners that require heavy time investment from a teacher.

The research study was undertaken as part of the MTeach (Master of Teaching) Practice-Based Enquiry module as part of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) STEP (Secondary Teacher Education Program). In this report I will examine if DI can be effectively implemented in a religious education classroom in Karachi using the IIS Secondary Curriculum module on Literature (On the Wings of Words: Selection from Muslims Devotional and Ethical Literature), I find DI to be of primary importance as the Secondary Religious teacher (RE) because I feel the approach would allow me to develop an ideal environment for the RE classroom, where not only inclusivity but cooperative learning would underpin the curriculum. Involving smaller classes would allow me to effectively understand the learning needs of our students. Moreover, the study would lead teachers to examine their practice and engagement with the curriculum.

I taught two days a week that is Monday and Wednesday for six weeks. I taught fourteen students of grade eight STEP class along with a host teacher. My teaching timing was from 6:15 p.m. till 8:00 p.m. The classroom was spacious enough to allow fourteen students sit on chairs with tables and had all facilities required for teaching. It had a large cupboard to fill student’s workbook, sheets and other student material. Class started with an assembly in a circle, then broke into small group’s task and re-convened in plenary. The last ten minutes of every class was dedicated to journal writing. Every week students were given guiding
questions to assist them in writing their journals. The regular attendance of the students was satisfactory and my class consisted of equal number of boys and girls.

It becomes increasingly important to encounter students with different needs, whether they are cultural, physical, intellectual, social or emotional, that the educators need to implement Differentiated Instruction as a requirement for students to engage in learning which is inclusive, rich and critical. As demonstrated by the literature review, there are certain common challenges associated with Differentiating Instruction.

**Aim of the research**

The question of the current study is “Examining how Differentiated Instruction can be effectively implemented in a Religious Education Classroom in Karachi, Pakistan using the IIS Secondary Curriculum module on Literature (*On the Wings of Words: Selection from Muslims Devotional and Ethical Literature*). The main purpose of the research was to examine how the teaching of the literature module can be differentiated to support the varying needs of the learners as they seek to meet the outcomes of the subject matter.

**Methodology**

The most effective manner to carry out this research was to use a case study approach. The methodology that I employed was based on the ‘*Grounded Theory Approach*’, which is associated with qualitative research.

The main purpose of my research is to examine how the teaching of the literature module can be differentiated to support the varying needs of the learners as they seek to meet the outcomes of the subject-matter. The study would lead other teachers to observe their practice and involvement with the curriculum and student learning. DI is dynamic and requires “ongoing collaboration in order to monitor progress of the student and adjust the learning activities as and when needed” (Rutledge, 2003).

**Data Collection Methods**

The current research employs methods to gauge different perspectives of the students in arriving at how student learn to triangulate the data.

Learner profile of each student by the host teacher gave me an idea on how students are learning in the classroom. The profile highlighted learners needs, wants, their learning styles, beliefs, attitudes, and their abilities which helped me to plan and develop appropriate material and activity that would be useful for student’s learning process. In short during the process of DI I was informed by the data and learner needs. Below is the data collection strategies used in my research.

**Pupil Diary**

Pupil diary was one of the ways to gain insights on general environment of the class and the progress of an individual pupil in the class. It informed me about the reflections made by students which I utilized to identify their perspective and problems that occurred during the course of research (Denscombe, 2007). I find their pieces subjective and less explicit to
illustrate their feelings on my teaching episodes (Hopkins, 2008). Hence, I accounted for that by probing students further on their responses and also through the focus group and interview sessions.

**Focus Group and Interview**

Focus group sessions and interview with students offered greater depth and detailed information regarding the students’ engagement in learning. The questions used for focus group and interviews were flexible, and insightful. I presented myself as sympathetic, interested and attentive listener in order to make students feel valuable and appreciate their opinions (Hopkins, 2008). The approach helped me to create and foster a relationship of trust between me as a researcher and students which I think was a necessary component of creating differentiated classrooms (Hopkins, 2008).

**Field Notes**

Field notes were one of the ways through which reporting, observation, reflections and reactions to classroom problems were recorded in my research. They were the first source of information for me and were convenient tool to refer back and reflect on classroom activities. Though the method was time consuming and highly descriptive therefore tended to fall back on aids such as questions, videotapes and worksheets (Hopkins, 2008).

**Results and Findings**

In the current research I aimed to create a learning environment that was deeply reflective, communal, transformational and engaging for all the learners.

The following section discusses findings derived from the methods used in the research. The findings highlight how these methods impact the learning needs and my teaching episodes. Moreover, the findings give us a glimpse of whether the practice of DI created an inclusive environment and effectively engaged the students in the Literature module so that they had positive learning opportunities.

**Episode one**

In my first class, I wanted to get a sense of who the students are, what they wanted to learn. Initially I examined through questions and later I introduced some activities, for instance, wall poster reading, story narration and video analysis. The methods that I used for data collection were pupils’ diary and field notes. The following are the findings derived from these methods.

In order to gain preliminary insight of the learning needs of the students, I asked questions to students. These questions were: what is your favourite subject in school? Where do you like to study at home? What was your favourite project you completed in school? Are there situation you find it difficult to learn in? Students were asked to respond them verbally. I took notes after the class of their responses.

I introduced different activities such as wall poster reading, story narration and video analysis. I observed learning was happening through visual, tactile, and auditory experiences. There were many who preferred learning by listening, discussing, and by taking notes whereas
others would prefer learning by looking at things visually. In my upcoming classes I continued similar pattern of activities to investigate more on learning needs of students.

**Episode Two**

During this phase of my research I formally started collecting data. The major activity that I incorporated in the analysis were debate that included sub activities like mind-mapping, video analysis and group presentation. Besides debate, focus group was also conducted. In order to derive findings of the activity I employed videotape recording, field notes and pupil diary as my key tool.

**Third Episode**

In the final week of my research practicum, I went for a grand reflection. The reflections were the example of how student learning has taken place. It is through these reflections I began to learn more about the students over the practicum phase. Though I tried to be intrigued each week, investigate how different the needs of the students were. But, the research time frame did not allow me to be more flexible in my attitude and practice to enable me to address the needs of the students more intensively. They are

- Understanding the learning needs of students
- Differentiating instruction according to the needs
- Increasing students’ engagement in the process of their learning.

**Analysis and Discussion**

The fundamental point to the research is breaking down traditional barriers of classroom instruction in order to embark on a journey that is inclusive and supportive to each student and will lead to communal success. DI, in these perspectives created equal opportunities on one hand for students to access the curriculum and on the other hand, opportunity for teachers to offer students a variety of learning experiences. As a teacher I believe “We must help them to learn how to think about their learning and to learn how to learn. Moreover, knowing what works for them when learning something new will help them to learn more efficiently in the future” (Grace & Gravestock, p.38).

This research, I believe could be taken further to improve the practice of educators. The research did shed light on my own teaching practice. I believe teaching in a ‘one size fits all’ does not always suit the best interest of the students. Rather meeting the needs of the students in different ways would lead to effective learning. Therefore, in order to understand different learning theories and have a better understanding of how students view the learning process, I implement a process of differentiation that is well informed and has the greatest potential for success.

In future I would like to explore the impact of this research in other RE’s. Do my fellow teachers draw similar findings or they would produce different result? Hence, such establishment might challenge my research validity and reliability. The research happened in a very short span of time therefore, I would like to explore how inclusively student’s individual differences are challenged and affect their overall learning. Finally, the idea of
examining student impact, it is essential to examine the question: “How do we know students are learning?” Hence not only throughout this study, but in future the question needed to be considered and value in order to achieve different outcome based on assessments and needs of students.

**Conclusion**

To conclude through this research, DI is made possible in RE to address the diverse learning occurring in the classroom. While it does require great effort on the part of teachers it is a teacher responsibility to take students to the same destination while using different modes of transportation. Therefore it is beneficial only when it has impacted student’s achievement and engagement. Initially, I intent to encourage inclusion and cooperative learning to ensure that all the students, regardless of their needs, are feeling supported in the RE. Such initiation would encourage students to attend REC and achieve success. Though the idea of motivation was not my primary factor for the research but I would like to examine it further in some literature to determine whether it can be an indicative factor in helping to assess the success of DI. Furthermore, this research would give an opportunity to examine the role of students. Since DI is a student-centered approach, it could begin to help carve out a role that students can play rather than being just passive learners in the classroom.

Results from the student’s focus group as well as my personal journal indicate that the class had students who appreciate, the choice and the variety of pedagogies employed in class. I expected students to respond positively to DI because it is personalised and take their needs into account. Moreover, in future I would like to examine the assessment and practice of DI to maintain the diversity of learners and constraints of voluntary religious education.

**Reference**


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HOW CAN COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES SUPPORT STUDENTS’ LEARNING WITHIN THE KARACHI, PAKISTAN CONTEXT?

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Abstract

This qualitative action research was undertaken with an aim to explore how collaborative strategies (CS) support students’ learning within the Karachi, Pakistan context. The main purpose of this study was to lead students’ talk in order to construct and co-construct their knowledge. It also aimed to enhance students’ motivation and self-reflective skills towards their learning. Additionally, this study looked into students’ responses to CS such as role-play, debate and think-pair-share in a Religious Education (RE) class. The data was collected through various methods which include, students’ interviews, students’ and teacher’s reflection journals and students’ work. The findings of the study demonstrate that by using CS, student learning takes place. Thus, the implementation of CS allowed students for an active participation, provided an opportunity to work together in small groups, promoted dialogue and created knowledge in order to achieve a common goal. However, there were some challenges, such as gender differences, which were encountered during the course of the study that require further research. The findings showed that students’ involvement in group work was affected when they were placed in mixed gender groups. On the contrary, working with friends and same gender groups enhanced students’ motivation, interest and participation towards the task.

Introduction

Learning is a cooperative process in which the interaction between people is defined as “fundamentally inter-personal and social in nature” (Illeris, 2007:23). In order to encourage this social aspect of learning, Watkins (2005) highlights the importance of collaboration among learners in order to share and produce new knowledge. Similarly, my exposure as a student and also as a teacher in London has led me to realize the importance of using collaboration as an effective means of learning. It is challenging, yet essential to introduce CS in Pakistan context in order to engage each student in the learning process. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of CS in supporting students’ learning within the Karachi context.

The study explores the main aspect of students’ learning:

- Dialogue/talk that enables students to construct and co-construct knowledge.

The subsidiary aims are:

- Enhancing students’ motivation through CS.
• Encouraging students to think, share and interact within groups to achieve a common goal.
• Developing a sense of self-reflection among students about their learning.

Context of the Research
The research was conducted in an area of Karachi, Pakistan in one of the RE, henceforth known as Centre A. I taught approximately fourteen; grade 7 students, aged 12-13 years old over a period of six weeks. Students were taught the draft form of the Ethics and Development module (EDM) designed by the IIS.

Literature Review

Learning as a Social Process
Lave and Wenger (1991) cited in Wells (1997:4) state that “learning is not a separate and independent activity, but an integral aspect of participation in any ‘community of practice’”. However, in Pakistan, to build learning communities is challenging, as teachers are primarily expected to transmit knowledge to students. Consequently, CL is one teaching approach that engages students in meaning making and views teachers as facilitators who develop students’ abilities to learn rather than transmit information Gokhale (1995).

The term cooperative learning and CL are different, yet often used interchangeably. Dillenbourg (1999) defines CL as “a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together”. In this process, the role of a teacher is to become a community member along with students in search of knowledge. In another view, it is an approach that is “imposed by the teacher and is designed to achieve a specific goal or end product” (Abrami et al., 1995).

Factors Supporting Collaborative Learning
In CL, talk is an important factor for knowledge construction. Bruffee (1993:3) argues, “Knowledge is something people construct by talking together and reaching arguments.” For this purpose, teachers need to design CS that foster talk and explore ideas by making arguments. Mercer (1995) classified this talk as exploratory talk. In collaboration, peer interaction can promote exploratory talk among students. In order to promote critical ability of the students, Watkins et al. (2007) suggest that it is important to engage students in dialogue, where through conversation they process meanings and construct new knowledge. As a result, to relate learning with personal experiences, teachers are required to facilitate student dialogue.

Collaboration with peers enhances students’ motivation toward learning tasks. CL comprises of a unique learning environment in which students are self directed towards their learning goals (Dobos, 1996). In collaborative contexts, a teacher’s role is to ensure all students use their self-autonomy effectively and have equal opportunity of sharing ideas. Hence, collaboration among the learners turns them into “effective help-seekers and effective help givers” (Watkins et al., 2007: 91).
Another aspect of collaboration that benefits from group interaction is self-reflection. Waktins (2004: 5) characterized CL as “interplay of private and public reflection”. In this process, engaging in self-reflective thinking enables students to recall and evaluate their previous learning experiences. Thus, students are required to reflect on the activity and its learning outcomes and then make connections with their personal lives.

During this study, the identification of gender differences among students in the RE classroom is not something recent, but has been part of my social and cultural context. As Bullen, Moore and Trollope (2002:203) proposed that forming groups based on sitting arrangements, or teacher selection is desirable “to ensure that no one is left out for social, academic, or racial reasons” (ibid:44). Similarly, friendship groups are not always successful, as it does not give children the opportunity to work with diverse perspectives (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992).

**Methodology**

To carry out this research, I chose an action research approach which was qualitative in nature, where “theories are not validated independently and then applied to practice… they are validated through practice” (Elliott, 1991:69). This research approach is suitable because its aims are consistent with the objectives of my small-scale research project.

**Data Collection Methods**

Four different data collection methods were used. In which, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with the mixed gender group of eight voluntary students at the beginning and at the end of my research. Semi-structured interviews gave flexibility to raise questions based on the students’ responses. My reflection journal and field notes were written during and after every teaching session. Moreover, students’ reflection journals were maintained on a daily basis as it allowed me to collect students’ perspectives about my teaching approach. Furthermore, some guiding questions were provided to review students’ experiences of CL. For example, what did they learn? How did they learn? Which teaching strategies helped them to learn and Why? Lastly, students’ works was used, which informed me about the students’ involvement, organization and understanding of their ideas and creativity in their responses, which they gained in collaboration.

**Findings and Analysis**

The following themes emerged:

**Enhancement of Students’ Motivation**

One of the most prominent themes to emerge from the study was students’ motivation in collaborative tasks. It was evident from the students’ interviews that collaboration enhanced student participation and encouraged them to become active during the learning process.

The study demonstrated that constant teacher involvement, unclear instructions and repetition of learning outcomes have an effect on students’ participation. Students’ views support the idea that a teacher-centred approach can hinder students’ learning and de-motivate them if
there is a less opportunity of interaction between students. Therefore, students appreciated activities when the teacher facilitated their learning and listened to their ideas. As a result, the implementation of CS in my STEP classes engaged students, at times excited them and enhanced their motivation. For example, during the role-play, students enjoyed interacting with peers and discussing their ideas.

One of the most important things that came out of the study was that working with friends and within same-sex groups maintained students’ interest and helped them to achieve the desired outcomes. I had not originally anticipated the significance of these factors.

The student’s responses showed that gender differences can hinder students’ learning in group. Students’ nervousness of the opposite sex created difficulty in trying to develop a positive relationship between the boys and girls. Due to shyness, students were unable to share and understand each others’ ideas. As a result of ‘disorganization’ and ‘miscommunication’, there was frustration and students started blaming each other (Teacher’s Reflection, 21-05-2011). Considering the gender differences challenge, I gave students an opportunity to form their own groups, consequently students in single gender groups were comfortable, engaged, organized and presented their arguments creatively.

Additionally, to minimize differences between students, I used the think-pair-share activity that I felt would engage students in discussions. For instance, one student said that “in think-pair-share…I found similar answers that made me feel better that I am on the right track…with partners, we can share our ideas” (Student Interview, 21-05-2011).

Some of the students’ responses offered a contrasting view on group work. According to them, working in groups discouraged them as they had fewer opportunities to work with their own skills. In contrast, in individual tasks, they were “active” rather than “passive” because they worked without any pressure (ibid). The research reflects that solely forming groups does not guarantee student collaboration as students have individual learning needs. Particularly in my context, it becomes important to understand that similar to other skills, the ability to work collaboratively is a skill that is developed over time, facilitated by the teacher. But at the same time, we need to recognise that some students prefer to work in groups.

**Encouragement of Talk**

The findings of the study indicated that in collaborative tasks, students enhanced their understanding when they were provided an opportunity to talk.

Students C: “…in project work we learned things, shared, discussed and enhanced our knowledge. In REC, in STEP classes…in groups, we enjoyed and learned a lot” (Student Interview, 02-05-2011).

The above responses revealed that the students’ past experiences of learning did not allow them to interact with their peers. However, in STEP practicum classes, the students expected the teacher would provide an opportunity of two-way communication. This was encouraging for me. According to the students’ views, they understood their lesson by sharing and interacting with each other, but a challenge for them was to initiate interaction with mixed gender groups.

Student D: “…with friends when we talk, we remembered that conversation because of it was a fun discussion” (Student Interview, 20-05-2011).
In class, I observed that in mixed gender group discussions, those students who were with friends talked a great deal. Their participation level had increased, as they knew each other from their secular schools. However, in mixed gender groups, discussions between girls and boys hardly progressed, as the girls felt shy. It is noted that having friends in group facilitated students to share their ideas confidently and understood the lesson objective.

Collaborative talk among students allowed them to turn their thoughts into arguments using their prior knowledge. I observed that the arguments were not directly relevant to the topic, the students lost track. For example, during the debate, instead of arguing on the relation between modernization and westernization, students only discussed modern inventions and their benefits. Thus, the data identifies that to encourage students to develop critical arguments for a purposeful debate; I need to explain what a debate is and how arguments are developed.

**Development of Students’ Self-Reflection**

In my STEP classes, I initiated the reflective practice and found that students do not know how to reflect. This practice involved the recall of lesson, the purpose of doing activities and their connection with the students’ lives. In every attempt, most students recalled the activities but were unable to reflect why it was done. In order to direct students’ reflective skills, I used revision charts in which three questions were posed at the start of the lesson: what, how and why you learnt? It is noticed that while reviewing, students’ responses were improved as some students’ responses encouraged other students to share new learning points.

The data demonstrated that through role-play students were able to recall their learning points easily, hence, they were reflecting upon their roles and responsibilities as a human being in order to overcome the world challenges. Additionally, it is clear from the above examples that students developed a good understanding of the topic, as talking with peers allowed them to ask questions, motivate each other to share their ideas, and helped them to recall and personalize the lesson.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The idea to initiate CL in my context was to support students’ learning by engaging them in dialogue with their peers. According to Mercer (1995) CL approach relies on social aspects of learning where knowledge is constructed socially between people. To promote this idea, through CS, learning communities were built in the classroom so students could interact, share and develop new knowledge. Role-play, think-pair-shares, debates and group presentations are some examples of powerful teaching strategies that gave students opportunity to work in and produced meaningful work. During this research, it was observed that by engaging in these activities, students’ motivation, interest and understanding towards lessons increased and they took responsibility of their own learning.

From this study, I learned that in my class, initially stepping out from the teacher-centred approach and engaging students in the group activities was challenging. However, the use of CS brought changes in teaching style as I performed a role of teacher-facilitator in which proper instructions were given in order to lead students’ learning and provide maximum opportunity of interaction.
Talk among students is an important element of CL that was prominently observed during this research. The findings of the research demonstrated that students’ knowledge and understanding level increased when they talked among themselves, which resulted in constructing and re-organizing their knowledge.

Furthermore, students preferred working with same gender or with friends. However, composition of groups, which includes number of members, their gender, and their participations, is one factor that affects the results of the collaborative task (Dillenbourg et al., 1996). Respectively, the findings showed that, to achieve the goal of CL is challenging as the decision of organizing mixed gender groups can affect the relationship between students and the quality of learning (Tunnard and Sharp, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to promote and develop acceptance among students to work in mixed gender groups.

In conclusion, this research provided me with an opportunity to explore the effects of CS in the Karachi context. From the findings I found that CS such as, role-play and debate enhance students’ motivation and interest towards the content. Group discussions among students assisted them to internalized lesson objectives effectively. However, the findings demonstrated that because of shyness, students in mixed gender groups had difficulty interacting with their peers; which caused disorganization of the group. Conversely, students collaborated well with their friends in their group as they had positive relationships between themselves. Thus, despite the challenge of gender differences, CL approaches provide an opportunity for students to have two-way interactions in the classroom and produce meaningful learning.

References


TO WHAT EXTENT, TEACHER’S QUESTIONING AND ITS APPROACHES HELP STUDENTS ENHANCE THEIR LEARNING?

Munira Bhimani, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction and Rationale

This study explored the extent teachers’ questioning and its approaches help in generating discussion among students and how through discussions students enhance their critical understanding of the subject matter Ethical pathways to Human Development-the Institute of Ismaili Studies-Secondary Curriculum (IIS-SC). This study was conducted from January-March 2012, in one of the Religious Education Centres (REC) of Karachi, administered by ITREB-Pakistan. The rationale for this study was my own learning experience from the secular school system, where the predominant paradigm of imparting knowledge was based on the behavioristic model of learning that revolves around repetition and memorization (Siddiqui, 2010). This model is still prevalent in the main-stream schools, where teachers ask questions and often students respond out of their rote-memorized repertoire, already provided to them. This provides very little room to students to get engaged in active learning and to question, thus hinders their critical thinking (Palme, 1999 and Rehmani 2003). Carnell and Lodge (2003:11) termed this as reception model, in which learner is “passive recipient of knowledge”.

Looking at the inadequacies of this model, I always try to facilitate students in enhancing their critical thinking and understanding through questioning, which provides a pathway where I can lead them towards higher order thinking. With time, I realized that I need to adopt some sort of questioning approach/technique that could help me in organizing my random questioning. Hence, I sought to learn the application of Socratic and Semantic Tapestry questioning approaches with their various techniques (Chin, 2007) in REC during my research practicum. The context of REC in Pakistan is in transition mode, which is moving from the reception to the constructivist and co-constructivist learning models. This will take some time but initiatives have already been taken by introducing IIS Curriculum at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Teachers are also being educated through various educational programmes. Also the philosophical and the pedagogical underpinnings of the curriculum emphasize on students’ active and interactive participation, wherein they can critically examine the content, ask relevant questions, discuss diverse views, and articulate “their own viewpoints by putting forward cogent arguments” (Moore, 2000; IIS SC-Teacher’s Guide, 2010:13).

Methodology and Methods

This study was qualitative, based on the Constructivist paradigm, where researcher and research participants together construct the reality (Robson, 2002; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This study was found to be in accordance with this paradigm as the applicability of teacher’s questioning with various approaches was dependent on students’ learning and this reciprocity was revealed in data analysis, both equally contributed to this study.
Furthermore, looking at the empirical nature of the study, I employed an Action-based approach, which provided a room for a self-reflective inquiry (Schon, 1995) and I realized the shortcoming in my previous questioning while executing the new ones. This constant mode of reflection allowed me to understand the applicability of those techniques and its impacts on students’ learning by observing their participation, evaluating those techniques, identifying possible alternatives in a form of other techniques, and undertaking appropriate actions (Paton and Mc Calman, 2000). The evidences were collected from Audio-tape as a primary data source with teacher’s and students’ reflections. Data were analyzed interpretatively particularly the verbal transcripts of classroom discourse.

Findings and Data Analysis

Findings revealed that the implementation of the aforementioned questioning approaches resulted first, in the emergence of an inquiry-based process in a form of discussion. Second, it helped teacher in formulating this process in such a manner that students were able to rationalize their learning through critical thinking and their own questioning. The entire process of data collection was divided into three episodes; episode-one starts with the application of the Socratic-questioning to scaffold students’ thinking for the conceptual change, episode-two focuses on the emergence of their questions through Semantic-Tapestry questioning approach and by applying the same approach episode-three deals with the co-construction of Knowledge. Following evidences have been selected particularly for this paper, which will not follow the above episodic sequence, furthermore, students’ as well as teacher’s learning are presented together:

Evidences 1

To frame the initial classroom interaction and students’ thinking I adopted Socratic questioning approach, which comprises of three techniques such as, Pumping, Reflective-toss and Constructive challenge. Through these techniques teacher asks a series of questions to guide students’ thinking and facilitate them to articulate their ideas, instead of lecturing (Chin, 2007). To enquire about students’ prior understanding, I applied Pumping questioning technique. First, I put onus on them, encouraged them through explicit requests and by giving positive and neutral feedback so that they could share their existing knowledge (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). This technique helped me in extracting their previous understanding of ethics and the scope of their knowledge seemed “[...]quite wider for example they know about the environmental and the social issues like orthodox-thinking, poverty, discrimination, joblessness, illiteracy” but the depth of their understanding is required to be dug in “[...]like, how they perceive orthodox-thinking and discrimination[...]” (Teacher’s Reflection).

The above evidence and other findings showed that this technique worked well, students explicitly shared whatever they knew as they were not interrupted by any intervention and were not provided with any information or perspective that could influence their thought process. Thus, as a teacher, I learnt how to control my interventions and I was able to provide students time to process their thoughts and articulate them further (Hogan & Pressley, 1997).

Evidence 2

To climb the ladder of the critical thinking, it is important for students to rationalise their knowledge and understanding. Reflective-toss questioning technique facilitated students to
reason out their responses, they were able to make their ideas clear with relevant examples. This technique consists of a typical sequence, which starts with student’s statement moves to teacher’s question for giving back the responsibility to student to think further and follows by student’s response with some details (Van Zee and Minstrell, 1997).

The feature of throwing back the responsibility on one student to think on his/her utterance and reason it out, not only helped in advancing his/her thoughts but this stimulated others as well to reflect on their responses. For example; during the discussion on the causes of societal injustice and inequality, one of the students mentioned about the orthodox-thinking as a social issue, I propelled her to think by asking how she perceives this. She said: “[…]girls’ marriages at their early age are trends set by such orthodox people, who are narrow-minded.” I acknowledged her response and observed that another student added to these points: “[…]sons are more privileged than daughters and are considered as future support[…]daughters are forced to get married at early age after that they can’t acquire further education[…]precisely, girls are not provided with their rights[…]” (Audio-recording).

I found this strategy worth-applying as it created a ripple effect just like a stone creates a ripple effect in a form of circles when you throw it in a water pond, this strategy exactly worked in a similar manner, one thought of a student influenced others’ thoughts. Their ideas generated a dialogue, wherein they complemented and built on each other’s responses and examples (Crook, 1994), also, they considered critically a variety of views, observed the discussion and their own thinking (Van Zee and Minstrell, 1997).

Evidence 3

During this process, there were some moments when students were having disagreements due to difference in their interpretations, some of which needed to be rejuvenated and for this purpose, I switched to the next technique, the Constructive challenge. Before this, I was continuously applying the Reflective-toss technique till a moment when I encountered with one of the student’s misconception and I started applying the new one. As per this technique, I posed a question to challenge his thinking and encouraged him to revisit his response instead of correcting it (Chin, 2007). Findings showed that initially, he was reluctant even to listen to the diverse interpretations. This was evident when we were further discussing the issues of girls’ marriages at early age and veiling, he counter-argued that it is not because of the orthodox-thinking, it is their tradition. I intervened by saying that traditions can be questioned but he was not ready to accept this. In this scenario, initially, I learnt to fail in teaching and learning process because change was not taking place, as that student did not reflect back on his misconception. I learnt to struggle with deep seated misconception “and resistant to change” (Clement, 1987:3 cited in Smith, III; diSessa; Roschelle, 1994), hence, I reapplied this technique by allowing students to first articulate their understanding and then created a frame of questions to present the reality for their conceptual change. Following is the evidence;

Student A: during Prophet Muhammad’s time, there was a trend of veiling and it is not because of the narrow-mindedness.
Teacher: you mean the tradition of veiling, which has become an issue in our context, that issue is not the result of orthodox thinking
Student A: yes, it is a tradition
**Student B:** In some families, girls are forced to veil as it is considered a sign of modesty and purity whereas those who don’t put on veil means they don’t possess good character [...] girls should be trusted and provided with their rights.

**Student B continued:** those girls who veil, they lose their confidence, they can’t face this world [...] they have some kind of fear that if they would do something then their parents will scold them [...] they can’t face male members of the society.

**Student A:** [...] I do agree but we need to understand the reason behind the veiling, actually, those who force their daughters to veil, they know that their daughters possess good character but some boys do not have good intentions and give bad looks to girls, that is the reason, parents prefer their daughters to veil.

**Teacher:** then who needs to be changed [...] Either you force me to veil or they should change their attitude [...] Should they respect girls or make them more suppressed [...] veiling is not exclusive to Islam and to Muslim societies [...] Islam and other religions teach modesty and there are other ways to practice it.

**Student A:** [...] their attitude needs to be changed (Audio-recording).

The above evidence alludes that this framework neutralized the interference of misconception by validating the new concept, finally students internalized it to a certain extent and conceptual change started to take place (Smith, III; diSessa; Roschelle, 1994). This might take more time because when students encounter with a different or new notion against their preconception they go through a peripheral change in order to situate the new one in their existing knowledge. Thus, as a result, the hybrid idea occurs for this reason, this process of conceptual change has also been termed as conceptual growth (Duit and Treagust, 1998).

**Evidence 4**

Looking at students’ responses and approach towards learning process, I planned to move them further in their critical thinking and understanding, through Semantic Tapestry-Focusing and Zooming technique, which works where students’ thinking needs to be guided from macro to micro perspectives (Chin, 2007).

Findings revealed the gradual enhancement in students’ critical thinking, which was evident from the nature of their questions that reached to a point where debates and critical discourses were generated. For example while discussing developmental projects at macro level, one of the students asked “If there is development then why there is an issue of basic necessities in this world?” Another student questioned: “in last 65 years, since our country’s independence, the financial liabilities have been increasing, so how will it be possible to think of its development? who is going to pay off in this corrupted society/government?” (Audio-recording).

**Evidence 5**

Looking at such learning process, they were involved in higher order tasks of project-work. They were provided with some guided questions, which were framed in a form of a Focusing and Zooming-questioning technique. Following evidence shows that while working on a project, students were engaged in a group discussion and were applying their skills of reasoning, synthesizing and co-constructing knowledge. According to Watkins, Carnell and Lodge, (2007:17), “…in the third model, co-construction, the classroom operates in a way where learners create knowledge together, and they may create a collaborative product from this”.
Student A: “Group discussion on renovating area helped us in taking certain measures to stop pollution”, Student B: “through such activities, innovative ideas came in my mind to bring change in country”, Student C: “[...]every student participated actively[...]this session provided us time to think about solutions to problems” (Students’ Reflections).

“Students are gradually stepping up the ladder of critical thinking for instance, they have been constantly thinking and asking questions about resolving prevalent issues, now today they got the opportunity to work on at least one issue[...]” (Teacher’s Reflection). As one of the students said: “If at this age we can find solutions then might be, in future, anyone of us can take these steps for betterment to uplift country’s condition” (Student’s Reflection).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated that Socratic questioning and Semantic tapestry with their various techniques played a significant role in enhancing students’ learning via developing their critical thinking process. Over the period of eight-weeks, various activities were implemented; all were framed with questions based on the aforementioned questioning approaches and techniques. Through these activities, students were involved in an enquiry process which started with their conceptual change based on their questioning and reasoning and then they reached to a level where they were able to question the root causes of the prevalent ethical and social issues in society and finally co-constructed knowledge to resolve these issues. Precisely, they were able to rationalize their learning by searching meaning in it.

This study proved to be a rich learning experience for me; I explored these questioning approaches and techniques and developed my questioning skills and knowledge. Besides these positive outcomes, there were some limitations, because of the shorter duration, I could not unfold each questioning technique more than once or twice and find its applicability in various other teaching episodes.

Lastly, I would recommend that every teacher should try and adopt these for their own learning in order to bring change in students’ way of thinking and approach towards learning and gradually, such initiatives can bring change in learning modes from the reception to the constructivist and the co-constructivist learning modes.

References


IMPROVING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF GRADE-6 STUDENTS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL, KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to improve students’ Oral Communication Skills (OCSs) in Lower Secondary Public school in Karachi by integrating lessons with the National Curriculum for English Language (NCEL) 2006. The research study focuses on the improving OCSs in a Pakistani public school context. The study was conducted in urban context Karachi Pakistan. In Pakistan two school systems work side by side. One is the private English medium schools and second is government Urdu-medium schools. English is learnt as a second language in both cases. It gives privileged access to the most lucrative and powerful jobs both in Pakistan and abroad. “It gives social prestige to one who can speak… In this role, it empowers the elite and keeps the power within it” (Rahman, 2002, P.320). In the context of Urdu medium schools where this research was carried out, as Bashiruddin (2003) states, “The students have no exposure to English in their everyday communication. Both students and teachers use Urdu or the regional language to communicate inside the class, and almost no exposure to English” (p.7). Thus language is learned for the sake of passing examinations, not for developing skills such as listening and speaking. Teachers mostly practice traditional teaching method which focuses on reading and writing skill but productive skills such as speaking is given no importance. As a result this skill is neglected, as Hodson (2006) pointed out, “the explicit teaching of speaking and listening has been neglected’ (p.2). Wilkinson as cited in Wilkinson, Davies and Berril (1990) also agrees that “the spoken language in English has been shamefully neglected”. These scholars explicitly have shown that teaching OCSs are neglected because of practicing traditional methods of language teaching. Even in annual examination there is no specific assessment rule for OCSs.

OCSs are the neglected competency in the public schools and teaching material for OCSs are also scarce. All Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) were taken from National Curriculum (NC) for English- 2006, under the competency of OCSs. In this regard NC guided me in developing teaching materials and activities. According to the NCEL-2006, there are five competencies and every competency has a standard. The third competency specifies the OCSs which has only one standard. Although the aim of the new curriculum is to provide opportunities and develop students competencies in English language but the entire focus is on writing and reading skills and OCSs are neglected as the curriculum says:

Listening and speaking skills are to be developed in the classroom context. Due to resources constraints, it is not possible in this first phase to test listening and speaking skills in all educational settings. However, understanding of appropriate language use in different contexts

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The capital of Sindh province and the biggest city of Pakistan.
will be tested through the written exam designed for just this purpose. National curriculum for English (2006).

As it becomes clear from the NC that our language teaching system is based on written examinations and thus one important skills i.e. OCS is ignored. Due to this, students’ communication skill is very poor and even language teachers themselves are not able to communicate in proper English. NC is not practiced even in most government schools. As a result it developed my interest to conduct an Action research (AR) project by making lesson plans according to the NCEL-2006.

**Key Terms**

Oral communication skills, Listening, Speaking, English as a Second Language and National Curriculum for English Language.

**Research Methodology**

For this study within qualitative research paradigm an action research design was adopted as it helped in using different teaching strategies and to develop action plans cycles in the form of lesson plans to improve and change the situation. As Norton (2009) agrees, “Action research is implying a form of self-reflective enquiry understanding by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice, their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out (p.52). Within action research, the spiral model (see p.19) of Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2000) was followed that required me to move systematically through the spiral of action research, such as to plan, act, observe, reflect and replan again, as they identify the process of action research as “a spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflected on these process and consequences of the change, re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting and so on” (Kemmis & Mc Taggart (2000) cited in Koshy 2005, P.52).

Although the whole class of 6 was taught but four research participants (two boys and two girls) were selected for this study.

A variety of tools were used to collect data throughout the three phases. The methods which used were observations, interviews, and audio recordings of the teaching sessions, reflections and document analysis. I was, as Rossman & Rallis (1998) mention, “a part of the process, continually making choices, testing assumptions and reshaping questions” (p.5).

**Findings and Discussion of the Study**

**Reconnaissance Findings**

The findings of reconnaissance showed that traditional teaching methods such as grammar translation method and rote learning were used which was very teacher-centred. The current practices seemed to be focused on teaching grammatical rules rather than developing students’ language skills. Textbook was used as a main source of teaching. In the beginning of the class, the teachers taught in Urdu. During the first observation, the teacher taught the students a topic from the Sindh textbook regarding ‘using a telephone’ a dialogue in which he translated
sentence by sentence in Urdu language. He verbally explained words’ meaning in Urdu writing down meaning on the blackboard and asked them to copy them in their notebooks. After the lesson he wrote down vocabulary on the left side and Urdu meaning on right side. For example;

Busy: Masroof hona
Funny: Mazah
Talkative: Ziada batey karne wala
Newcomer: Naya jo abi aye. Look at that teacher (pointing towards me) is newcomer. (F.N, 24/1/12).

The teacher spoke most of the time using L1 (Urdu language) and students were provided very few opportunities to speak. This situation is similar to what other researchers (Bahdur, 2009; Hussain, 2008; Bashiruddin, 2003; Sadrud-Din, 2003; Mehdi, 2000; Panah, 2000) found in their research studies. The teacher applied GTM, which limited the opportunities for improving OCSs of students. This seemed to be due to teacher’s lack of pedagogical skills and knowledge about using various teaching strategies and lack of exposure to the classroom practices of teaching English (Bahadur, 2009; Shughri, 2007; Bashiruddin, 2003). This compelled him to use traditional methods in his teaching English in classroom (Memon, 2000; Hassan, 1998). A recent study of Khan & Khattak as cited in Pawlak (2011) conducted in Pakistan also reveals that:

Most of the classes are teacher centered and provide no room for innovation on the part of the students. As the teacher occupies a place of authority, the students remain submissive. This leads to anxiety. It is evident from the findings that the students get confused whenever they are asked to speak English. This is due to the fact that they are in a high anxiety situation (p.147).

The evidence shows the same situation where teacher’s teaching practices neglected development of OCSs and the focus was given only to written tasks, as Bahdur (2009) & Shughri (2007) mentioned. Students used to be reluctant in participation in classroom because lack of opportunities provided by the teacher and there were some other reasons as well such as fear of making mistakes or being laughed at by other students as Ghafoor, 1998; Dilshad, 1998; Shughri, 2007 findings also reveal. As a result, the students spent most of the time copying the textbook tasks and teacher focused only on reading and written work.

All these facts and realities showed that there was a very limited space for learning English OCSs while literature on second language learning emphasizes on providing more opportunities to practice OCSs in classroom (Hedge, 2000; Slattery & Willis, 2001). If a teacher uses an encouraging language and gives confidence to students and creates conducive environment then students’ learning of OCS could be enhanced.

**Intervention and Post-intervention Findings**

To address the main research question “How can I facilitate students of Grade-6 to improve OCSs” I was of the belief what Bashiruddin (2003) asserts, “Teachers can make changes in their teaching practices if they are introduced to new teaching techniques” (p.33). Applying new teaching strategies such as demonstration, role play, discussion through pair and group work encouraged students’ participation in classroom activities and improving OCSs. Shughri (2007) also found that, “these strategies brought real life situations into the class, where students were provided with rich opportunities to express their ideas and exchange their
opinions” (p.72). During the three cycles the key themes emerged were students’ participation and responses in classroom activities increased, accuracy and fluency skills were increased, very limited code switching was observed, self and peer correction, imitation and questioning skills of students were improved.

Before assigning task, I demonstrated so that students could get ideas and complete it with understanding. Demonstrating the lesson and activities dramatically enhance interactions and facilitate spoken English. (Bahdur, 2009). They get to see gesture, facial expression and understand action of the role player. Researchers such as Grove, 2006; Sasikumar, Dutt & Rajeeva, 2005 also support demonstration for improving students’ speaking skills because it gives clues of what the person speaks.

It is learned that students’ participation could be improved by involving them in activities and keeping very close relations with them. If teacher encourages students it will enable them to do a task in good way. I also learnt that participation can also be improved setting social roles.

In demonstration, questioning techniques was used not only ‘what and how’ but also ‘why’ which helped students in improving OCSs. The findings of many studies (Cameron, 2001; Chin, 2006; Fisher, 2006) found teachers’ questions fruitful for involving in classroom activities which finally help students improve OCSs. While teaching lesson three, more questions were asked to get students involved in learning. Students started to give good responses, as in warm up activity (lesson three) students were asked by showing a chocolate that if they asked for it in English it would be given him/her. I got interesting responses such as “A chocolate”. ‘My chocolate’. ‘I love chocolate because it is protein’. ‘I like chocolate. Can I take chocolate sir” (CTT, 9/2/12). These small utterances showed that one participant responded with reason ‘because’ as in the first lesson they had been taught ‘giving reason’ using of ‘because’, so he applied previous learned lesson which showed progress in real setting environment. Similarly in another participant’s utterances message is exactly clear and fluent. Thus, it indicated that students had been improving with passage of time.

Role play and discussion were used to give opportunities for students practice oral speeches as these also provided students with ample opportunities to get involved in classroom activities and lesson interactive. Several other studies such as Shughri, 2007, Jabeen, 2005; Cameron, 2001; Ghafoor, 1998; Dilshad, 1998 also found these strategies useful in improving students’ OCSs if the activities are made related to real life situations and their own experiences. While chart presentation in group work, two participants Khatija and Hammid explained it verbally in this way, “we agree with this statement because girls is...um are very intelligent. She is very good hearing... girl is very hard work and good... girls are very good student. Girls are beautiful.. laughing...”. (CTT,10/2/12). Here it is clear that they accurately used ‘is’ with singular verb and ‘are’ with plural which is a good sign of their improvement. It was previously mentioned that they made this mistake but now it got improved. It also appeared that exposure to new strategies enhanced and improved students’ speaking skills. As Jabeen (2005) states, “Role play gives the learners the opportunity for realistic spoken language in the classroom (p.8) and it helps in building confidence and in the development of speaking skills”(p.22). Moreover, pair work and group work were also found to be effective in language classroom as they involved students and motivated towards learning language. This seems to be supported with other research findings (Bahdur, 2009; Shughri, 2007; Jabeen, 2005; Ghafoor, 1998; Dilshad, 1998).
Many research studies such as Block, 2001; Dobson, 1992; Sadrud-Din, 2003 informed that an encouraging environment facilitates students to perform better in speaking skills. To encourage speech, first, establish a comfortable, safe environment, one in which the students feel accepted and worthy. (Houk, 2005). I provided students conducive environment which enabled them to enhance their OCSs. For that I treated students with respect using encouraging language. Researchers such as Kottler & Gallavan (2008) have suggested that ELT should use inclusive language as police officers use because it will allow students to see how language is used in different circumstances. “Recognizing that you are a role model, use communication that is gender-neutral and culturally sensitive” (P.36). It was found that encouraging environment enhanced students learning of OCSs and they started to participate in pair and group work and it further helped them to realize their mistakes and errors and also supported them for self and peer correction. While teaching a lesson (refer to M6), two participants Khatija and Mahrin presented their verbal dialogue in ‘question- answered’ form in which they corrected each other:

Menrin: Can you play tennis very well?
Khatija: yes, I can play tennis very well.
M: Are you reading in English? Anyone know...(Confused)
K: …laughing…. var tumhara jawab tha...(that was your answer), yes, I am reading English very well.
M: And you… can drive?
K: Yes, I can drive very well. (C.T.T, 21/2/12).

The above mentioned dialogue clearly revealed that both were using English and correcting each other. They realized their mistakes and sometimes switched to Urdu when one did not understand other’s question. This dialogue showed that students improved their speaking skills because when correction and self realization starts then it is a sign of improvement. It is also revealed by other research studies that errors support in developing oral proficiency (Bahdur, 2009; Dilshad, 1998; Ghaffor, 1998). “An ‘error’ then is not something that hinders a student’s progress, but is probably a clue to active learning progress being made by the student as he or she tries out ways of communicating in the new language” (Yule, 2007. p.116). As a result student made self-correction which is independent learning and plays a key role in self-directed learning schemes.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted to improve students’ OCSs using the NCEL 2006 as an action planner. All lessons were made according to the SLOs of the NCEL since the actual implementation was considered necessary to be brought in the public school. Four participants were selected from Grade-6 to keep record of their improvement and progress before and after intervention. In pre-intervention three classrooms teaching of CL were observed and also his interviews as well as participants were taken in different occasion.

The findings of the reconnaissance and intervention as well as post intervention indicated clear difference and improvement. It seemed that new teaching strategies and various activities proved to be effective for students’ improvement. Thus, this study proved that students have great potential and interest to develop their OCSs but they need a favorable learning environment and teachers’ support, attention and commitment for students’ learning.
References


STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AT UC-TRC LEVEL – A HUB FOR TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Professional development is a continuous improvement process, on job training and support needed to improve teaching, it encompasses the processes that educators engage in to initially prepare themselves, continuously update themselves, and review and reflect on their own performance. The experiences suggest that continuing professional development is needed to reinforce learning and support educational change process. This paper encompass on strengthening the professional development for teachers at Union Council Tehsil Resource Center (UC-TRCs). Teacher Mentors, developed by AKU-IED, STEP Project initiated the Cluster-based Mentoring Programme (CBMP) and also providing teachers follow-up support through Schools visits. Teachers professionally support each other, which bring some positive change in classroom teaching practice. They were provided opportunity to learn about and enhance their pedagogical skills in working with different approaches to professional development. It is critical for teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn from each other. The best professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. UC-TRCs working as a hub for teachers’ professional development at Tehsil level in selected Districts of Sindh and Balochistan. This paper highlighted some of the experiences of District Killa-Saifullah in Balochistan. Professional Development opportunities provided for primary and elementary School’s teachers (male & female) at UC-TRCs level, specifically focused to enhance the subject-based pedagogical content knowledge, skills, integrating the gender perspectives in their work, with special emphasis on mentoring skills. These professional development activities provided support to mentors and cluster schools’ teachers, which show a change in their classroom practices. These initiatives help to enhance the mentors’ capacity to work with their cluster school teachers for improving their performance and impacting student learning.

Introduction

AKU-IED is implementing the Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) project in the selected districts of Sindh (Hyderabad, Khairpur, Sukkur, Thatta, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allahyar and Matiari and Balochistan (Quetta, Qila Saifullah and Chagai). The Project has been funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

The outcome of teaching and learning result aims to improve performance of teachers and education managers in delivering and supporting quality teaching and learning within the school and classroom by building the capacity of education teacher mentors, and teachers through a number of customized courses and innovative field-based models.
In this connection capacity of government primary teachers developed, to undertake quality teaching and learning in the classroom, 130 Teachers Mentors in total 4 subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies and English), through an Advanced Diploma in Primary Education (ADIPE) were trained in 2009 and 2010. These Teachers Mentors have initiated Cluster-Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP) through conducting workshops and provide continues Follow-up school visits at UC-TRC Level primary teachers activities in 2011 and will continue same for 4 years to improve the quality of primary education in selected districts of Sindh and Balochistan.

**Professional Development for Teachers at (UC-TRC) Level**

Improving teacher quality depends on improving professional development and improving professional development depends on creating meaningful learning experiences for teachers. The experiences suggest that continuing professional development is needed to reinforce learning and support educational change process. Teachers Mentors transformed existing Learning Resource Centers developed through a previous USAID funded programme into the more robust Union Council – Teacher Resource Centers (UC-TRC) or hubs for teachers’ professional development at the Tehsil level in their districts.

Literature reveals that Mentoring programs are recognized as effective ways to develop a sense of belonging, facilitate intergenerational transfer of knowledge and promote staff retention. By focusing on the development of human relations, such programs often have a positive impact on cooperation and the quality of teamwork.

Focusing on mentoring centered on professional development and the work world leads impacts on the personal and professional development of both the mentee and mentor. Professional development is a continuous improvement process, on job training and support needed to improve teaching, it encompasses the processes that educators engage in to initially prepare themselves, continuously update themselves, and review and reflect on their own performance. UC-TRCs or hub for teachers’ professional development provided ongoing learning opportunities to teachers through their schools and districts and play a vital role in School improvement.

**Cluster-Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP)**

Cluster Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP) is an innovative Field-based Model for professional development at UC-TRCs level for the teacher Mentees, to improve the quality of primary education in selected districts of Sindh and Balochistan. The Programme is conducted by the Advanced Diploma graduates teachers mentors since 2011. In each District UC-TRCs developed tehsil wise in schools, known as Nucleus School and the cluster schools are called feeding schools. Teaching learning resources provided to each UC-TRC, including books of four subjects, activity books, science & math learning material, globe, charts, Maps and story books along with other teaching & learning materials. Mentors used these materials in their workshops with mentee teachers and learning material also used by teachers in planning.
In each UC-TRC 20-25 teachers from cluster Schools are participating in the programme over the period of the project (4 years) and each teacher mentee of UC-TRC will receive 16 workshops per subject (Languages, Math, Science and Social Studies).

The CBMP is designed with the aim to help teachers to improve their content knowledge, enhance pedagogical skills, classroom management and students’ assessment strategies within the framework of contextual needs. On the completion of the 4 years programme, the teachers will be able to:

- reflect on their own practices and act to improve it;
- Enhance the content knowledge and teaching skills of the teachers
- demonstrate understanding of pedagogical content knowledge in 4 subjects and critically analyze the Standard based national curriculum.
- Develop gender objective for their teaching, learning and management practices,
- Use of gender inclusive teaching strategies, gender inclusive teaching and learning resources and use of gender inclusive classroom management practices.

**Structure of CBMP**

1. Face-to-face interaction: The mentors are conducting subject based workshops in their respective clusters on a rotational basis at UC-TRC level.
2. Follow-up Support Phase: Mentors providing continuous follow-up support to mentees in classroom teaching and learning, they co-plan, observe and provide feedback to the mentees.

**Experiences of District Killa-Saifullah in Balochistan**

This paper highlighted some field experiences of Cluster Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP) at UC-TRC Level in District Killa-Saifullah. Professional Development opportunities provided to primary and elementary School’s teachers (male & female) at UC-TRCs level, so it act as a ‘Hub for Professional Development”. Each UC-TRC provided with teaching & learning resources;

In Coaching and Mentoring by Parslow & Wray (2000), Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995) define it as a shared, meaningful relationship formed between two people in order to support successful knowledge, work or skills transitions. It is characterized by a feeling of mutual trust, with accountability as a core value. Gordon (1983) describes it. Communication, learning and reflection clearly convey the quality of the relationship of support that forms between the mentor and mentee. The mentor’s role is not to criticize, dictate conduct, rate performance, and rescue or create in the mentee a carbon copy of himself. These are mistaken concepts of mentoring and instead illustrate behaviors to be avoided.

- Professional development programme is going on for teachers, a continuous facilitation and support provided to improve classroom teaching
practices;

- Mentors engaged in the process of mentoring & professional development at school level, continuously update themselves, review and reflect on their own performance.
- Continuing professional development needed to reinforce learning and support educational change process.

Changes Observed in Mentee Teachers

It was observed that Professional development initiatives through CBMP at UC-TRC level and through follow up support to cluster schools’ teachers make a difference in teachers’ classroom practices and some positive change in other school activities. The following are some significant observations & reflections of teachers;

- Effective Classroom Teaching Practices: It was observed that the teachers were using practical activities in classrooms and students involved in learning process, they were discussing the activity and raising questions, like in teaching of Primary Science concept of Sound, students were involved in simple practical activities, which can easily be arranged in classrooms, mentee teacher provided students opportunities to learn and discuss themselves. This was a change at primary level the students were participated in practical activities.

Teacher’s Reflection

“We were not aware about the importance of these practical activities in teaching of science, we were just explained the content from text books and now learning from CBMP workshops I came to now that for effective learning students involvement is very important, now students enjoy by doing themselves they learn the concept” (Male Mentee teacher)

“As a math teacher at primary level in classes I never used practical activities. In Math workshops we learn through simple low cost materials the Math concepts, so I try to implement in my classes, the students take interest and everyone wants to participate in activities and this changes the overall classroom environment”. (Female Mentee teacher)

- Improved content knowledge of 4 subjects; Improvement in subject knowledge is the main success of CBMP workshops, because mentees developed content knowledge in four subjects by subject mentors of AKU-IED graduates, they introduced specific skills for teaching for specific topics, like how to teach History or Geography in Social Studies. During follow up mentors provided support in classrooms through demo lessons and co-teaching, which are very helpful and teacher’s confidence level developed.

- Lesson planning & maintaining portfolio: Teachers are now learned lesson planning technique and develop lesson plans in 4 subject areas, considering the objectives, activities and assessment methods. These skills gradually improved by classroom support, which is given by the mentors. All lesson plans, sample of students work and
Success Story of Female Mentee Teacher

This is a story of a female teacher, who is teaching in a multigrade school in rural area of Killa-Saifullah, in single Teacher School, she teaches to different classes and after participating in CBMP workshops and activities for the mentee teachers, which they have conducted in UC-TRCs. The importance of gender awareness in Education for male & female teachers, so mentors integrated gender objectives and activities in each workshop of CBMP.

- **Developed Gender awareness:** it is important to highlight here that Gender is an integral part of STEP Project, and teacher Mentors learned and plan workshops and activities for the mentee teachers, which they have conducted in UC-TRCs. The importance of gender awareness in Education for male & female teachers, so mentors integrated gender objectives and activities in each workshop of CBMP.

- **Low cost/no cost Material Used in classroom teaching:** It was significant that mentee teachers developed low cost and no cost teaching material for their classroom teaching. They learn these skills through CBMP workshop and involved the students. One of the mentee teacher Naseeb-ullah is teaching in his classroom, when mentor visited his school he observed that he were using low cost / no cost material like bottles tops, board sheet, paper cards and sticks and students work were displayed on classrooms wall. Students were encouraged by him and they all actively participated in classroom activities. These steps improve the classroom learning process.

- **Multigrade Teaching:** The Schools’ context of rural and some semi urban have the multigrade context of teaching, where teaching involves the teaching of children from two or more grade levels in one classroom. The professional teacher is a key resource person in the multigrade context. Teachers need special skills and techniques to manage and teach in such conditions.

A male teacher mentee reflected that: “These workshops change my thinking as a primary school teacher, before this I was not involved students in group work and in activities, but now I plan different activities for multigrade class. Students now taking interest and enjoy their learning. He also involved their parents and community to solve school problems”.

**Success Story of Female Mentee Teacher**

This is a story of a female teacher, who is teaching in a multigrade school in rural area of Killa-Saifullah, in single Teacher School, she teaches to different classes and after participating in CBMP workshops and with follow up support she developed some no cost material for her classroom teaching, such as activity cards, pictures, in teaching. I have observed that her students were engaged in learning process in different ways. By doing some card activity and in groups they were reading and writing. In multigrade class, it was quite difficult for her to involve and manage all students, but she reflected that now she is able to manage some issues of her class. She was appreciated and said that teachers training workshops and follow up help me to improve my classroom teaching before these CBMP, she was facing problem in managing the students of different classes but now she learn how to teach in a multigrade school, now she is able to use teaching & learning material in her class and students learn in groups through activities. She is very enthusiastic and reflected that it is our responsibility to motivate community so they can cooperate and send their children in School.
Conclusion
Continuing professional development is needed to reinforce learning and support educational change process. CBMP workshops mainly focused interactive methods of teaching, which help teachers to learn together through participation in thought provoking activities of teaching & learning. The continuous mentoring process facilitates learning opportunities. The professional development activities provided support to mentors and cluster schools’ teachers, which show a change in their classroom practices. These initiatives help to enhance the mentors’ capacity to work with their cluster school teachers for improving their performance and impacting student learning.

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SERVICE-LEARNING: A PEDAGOGY OF ACTION AND REFLECTION FOR STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACETS OF DEVELOPMENT MODULE

Samreen Rafique Ali, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction

The organization of schooling has long been associated with the idea of a curriculum. Researchers have grappled with questions like which include: what is a curriculum? And, how might it be conceptualized? Kelly (2009) criticizes curriculum merely as a product and states that curriculum is to be thought in terms of activity and experiences which continue to develop and respond appropriately to the changes in society and educational processes. This notion of examining broadening of curriculum is also mirrored by Brookfield (1990);

“curricula is not studied in some kind of artificial isolation, but that ideas, skills, and insights learned in a classroom are experienced in real life. Essential to praxis is the opportunity to reflect on experience…” (p. 50)

Dewey (1937) supports this idea and explains that curriculum serves a broader social purpose, which helps pupils become more effective members of the society. It enables the learner to inquire how this experience is related to other things they know.

Tyler 1949 also supports this idea and mentions that the real purpose is to bring about significant changes in the students’ behaviour in which teacher’s role is crucial that brings relevance of the subject matter that is to be taught and learned in an educational and real world setting.

Upon reflecting on the current scenario of the teaching and learning process in Karachi juxtaposed to the objectives of active involvement with the curriculum, this research explores how students learning of the core messages of the curriculum can be enhanced by providing the opportunity for the students to concretely apply their learning to the wider context in which they live in, a process termed, “service-learning” (Kinsley, 1995).

Learning: Make a Real Life Experience

Many teachers assert that learning is inherently active because students are involved simply the act of listening and/or note taking. However upon close scrutiny of the literature that has emerged on learning (e.g Watkins, 2005; Carnell and Lodge, 2002, Anderson 1999 and Claxton, 1996) suggest that effective learners do more than just listen: learner discuss and engage in higher-order thinking tasks of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Blooms, 1956).

In addition the studies above, active-learning as practicing some real-life learning experience by allowing the students to take initiatives, reflecting and monitoring their own learning. Ashworth (1997) gives importance to students’ participation in social interaction as being an important factor in the learning process. According to him, learning is more than a
matter of cognition; it is an enterprise which entails students being involved emotionally and socially in their learning (Dewey, 1932, Vygotsky, 1978).

Service-learning is one of the ways in which students are able to both be “actively involved” in their learning process and also allows for the manifestation of a broader definition of curriculum which links the physical curriculum (materials) to the experiences of the students to the wider world in which they live in (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

**Service-Learning: Classroom Learning to Real Life**

There is a mounting body of evidence documenting the efficacy of participating in service-learning during the undergraduate years in the Western hemisphere (Burman, 2004; Jones, 2004; Eyler and Giles, 1999). However, little is known about service-learning in secondary education especially within the Pakistani context. Rizvi (2004) identifies that in Pakistan only 7% of schools have social-service clubs, and all of these do not link or draw from the classroom experiences of the students.

Service-learning has been a popular educational philosophy for a very long time. Most trace its roots to the writings of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, who argue for creative responses in learning where learners need to be taken out of the context of their habitual routines and be challenged in a mode of thinking towards problem-solving and utilizing hands-on experience. Sheckley & Keeton, (1997) states;

“Service-learning is an educational approach... that provides a means of linking the academic with the practical experience. It promotes inquiry-based learning that reflects on individual experience and construct knowledge through dialogue with peers and community.....(p.32).

Since the early 1980, a majority of studies that were undertaken empirically show the benefits of service-learning in all sphere of student development: intellectual, personal and social development (e.g. Butin, 2005; Jones, 2004). Conrad (1989), mentions that it brings a sense of personal-efficacy, personal-identity, spiritual-growth, and moral- emotional development. According to Butin (2003), it promotes a sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills where learners look at their active role in the development of the society.

**Service-Learning Model**

Service-learning is a form of experiential-learning that calls for an ongoing cyclical procedure which engages the learner in the process of making sense of information, extracting meaning, reflecting on situations and relating information to real life. Building upon the earlier work by Dewey (1934) and Levin (1946), Kolb’s (1984) presents a cyclical model of learning, consisting of four stages shown in figure 2.1.
Butin (2003) supports the use and implementation of Kolb’s learning cycle in service-learning as it caters to the diverse styles of learners. Learner continually chooses which set of learning abilities he/she uses in a specific learning situation. The Table (2.1) below elaborates the four different learning styles under which learner can learn effectively.
Reflection on Service Learning

The majority of the literature published identifies critical role of reflection in service-learning that generates new insights into what activities learners do and why they do them (Butin, 2005 and Mcpherson, 1995). (Butin, 2005; Astin, 1997). Reflection provides “the transformative link between the action of serving and the ideas and understanding of learning” (Eyler, 1996, p.14).

Burman (2004) persuasively argues for collaborative reflection that shifts the private act of learning to allow for the creation of learning communities. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) view collaborative reflective practice as a social process that moves individual empowerment of expert (teacher/student) to group responsibility through which learners develop greater self-awareness about their learning and bring change through openness in dialogue and collective decision making. Such collaborative reflection may result in a non-hierarchical sharing of knowledge and/or dynamic co-construction of knowledge (Watkins, 2002)

Therefore if in service-learning students are collective empowered to reflect and make decisions about their learning, what then is the role of the teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners’ Learning Style</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divergers/Reflectors</td>
<td>Learn better in situations that call for generation of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are imaginative and emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilators/Theorist</td>
<td>Understanding a wide range of information and putting into concise, logical form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are interested in ideas and concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergers/Pragmatist</td>
<td>Learn better when provided with practical applications of concepts and theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have the ability to solve problems and make decisions based on finding solutions to questions or problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodators/Activist</td>
<td>Learn better when provided with “hands-on” experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They enjoy carrying out plans and involving themselves in new and challenging experiences. Their tendency may be to act on “gut” feelings rather than on logical analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 2.1 |
Role of a Teacher

The role of the teacher extends far beyond the simple definition of the expert of a repertoire of pedagogical skills and content knowledge: rather it involves the continuous dialogue to create the structures and processes through which the students are able to effectively learn (Carnell, 2002 and Watkins, 2005).

What emerges is that the role of the teacher in service-learning is facilitating and generating a community to learners. In this way, the teacher manages students’ learning by developing trust, providing equal opportunity and affirming the value of existing students' knowledge. The teacher would need to motivate students to adjust with new learning environment, encourage students in taking risks in using their newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations.

The literatures reviewed call for a qualitative research to explore the pedagogy of service-learning while implementing the “Facets of Development” module. To do this, the study focuses on research with students of one of the RECs in Karachi, Pakistan.

Research Methodology

The research is based on a qualitative research method with particular focus on action based research approach as it helps to understand the situation in its natural setting. An action research allows engaging in an ongoing cycle of systematic planning, acting, observing and reflecting (figure 3.1, Kemmis, 1982). By observing and on reflecting students’ suggestions and input onto their service-learning, relevant changes have proposed in the next lesson plan and thus embarked upon the next inquiry (Figure 3.2).

The students in the study were 13-14 years old (8 girls and 7 boys). During the study data was collected on an ongoing basis. Four methods were employed to collect the data: observation, audio-recording, focus-group discussion, and daily reflective journal from both the students and the teacher. Through these methods a variety of information was collected which help to understand the practice more deeply.
Findings and Discussion

Service-Learning bringing “Life to a Text”

Through the strategy of service-learning, students engaged in the process of finding the relevance of the text to their personal lives. Students felt that applying the text to the “real world” motivated them to become involved in finding solutions to some of the poverty problems (Butin, 2003). The findings indicate that getting directly involved in the application of the course material helped them to understand the key message of developing a sense of civic responsibility. The approach led by valuing the text, and applying the ethical values to a practical experience. The texts become emotionally engaging, critically reflecting and generalizing it with local examples (Figure 5.1).
**Student-Students Interaction: “Value the Differences”**

The study informed that students constructed their own knowledge of ethics in action when they were given the opportunity to work collaboratively in groups: (Carnell and Lodge, 2002) it promoted the co-constructivist model as opposed of the transmission model which made learning purposeful and self-directed (Anderson, 1999).

The research also indicated that students learn in a multitude of settings and in a variety of ways: intellectually, emotionally, physically, and simultaneously (e.g. Fried, 1999, p. 10). Indeed, students do not compartmentalize their lives, rather they live complex lives—“an interconnected web of varied experiences” (Magolda, 1997, p. 16). Service-learning provided an opportunity to all the students to contribute to their learning according to their own personal knowledge and skills; this inculcated a sense of acceptance in the group, between males and females for example, and allowed each other to tap into each other’s strengths, including those individuals who were generally regarded as slow learners in the classroom.

Effective participation in group work not only developed the capacity of individual students to self-reflect and self-monitor it created the opportunity to support other members of the classroom. The finding also suggests that respect and honesty in group interaction played an integral part in the class working together as a whole (Carnell and Lodge, 2002). With this genuine trust students were confidently identifying each other’s skills, learning styles as well as areas of improvement when they devised an entire procedure to collect junk from each of the apartment units.

**Ownership of Learning: “Communities of Learner”**

Empowering students to take an active role in their learning give them ownership of their learning which gradually develops into a “community of learners.” It is evident from this research that students form a community of learner where they felt challenged both affectivity and cognitively during both class discussions and service-learning. Rather than be asked to leave their emotions, opinions, and personal experiences outside of the classroom door, students were encouraged to reflect on their experiences in relation to the Module. Service-learning thus, provided an avenue to connect students’ living with their learning of ethical values as articulated in the modules.

In learning communities, it is important to understand that there is no “expert”, everyone including the teacher is a learner in the process Watkins (2000). However, in the context of Pakistan, the teacher is considered an “expert” who is responsible for the transmission of knowledge. This idea of the teacher as a learner in the class took some time for students to accept. And once that was done, the findings indicated that the students’ confidence to take initiatives without any fear increased. The learning becomes a collective activity that engenders collective power (Figure 5.2).
Role of Teacher: “Reflective Practitioner”

This study has provided insights into the role of the teacher in engaging students in the learning process. Teachers’ role from leading learning to facilitating learning evolved during the service-learning period of this research. There was evidence in the findings that with time and with more acceptance of the change in teacher’s roles and responsibilities the students were able to co-construct a learning community. The conducive environment, constant dialogue and reflective practice among students and teacher were inextricably linked to the change in teacher’s role.

What this study has illuminated is that a reflective teacher is one who is able to engage in reflective processes for themselves and engage students in reflective processes. For this initiative, teacher enables students to be open-minded, responsible risk takers and encourages a reflective discourse in the classroom. In this whole process both my students and teacher and continually reinforced the notion that all are learners.

Implication and Recommendation

The foregoing findings imply that service learning has the potential to promote students reflective thinking and assist them to examine their role in the wider social context in which they live by connecting the classroom learning to real life experiences. Teachers are needed to encourage their students to take an active role in their learning. The schools should incorporate experiential-learning as a core topic in the teacher learning programmes which will provide the teacher an opportunity to see the teaching and learning process beyond the classroom walls.

In the Pakistani Education System the teachers’ position and authority is unquestioned. Nevertheless, the implementation of service learning will allow teachers to reflect and re-examine their role as a teacher, in promoting student learning.

The finding of the research recommend that experiential-learning could be part of one of the pedagogical approach in the curriculum to guide teachers to initiate experiential-learning in the
classroom by making links with the real world.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, service-learning provides an additional means for reaching educational objectives. It is appropriate for service activities when learning objectives associated with the service are identified as a result of key messages of the lesson. The students and teacher found that using service-learning brings new life to the classroom, enhances performance on traditional measures of learning, increases student interest in the subject, teaches new problem solving skills, and makes teaching more enjoyable. In addition, service-learning expanded objectives to include civic education by implementing value outlook aims and objectives of this module.

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INVESTIGATING CHILDREN’S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT BY USING NARRATIVES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Introduction

The field of children’s spirituality is a relatively new area of exploration, however, a growing body of research is being established in this relation, yet there is much to be done (Hyde 2008). Spirituality has been understood and identified as an expression of religion by many authors for example Wright mentions that the religious education contributes to the development of children’s distinctive spiritual abilities rooted in religious traditions and brings them to a knowledge and understanding of religion (Wright 1998). Appreciating its significance for religious education, the research sets out to investigate a relatively unexplored area of enquiry, which is to discern the spirituality of REC students.

The research was undertaken as part of the MTeach programme which is a joint programme with IIS (Institute of Ismaili Studies) STEP (Secondary Teacher Education Programme). The research concentrated on one of the IIS secondary curriculum’s objective to nurture within Ismaili youth an intellectual and ethical commitment to their own beliefs while also encouraging students to respect other traditions and beliefs and in addition, making them sensitive and consciously reflective to the spiritual dimension within human existence (IIS module guide 2008).

The field of my research was the Religious Education Centre in Karachi, where Ismaili Muslim students are taught religious, historical and cultural education which is an informal medium of education. Participants of the study were comprised of 18-20 secondary students of 13-14yrs of age. They were taught for two hours twice a week for seven weeks. The study commenced from 2nd May till 22nd June 2010.

The study is significant because it endeavours to draw links between theories from literature and pedagogical approaches to secondary religious education class. It provides a conceptual understanding of children’s spirituality and also identifies possible methods for its exploration. I would argue that it is in the development of a child’s spirit, as in true identity, character and ensuing self-esteem. It is in this way a child’s ability can be unlocked, enabling them to make the most opportunities offered at REC, both religiously and socially, and hence to achieve their full potential.

The Aim of my Study

The aim of my study is to present and discuss the characteristics of children’s spirituality which were identified through narratives, conversations and observations of children religious education classroom. Also, to see the benefits of using narratives in nurturing children’s spiritual development. In addition, it also offers a description of spirituality and the way it is understood in my research.
Literature Review

The present era is observing an ever-increasing interest in the phenomenon of Spirituality and is evident in the vast array of literature. For example: Spirituality is considered by many psychologists to be an inherent property of the human being (Helminiak 1996; James 1977; Tacey 2003). Similarly, it is an exploration of the meaningfulness of our lives and our relationships to self, to others, to nature, or to a higher power that is thought to be the essence of spirituality (Hamilton & Jackson 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998). All of this specifies that the term “spirituality” has been used in different contexts with a multiplicity of diverse significance.

Focusing on children’s spirituality, Nye points that the key characteristic of childhood is their rich natural spiritual capacity, however keeping this in mind can radically influence ones view of children (1998). Exploring, Nye’s views further, the study focuses on children’s spirituality in particular. It further explores children’s process of spiritual development and importantly the relationship between the spiritual and the religious, and finally ways for teachers to assist children in accordance with their development so that they can express their spirituality.

Methodology

The chapter outlines the approach and describes phenomenology as the theoretical perspective with some of the practical details in terms of how, the research was conducted.

Qualitative Research

Situated within a qualitative paradigm, the study emphasizes the cyclic nature of the approach, as repeated observation is necessary to clarify an emerging concept, which in turn improves the quality of further observation.

Theoretical framework

The study took its impetus from phenomenological approach using this as the theoretical framework for reflecting, interpreting and attempting to understand the essence of human experience concerning a particular phenomenon. This involved studying a small number of students over a period of time to understand relationships of meaning. In order to understand students’ responses, two ways selected to be emphasized and researched; were listening to students’ own ideas about spirituality and exploring religious stories to develop their spiritual understanding.

Ethical Issues

The research focused on ethical guideline given by British Educational Research Association (BERA) at the IOE website. Also permission was obtained from the members of ITREB and the chairperson of REC. Proper written consent was also provided to participants prior to the research.

Action Research Approach

Action Research Approach was selected to investigate usefully.
**Data Collection Methods**

The section discusses three methods which were employed: focus group, observations, students’ reflective journals and teacher reflective journal to generate data which informed the basis of my findings and analysis. As use of questionnaire did not seem to produce any significant enrichment in the research; therefore it was only used at its least support in findings of the research.

**Data Analysis**

Relevant to my focus and for an in-depth analysis of the study, I used grounded theory analysis which is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents.

**Summary of Research Methodology**

Overall the research process evolved through different stages. Each stage utilised action research methodology and was accomplished by using phenomenological approach to draw insights and linkages from the major themes that emerged. As the study required iterative cycles, I started with some rather fuzzy questions, then started gathering qualitative data with different data sets, and again revisited the ideas I started with, challenging and adding nuance to them, as well as setting the stage for the next set of inquiries. After completing each specific lesson, I evaluated the activity, with reference to student generated work samples; the reflective process also included an opportunity to suggest possible modifications to the study.

Furthermore students’ participation and reflections gave me their current understandings of what constituted good pedagogy. Following the conclusion of class data was collated and analysed. In particular the preliminary data was synthesised and matched against the present data. This eventually began my systematic data recording process, both in terms of the overall framework and the specific themes as they emerged from the children’s work. In line with Dick’s (1993) premise that the data should decide each successive action of the process, the initial scaffold and review reflection sheets were modified prior to going on to the next stage. The primary sources of data were the written reflections of the students; my field notes observations and focus group discussions.

To facilitate data gathering during the later phases, I utilised different strategies to improve my teaching and learning process. This process set out to facilitate carefully planned discussions that potentially allowed for the emergence of a range of insights in open-ended discussions further. A secondary data sources consisted of a cross-section of work samples provided by students for each of the trialed activities. The questionnaire was used for illustrative proposes during the study and was not analysed in any detail as part of the study. During these phases, all the data was kept for analysis. At the conclusion of the practicum, the overall comments from all three data were gathered and analysed for consistent themes and insights. Where appropriate, the data is embedded in the findings and analysis chapter.

**Findings and Analysis**

The chapter sheds light on the insightful responses of the students gained from different data, followed an analytical approach to identify students’ spiritual characteristics.
Pre-focus group Interview

In the initial phase of the focus-group interview photographs were used as stimulus materials to encourage children to talk freely. The conversations were transcribed and then analyzed for emerging themes. While these data are preliminary and the themes likely to be expanded as additional data are collected and analyzed.

Students’ in Class engagement

- **Identifying the individuality of children’s spirituality**
In addition, there were certain excerpts from their reflective writings or in-class dialogues (examples are provided where appropriated) that seemed especially significant; excerpts which alerted me that there was something indicative of a spiritual nature.

- **Using Narratives and Stories**
Reviewing observations and my reflections made me very attentive that the students had the ability to incorporate their insight by uniting their logical understanding with their own dialogue within class discussion. This in fact suggests a kind of spiritual awareness. The students had a better potential to relate their understanding of the historical figures with their own lives, such as from the Story of Prophet Mohammad and Nasir Khusraw who were able to link the Transcendent to their own life. After studying Prophet’s story Salman reflected:
  ‘I don’t know how Prophet Mohammad tolerated his enemies who tortured and abused him...One can never imagine a normal human being maintaining self-control when being humiliated, and treated so inhumanely by others. I wish am able to live such a sound moral life ’.

- **Other Strategies used**
Other strategies were explicitly included to make children consciously focus on themes. In addition to that, seeking relation or communication through prayer, exploiting children’s aesthetic and sensory experiences, and deliberately philosophizing, were some of the methods used which provided incredible outcome of children’s tacit knowledge.

Post Focus-group

At the end of the research practicum, I had a focus-group discussion again with the same students in order to see their final responses on the themes. Almost all the students explained their increased understanding towards spirituality. For example, Ali initiated:
  ‘Nasir Khusraw’s critical incident reminded me of my confused understanding about one of religious concept and even my own ideas differ from what my father thinks. I now have confidence like Pir Nasir Khusraw... ’ Many students also expressed their thoughts on, “Spiritual Questioning” (initially came out from the story of Nasir Khusraw).

Similarly, their discussions elucidated that they see the connections between people and other aspects of their understandings in diverse things; and their propensity to ask ‘Why?’ or ‘What if?’ and to seek fundamental answers.

Limitations of Results

Observing and listening to students’ responses, makes one ponder on students’ cultural domination. This could be one of the limiting factors for the child’s understanding. Another constraint was of the time, to briefly introduce students to a range of ideas in the hope that they
would find affinity in at least some of these. This has resulted in the development of a sketch of their lived spirituality that may seem by some as somewhat superficial or at surface level.

However, it was apparent from the data that their initial nurture was beginning to develop which was being sensed throughout the whole research process. Thus analysis took me quite far indeed into the kind of close observation and interpretation that allowed me to construct the kind of characterization that I have outlined in discussion chapter.

Discussion
Discussion includes a broad analysis of four different dimensions of the theme that were categorised in accordance with the students’ responses collected from different data. Themes chosen represent and reflect different perspectives in which children’s spirituality appears. These can be the child’s relationship to God, to nature, to people and to self. The lists of different features characterize and identify different intentions and dispositions hidden behind various expressions of children’s spiritual experience.

Equally, data from their reflective dialogues, and observations highlighted, was the dynamic intersections of all elements that contributed to their understanding.

Changes in children’s spiritual characteristics
During the “course of action” I saw immediate, as well as long term progression in children’s spirituality. Over time, the study of the data demonstrated that some children showed resistance in expressing themselves, while some showed exaggeration. Children sometimes acknowledged only a theoretical notion of the spiritual, or tried to explain in terms of what ‘other children’ might experience, and then gradually identified such features in their own practice. Their concluding reflections revealed that many students felt a change in their spiritual understanding and have gained confidence in their personality.

Overview of three different data revealed that Narratives provided a significant spiritual awakening and provided students the opportunity to interpret their own life circumstances, to understand the moral or psychological aspects of their character. They grew in their experience of stories, absorbed the language of the faith, connected it to their life, and began to make stronger connections with God.

Maintaining my Objectivity
To summarize, the study used multiple methods, each with different data collection techniques and strategies. The goal is to build up a fully routed analysis of some phenomenon by combining all lines of actions. The point was to avoid the personal bias and superficiality that stem from any of the methods. Thus data from multiple sources helped in validating the findings and provided good triangulation.

However, whilst analyzing different data through “grounded theory” approach, I found the common idea that the students developed a sense of awareness of their own spiritual nature which further assisted them to express their own spiritual characteristics. Although, I believe this small scale research demanded more intense and in-depth study of the subject. However, due to time constraint the study would not be able to penetrate and justify on core issues which it required. Nevertheless, to some degree the research may have attempted to touch on these
spiritual dimensions and therefore may make some fuzzy generalization (Dick, 1993) that one may apply to the context.

Conclusion
The research attempted to describe some of the characteristics of children’s spirituality by using narratives and stories. By using a variety of pedagogical approaches, the study provided the students with an opportunity to explore and reflect upon the values of their Islamic heritage hidden in the aesthetic and didactic elements of the stories.

The study indicates that there is significant potential for RE (Religious Education) teachers to contribute to the development of children’s spirituality through the use of stories and narratives—to foster children’s capacity for meaning-making. Similarly, it revealed that such an enquiry fostered the development of reflexive empathy. The study followed what Jane Erricker (2000) urges teachers to listen to children attentively which will allow them to develop their own identity in a supportive school environment within a trusting relationship between teacher and pupil.

Although my research is in its infancy, I am encouraged by my data which has given me considerable insights into the process of spiritual development. Religious education in REC can draw upon student’s constructing their ideas and wonderings creatively ought to begin with children’s own worldviews, and to engage them with the authoritative wisdom of the faith tradition hidden religious stories.

While, the study was only limited to one REC context, and was not designed to make broad generalizations, nonetheless, may make some fuzzy ones. The findings may have implications in a range of settings in religious education classrooms. Yet, in general, spiritual experience and development may, indeed, be universal across cultures, only the nature of that experience, and understanding might have significant cultural influence within which it occurs. This is always a possibility in culture-specific research results.

I am hoping that the outcome of this research can contribute to spiritual development of children by showing children an approach to reflection which enables them to be thoughtful about the big questions of life.

Recommendation at the policy level
The study suggests the significance of children’s spiritual development and verified to some degree that spirituality has to do with our embodied relationship with that which is of ultimate truth and value; however, one may learn these values within the community. Therefore, it is the primary task of school community to ensure that the spiritual tradition owned by the community should be passed on to the children and that the process of nurture has to be given priority. Unfortunately this is rarely been discussed and encouraged to pursue further. However, it is simply reasonable that faith-schools should be pro-active in identifying, articulating, and developing a set of spiritual values, in nurturing children into a particular spiritual tradition. Yet, all this suggests a chain of responsibility; teachers need support to practices and attitudes generally that endanger children’s spirituality by their indifference to the value of process, relationship, and trust. Further, these spiritual values will then need to be transmitted: through
policy statements, through academic and good teaching practices, and may be through collective worship.

Reference
Abstract

The overall purpose of this study was to evaluate the teaching practices of English in early childhood classrooms in Pakistan against a set of predetermined parameters. Data gathering instruments in the form of checklists were developed and around fifty teachers and equal number of parents and children were interviewed and observed in natural settings. Robert Stake’s Countenance Model was adapted to document and report the findings in qualitative form and case studies were developed.

It was found that often children are taught English through rote memorization and they are not encouraged to express their thoughts in their native language. It was also found that both parents and teachers do not know different ways through which children can acquire and absorb English as a language in multicultural environments.

A longitudinal study is recommended on existing ways and methods of acquiring English language during early childhood (0-8 years), specifically under diverse cultural settings.

Introduction

Psychologists have discovered that hearing human speech is a basic human need without which a child’s mind can be starved and damaged in sensitive times. During early days parents play an important role in acquisition of language of their children.1 Later on teachers played a leading role in teaching language to children. Over the past twenty five years, studies on early readers indicate that the people in school teachers, head teachers etc should stimulate the child’s interest in reading and writing by answering endless questions, praising the child’s efforts at reading and writing, stories that the child dictates and displaying children’s work at prominent place in classroom and as well as in school. 2

Purpose of the Study

**General:** The overall purpose of the study was to evaluate the teaching practices of English in early childhood education classrooms in Pakistan against a set of predetermined parameters.

**Specific:**
- What is the quality of interaction between parents and children and teachers and parents and children to learn and teach English to young children? Friendly conversation, storytelling, dialogue etc.
- What interactive methods and cultural context teachers and parents used to teach English language to the young children? i.e. cultural games, drama, role play, questioning to provoke thinking in children etc.
• What activities have been incorporated to teach English to Young children? i.e. activity cards, books, picture reading etc.

Literature Review

Sulzby & Teale, 1996 found that children develop their language from listening and interacting with adults and it builds a foundation for their learning to read later. Studies on the interactions between adults and children during storybook readings and adults’ mediation between the book and the child’s learning show important effects on child’s vocabulary development, enjoyment of reading, comprehension, phonemic awareness and expressive language.3

McMath, King, and Smith (1998) stated that reading quality informational books provides valuable resources for young children. This type of literature provides a venue for answering questions about the world around them, encouraging critical thinking. 4

It is now widely recognized in Singapore that the teaching of English should be primarily located in the cultural setting of Singapore, although not at the expense of exposing students to a wider range of cultural expressions in English (Anthea Fraser Gupta: University of Leeds 1999). In early childhood classrooms, teachers teach English as second language as well as teach lessons in mother tongue I.e. Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, Gujarati etc.5

In their joint position statement, the IRA (International Reading Association) and the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) emphasized the importance of providing young children with foundational knowledge in language acquisition, reading and writing processes, and early literacy development (Newman, Bredekamp & Copple, 2000).6

This document states that the most important period for literacy development is from birth through age eight.

Amos GichuhiNgugi (2004) This study found that large class size remains a big challenge and a barrier for teachers to plan and organize theme-based integrated activities appropriately and effectively. 7

In the conference of Rediscovering Childhood in Karachi organized by Sindh Education Foundation (2006) panelists presented their views that early childhood experiences are crucial determining factors for emotional as well as intellectual development of a child and later on his performance in the school also depends upon these elements.8

Methodology

The research strategy included a qualitative and analytical survey. For this purpose, Stake's Countenance Model was chosen as a framework for evaluating the preschool in Pakistan.

Robert Stake's "countenance model" (Stake, 1967) was originally formulated for curriculum studies in the late 1960s. The model suggests three phases of curriculum evaluation: the antecedent phase, the transaction phase and the outcome phase. The antecedent phase includes conditions existing prior to instruction that may relate to outcomes. 9

The transaction phase constitutes the process of instruction while the outcome phase relates to the effects of the program. Stake emphasizes two operations; descriptions and judgments.
Descriptions are divided according to whether they refer to what was intended or what actually was observed. The countenance model aims to capture the complexity of an educational innovation or change by comparing intended and observed outcomes at varying levels of operation.

Eight checklists were developed in order to achieve the objectives as outlined above. The researcher’s approach was to obtain more holistic impressions of teaching and learning at school and at home.

**Research Tools- Check-lists**

1. Interviewing parents regarding parents and child relation and communication link between them.
2. Observing parents and children regarding their relation and communication links between them.
3. Teacher’s Interview regarding quality of interaction between teacher and children.
5. Teacher’s interview regarding her/his teaching approaches to teach English in early childhood classroom
6. Observing a teacher regarding her/his teaching approaches to teach English in early childhood classroom.
7. Teacher’s interview regarding her/his class activities to teach English in early childhood classroom
8. Observing a teacher regarding her/his class activities to teach English in early childhood classroom.
Countenance Model of Evaluation Applied to Evaluation of teaching English in Early Childhood Classrooms in Pakistan

Findings of the Study

The framework of the study consists of eight data gathering instruments and cluster of stakeholders i.e. students, teachers, parents of early childhood education and community leaders. The data of the study were analyzed under the following sub-case studies.

Sub-Case Study One

Perception and attitude of Parent towards teaching English to their Children (3-8 year)

Most of the parents of preschool children in urban areas have clear concepts about early childhood education and how to assist to their children in the learning process of English. Whereas, in rural areas, most of the parents think that child will learn in school and teacher is the best person to teach English. Here is an example of absence of linkage between school and home activity:

Yasin–Gilgit

The children after coming from school go to the fields with their parents. They spent their afternoon in fields and they explore the nature. Again next day, they are in classroom to learn from their teacher. In rural areas children and parents did not get any time to sit to gather and
interact. Grandparents think that they do not know anything that they could teach young children.

Sub-Case Study Two
Quality of interaction and communication links between parents and children:

Often fathers are busy in their professional activities and mothers are engaged in domestic tasks. Parents and child hardly got time to sit together and communicate with each other. There is a positive relationship between parents and child but often children are not informed by parents about discipline and ground rules therefore, they start behaving in violent manners. Mothers are with heavy responsibilities often yelling on their children. In many instances educational environment is not created at home which could inspire children to think, read and write.

I saw in a village Thatta (interior Sindh) that few young boys and girls were gathered in the back street of their homes. They had match boxes in their hands they collected garbage and burned it, afterwards they were standing and watching the scene with interest. This incident showed clearly that often parents are busy that they do not know where their children are and what are they doing. Parents of rural areas do not engaged their young children in reading and writing activities hence they involved in harmful activities.

Sub-Case Study Three
Perception and attitudes of the teachers who teach English in early childhood classroom:

Often in urban areas teachers do not view their students as empty bottles to be filled but as candles to be lit. A teacher at Early Childhood Education Centre -Aga Khan School -Karachi has reported:

Human beings are born free. Too much restriction creates hindrances in the process of learning of the children. Therefore to teach English we need to provide learning environment to young children with a sense of freedom to explore. In a prepared environment with friendly attitude of adults, children can acquire better understanding of

Even though teachers in their interviews stated ambitiously the processes of teaching English in early childhood classroom but practicing them in the class room needs more planning and efforts on the part of both the management and teachers

Sub-Case Study Four
Quality of interaction between teacher and children in Early Childhood Classroom

In most of the government schools, the number of children is so high that it became very difficult for teachers to maintain one to one relationships with children. The teachers asked the class to present a lesson in English in a group.

In a small room, twenty-five to thirty children were sitting. There was no fan and it was the month of May. Though there was a playground, the children hardly got the chance to play. The teacher also did not care about dirty clothes worn by the children. The teacher was standing in front in the centre of the classroom. The students were learning English through rote memorization.
Those schools which have few children in a class, teachers use activity based teaching methods for teaching English to pre-school children and have a more positive relationship with them. They read story books with their children to build vocabulary and understanding of English language. However, these schools are very small in number which cannot look after the education of all the children in Pakistan.

I also observed in early in early childhood education classes that teachers do not give ample opportunities to children to express themselves. They punished children on their mistakes. The element of care and love were quite missing especially in large classes of early childhood sections.

**Sub-Case Study Five**

**Teaching Approaches used in Early Childhood**

The study of selected private schools of Pakistan indicated that few of them have a child-centered learning environment and educational material had displayed on soft board.

In Pamir School – Chitral: I found that children’s works were displayed on soft boards. I observed that it was the centre of attraction for children. Teachers were prepared displayed boards with dexterity. Short meaningful sentences were written with illustrations.

Nasra School -Karachi: During individual lesson time, each child had learning cards while learning alphabets and words of English language. It gave them a chance to learn with exploration and joy. The classroom was decorated with pleasant learning material. The children’s own creativity was at displayed and it boosted their self-esteem.

On the other hand, Government schools do not have any of these features. Often teachers do not have posters and activity cards to teach English to young children. They were teaching English to their children through a teacher-centered approach. Children were working in their notebooks and copied from black board. Often they looked tired and bored.

**Sub-Case Study Six**

**Learning Environment in Early Childhood Classroom**

I found in few schools only teachers also looked after the psycho-social needs of the children and children were learning and playing in joyful moods. Nasra Pre-primary School is one of the examples:

**Events in a Day Visit to Nasra Preschool**

In the last period, the children went to the terrace play area where house corner is arranged different parts of a house are marked in English. There were two adults who looked after them. There was no structured lesson and children were happy. They also got time to communicate and explore in a child friendly environment. In this way, the children got a chance to learn language through play and explore. I observed that the management and teachers had organized their whole day teaching around play. They knew that play is an important way of learning for children.
Sub-Case Study Seven

Activities for teaching English in Early Childhood Education Classroom

I found that the teacher’s own personality is very important. If a teacher is friendly and takes keen interest in teaching English to each child of her class, she can bring about positive changes in all the students. I also found that those children who learn English through activities were more pleasant and confident to learn and speak English as compared to those children who learn through rote learning.

A teacher of Pamir School at Lower Chitral reported that

Children learn names of things in English from their surroundings. All these activities are carried out in such a manner that it does not burden these children and in a play way manner they developed their vocabulary in English language.

Results

Most of the parents in urban areas have awareness about early childhood education but often they remained busy and therefore often they cannot spare time to tell story or play with their young children. Whereas teachers are ambitious about early childhood education but I observed that it is difficult to demonstrate that quality of teaching in classrooms. Often in classes there are thirty to forty children and teacher could not interact with individual child. Often children learned English through rote memorization. I observed that it increased their boredom and tiredness. All these processes weaken their foundation of English language. During interviews of teachers I found that they do not have an understanding and skills about how to use cultural languages as an aid to teach English language. Multicultural environment is not created in classrooms.

Conclusion

Children learned English or any other subject with interest and enthusiasm when they are actively involved in lesson. Teachers and parents provide opportunities to express their views, their questions are answered and tangible material and activities are available. They got opportunity to share their learning in small and large groups.

Recommendation

- English language should be taught to the children of early childhood education program in cultural context in which it is taught.
- Teachers and parents should communicate with their young children and should take out time to interact with them in friendly environment.
- Rural schools as well as urban schools need to develop activity based learning approach to teach English to young children.
- In teacher training centers of Pakistan courses should be introduced to parents and teachers about how to teach English in cultural context to young children.
Future Directions

A longitudinal study should be conducted on teaching English language to the children of early childhood education classes in their cultural context and to analyze its impact on later stages of formal education.

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Stake, E, R (1975) Program evaluation, particularly response evaluation University of Illinois: Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation.
PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT (PI) IN STUDENTS’ LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN A KARACHI RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CENTRE (REC)

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Abstract
Collaboration between teachers and parents is imperative for a child’s learning. A healthy interaction between both has a positive impact on a child’s relationship with his/her parents, self-esteem, behaviour, attitude towards studies and his/her overall personality. This research is a qualitative study which aimed for a comprehensive overview of the employment of strategies of parental involvement (PI) within a Religious Education Centre (REC) in Karachi, Pakistan. The case study approach enabled an exploration of the outcomes of three strategies: Teachers Involving Parents (TIP), Parents’ Council, and Parents’ Awareness Session. The three data collection tools: parents’ pre and post focus group discussion, students’ reflective journals and teacher’s reflective journal validated TIP as a principal strategy to enhance PI in my context. The parents’ council and parents’ awareness session were confirmed as having a supportive role. The study also discovered the importance of on-going practice in promoting PI in order to sustain it. Finally, it recommends approaches to apply the study to other contexts.

Introduction
My interest in parental involvement (henceforth PI) comes from my experience as a religious and secular teacher in my home context, and during teaching practicum in the UK. During my religious teaching experience in Karachi I realized that at times, despite my efforts, a few students were unable to learn effectively. On further enquiry and analysis, I found out that besides other reasons, lack of PI was a reason why students were unable to reflect on their learning in daily life practices. Hence, I questioned myself, ‘did I try to actively engage parents so that they become fellow learners and then partners (supporters) in their child’s education?’ There have been countries where religious education is usually a part of the school curriculum as a subject. However, there are many communities in which students attend separate religious schools. The faith community of Islam – Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, is an example of such communities with an organized Religious Education Centre system (henceforth REC), run by voluntary workers.

Reviewing the concept of PI, this research – conducted in an REC of Karachi, Pakistan – focuses on strategies teachers can use to promote PI for a child’s learning. The participants in this research study were 12-14 years old students and their parents. The classes took place twice a week over an eight week’s period. In my context, parents are unable to connect well to the teachers despite being actively involved in a child’s primary responsibilities. Moreover, within an REC setup, teachers – sometimes due to lack of time and training – are unable to encourage parents in taking a leading role in their child’s learning, alongside teachers. In such circumstances I intended to find out how to enhance the relationship between teachers and
parents so that the best learning outcomes for the students can be attained. This leads to my main
research question which is:
‘What strategies can a teacher use to enhance the involvement of parents in their child’s
learning?’

Subsidiary Questions
1. How does PI affect a child's learning?
2. What are the implications for my practice?

Literature Review
The author of Mega skills, Dr. Dorothy Rich (1996) highlights the need for collaboration
between the school and home signifying these as two key educational institutions necessary for a
child’s learning. Barges and Loges (2003) also found out that, teachers and parents as important
stakeholders, lack communication with each other. A plethora of research suggests ways in
which parents should be involved. Yet, despite such efforts PI has still been an issue in various
contexts around the world (Lawson, 2003). A study by Anderson and Minke (2007) concludes
that most of the parents believed that their decision to engage actively within the school was
mediated by the teacher’s invitation to get involved. Thus, in contrast to what Anderson and
Minke (2007) identified, this research study, moving a step ahead explored to understand how
teachers decide to use various strategies to invite parents to get involved in their child’s REC.

Studies have concluded that PI has a positive impact on a child’s overall learning, resulting in
increased willingness to attend school (Yap and Enoki, 1995). Thus, PI positively shapes a
child’s attitude and behaviour towards life, provided that it is in the right direction and form
(Khajehpour and Ghazvini, 2011). PI, as defined by Cotton and Wikeland (1989), is of two
types: (1) passive – indirect involvement through circulars, phone calls, and messages, and (2)
active – direct involvement through classroom participation and communication with the
teachers. The research shows that both types of involvement have positive effects on children;
however, active PI is supposed to have more positive outcomes (Cotton and Wikeland, 1989).
The perspective with which Cotton and Wikeland suggest the active and passive PI seems to be
very school centric (Lawson, 2003). Consequently, such a limited perspective of the researchers
is overlooking the parents’ perspective of PI which could even be to get involved with child’s
homework directly at home. Thus, it shows how parents have been misperceived by the
researchers and professionals.
The literature proposes that PI in the form of volunteering makes a child feel important (Rich,
1996). Moreover, younger children love to see their parents in their classrooms and hence feel
pride when their parents participate (Cotton and Wikeland, 2001). Hill and Taylor (2004) found
out that the adolescents during their early, middle and late adolescence need the support from
parents. Thus, Hill and Taylor’s study (2004) refute the conclusion drawn by Cotton and
Wikeland (2001) by alluding that PI remains a necessity during the secondary years of a child.
The study by Cotton and Wikeland (2001) argue that PI during adolescence may hinder a child
to grow independently as parents may impose their views on the child which could restrict their
freedom of expression (Cotton and Wikeland, 2001). To stay away from such adverse outcomes,
they suggest a balanced way to help a child grow independently. This could be one of the reasons
why PI at the secondary level decreases when an adolescent seeks freedom and independence.
Yet, since the balanced ways are context dependant (Lareau and Shumar, 1996), none of the research could be generalized to have been successful in identifying what is the only balanced approach (Anderson and Minke, 2005).

**Strategies to promote PI**

Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) conclude that parents play a significant role in a child’s successful transition from primary to secondary school. They further suggest that if adequate support is given to the parents regarding how they can effectively help a child at the secondary level, parents feel comfortable in sharing their concerns with the school personnel. Roker *et al.* (2006) state that what becomes necessary here is to find out which kind of support might be suitable? Therefore, keeping in view these research implications, strategies which can invite parents (in my context) to get involved in their child’s learning are cited below.

- **Teacher Involving Parents (henceforth TIP)**

Roker and Coleman (2007) highlight the fact that the majority of parents of secondary school students feel that “schools are bewildering institutions, unlikely to offer the support and advice that is so badly needed” (p.21). Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2002) carried out a research study named, ‘TIP’: an education programme for enhancing PI. The programme had its own goals, design and implementation rules. The findings by Roker and Coleman (2007) suggest investigating appropriate tools which could be fruitful to reduce the agitation parents develop towards the schools. Thus, TIP as a strategy with a slight change served to be one of such tools for this case-study where parents were kept involved through various means: that is, via messages, circulars and phone calls.

- **Parents’ council (parents helping each other)**

The teacher-parent relationship for a child’s learning often leads to an inevitable issue of power and authority (Roker and Coleman, 2007). Consequently, “parents may be reluctant to initiate contact with the school, perceiving such activities as questioning the decisions or actions of experts” (Yap and Enoki, 1995, p.51). Additionally, research has shown that “parents find hearing from other parents a particularly learning experience” (Roker and Stace, 2005, p.46). Therefore, to offer a healthier form of support, parent-to-parent mentoring and collaboration must be ensured so as to resolve power dynamic problems and to promote a more compatible teacher-parent relationship (Roker and Coleman, 2007). On the other hand, Anderson and Minke (2005) critique that such a strategy might be unsuccessful in a context where parents are from diverse social classes. The difference in social and educational background might lead some parents to feel inferior (Anderson and Minke, 2005). Roker and Coleman (2007) although proposed parents’ council as a useful strategy, explored that it has not been tried out sufficiently. Thus, this research study intended to implement it successfully.

- **Parents’ awareness sessions (sessions with the parents to provide them skills and knowledge)**

One of the responsibilities of teachers is to provide parents with different opportunities to grow. Roker *et al.* (2006) identified the fact that the majority of parents mentioned that they lacked skills and knowledge regarding various ways of involvement in children’s education. Thus,
parents need proper training sessions with the professionals. However, the information in training sessions, if limited, works better than the extensive programs (Anderson and Minke, 2005). Cotton and Wikelund (1989) highlight a disadvantage of parental awareness sessions whereby parents although initially may seem interested, yet, may lack enthusiasm to stay connected.

Various scholarships have advocated different types of PI as effective. Conversely, it is unlikely to observe a scholarship on a context in which a particular PI programme/strategy is successfully implemented. This research study is a case where the effectiveness of the three particular approaches: TIP, parents’ council and parental awareness sessions, has been experimented.

**Methodology and Data Collection Methods**

**Qualitative Approach**

This small-scale project required a qualitative approach to focus on the real world-infield (Robson, 2002) aspects of PI. Mack *et al.* (2005, p.2) conclude that qualitative research study develops a “rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon” by generating a substantial data. The flexible design facilitated me to unfold and develop the strategies. This study also proposed to thoroughly understand the contextual implications of specific PI strategies, therefore a ‘Constructivist’ research paradigm and philosophical stance (Silverman, 2005) was desired to explore the fundamentals of the PI strategies. Furthermore, this research study was a case study as the PI was seen within a particular REC context. Case studies involve “developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases” and require “multiple sources – documents, archival records, interviews, observations, and physical artefacts” for collecting data (Cresswell, 1998 in Robson 2002, p.165).

**Data Collection Methods**

This research study selected seven students and parents as research participants through purposive sampling since the study required parents of those students who were less actively engaged in their child’s REC learning. In order to evaluate the data from various perspectives so as to avoid discrepancies (Denscombe, 2010), three data collection tools were used: students’ reflection journals, teacher reflection journals, and parents’ pre and post focus group discussions. The data collected from the aforementioned tools was translated into English. The transcribed data was dealt through a thematic code method (Robson, 2002). The themes were validated and analysed further through triangulation. “Triangulation involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective” through “different methods, different sources of the data or even different researchers within the study” (Denscombe, 2010, p.346). Reviewing the importance of triangulation, the parent’s pre-post focus group discussion was selected as the triangulating tool. The methodology and data collection methods used in this small scale research study explored the feelings, perceptions, and attitudes of students, parents and teachers on the implementation of the PI strategies in my context.
Findings and Analysis

A thorough study of the data led to the emergence of following themes:

(1) Parent – Child rapport
(2) Parent – Child self esteem
(3) Parents’ – Teacher’s understanding of PI – It’s never enough
(4) A Teacher’s attitude

The abovementioned four themes are divided into two categories. The first three themes are categorized under ‘Factors essential for enhancing PI’ whereas the last theme is categorized under ‘Factor potentially hampering PI’. The reason for this segregation is due to the nature of the findings – positives and negatives – pertinent to the enhancement of PI.

Discussion

TIP

The findings under the two themes: Parent-child rapport and Parent-child self-esteem suggest that this research culminated in a better relationship and raised self-confidence amongst parent and child. The tools with which the TIP strategy was implemented, that is, circulars, phone calls, messages and invitations to classrooms intensified PI. Thus, all three sources: teacher’s reflective journal, parents’ focus group discussions, and student reflective journals validate that TIP resulted in an increased communication between all three. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005, p.166) argue that “researchers need to examine differences in parents’ motivation to become involved across secondary-grade levels”. Similarly, Anderson and Minke (2007) found that parents innately get involved in their child’s learning once they get to know that they are essential. The TIP strategy involves parents in two ways (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989): active – parents’ direct communication with their children in the classroom, and passive – by involving and inviting parents through circulars, phone calls and messages. Thus, through these measures it becomes important to let parents know that ‘teachers need parents’, regardless of their cultural, educational and social background. The TIP strategy amplified my aptitude of involving parents at the secondary level.

The change in students’ perception of PI occurs when parents are involved during the class activities while ensuring active participation of their child. That is, the child remains an active participant whilst parents merely support (James and Prout, 1997). Such an interaction where a child’s freedom of expression (Cotton and Wikelund, 2001) is not challenged helps a child to develop a positive impression of PI in early teens. In this way, the authoritative role of a parent in a child’s mind shifts to a more supportive yet constructive role. Hence I believe, TIP proved to mitigate the uneasy feeling which students had regarding the presence of their parents in their classes.

Parents’ council

The evidences explicitly confirm that this strategy could not work alone. Yet, the positive response that came from a parent shows that due to the TIP strategy, parents started to greet and know each other. Moreover, they took initiative to build a positive rapport with other students within the same class. The significance of a parents’ council is to assist parents so that they feel
comfortable with other parents (Roker and Coleman, 2007). The aim is to support parents to take such initiatives and collectively share their responsibilities along with the professionals (Hoskin and Lindfield, 2005) to help form a collaborative relationship amongst themselves and teachers (Lawson, 2003). To ensure that PI at the secondary level positively impacts on a child’s learning, I believed that establishing a parents’ council might serve as a valuable strategy.

In my view, although the anticipated aims of this strategy could not be achieved entirely, it allowed parents to interact with other parents. Yet, the next step of discussing and sharing their beliefs, problems and concerns regarding their children could only be accomplished over a long period. Thus, it is evident that in my context a parents’ council cannot be used as a significant one to enhance PI, rather it needs to be used in combination with the TIP to be effective.

**Parents’ awareness sessions**

All four themes discussed above illustrate that awareness sessions impacted on every parent differently and show the feelings of each parent about these sessions. The results somewhat contradict the suggestion made by Anderson and Minke (2005) that the session must be light and must not be loaded with heavy information. It argues that a session which is conducted in a very light environment and language may not be liked by a parent who wants it to be highly informative and professional. However, every parent’s needs differ and hence the type of session and the ways it should be handled comes from experience and long-term interactions with the parents (Hufton et al., 2003). Nevertheless, even if parents find an initial session overloaded with information, it may provide teachers with an opportunity to plan subsequent sessions prudently which can develop a teacher professionally through continuous reflective practice (Loughran, 2002). Thus, it is crucial to consider parents’ needs since the beginning of the teaching term so that by the end of a year, parents’ interest can be identified and hence can be passed on to the subsequent teachers of their child. Moreover, akin to parent’s council, TIP motivated parents to start attending the sessions. Lastly, the responses of parents over the awareness sessions have been multiple and none of them actually led to a definitive conclusion.

**Synthesis**

The strategies of PI throughout the primary years might not work during the teenage years and hence call for a different approach. Thus, teachers must be cognizant of the fact that during the whole process of improving PI, pastoral care (Huftan et al., 2003, p.375) towards both – parents and students – is a necessity. Moreover, teachers must also be aware of the prevailing PI perceptions amongst the parents and students of their context. As defined by Lawson (2003) teachers must not view PI from their own perspective, rather it should be viewed through the lens of parents and students as well. Dunst et al. (1994) and Dunst (2002) highlight the fact that a PI strategy cannot work until it is contextualized according to the needs of the parents. This lays a heavy responsibility on the teacher and staff of educational institutions, as well as on policy makers who are involved in PI practice.

The most essential aspect of achieving a successful PI in a context is through educating teachers (Anderson and Minke, 2007) since it is the teachers who remain directly involved with the parents and the students. This concludes and justifies my intention of dividing the findings into two parts: factors enhancing PI and factors potentially hampering PI.
Conclusion
The idea of situating teachers at the centre of PI emerged while exploring the research study conducted by Anderson and Minke (2007). Reviewing this research study, I foresee that this study might help REC stakeholders in making PI policies that can be practiced regularly. In addition, this research should help REC voluntary teachers to understand the fundamentals of practicing PI strategies. As mentioned above, the TIP strategy might not work in the contexts where both parents of a child are working. Thus, in such contexts teachers can involve students to explore strategies to involve parents in their learning. Further research suggestions would be to explore the factors which affect the long-term sustenance of PI, and a framework to equip teachers to successfully implement various strategies in a particular context. Thus, the discussion concludes that strategies of PI once planned might initially work well. However, if a teacher fails to address the changing needs of the students and parents then the same strategy which started well may reduce PI later on.

References


INTEGRATION OF ICT IN CHEMISTRY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Almighty Allah for giving me opportunity and strength to carry out this project.

I extend my thanks to Academic Unit, The Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, who encouraged me to initiate this project and supported both academically and technically.

At last I would like to thank all my colleagues who at every step acknowledged my work.

Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in science subjects leads to innovation and creativity which develops students’ interest, conceptual understanding and higher order skills (Jung, I. 2005). However, at higher secondary level this integration is often wrongly considered a useless and frivolous activity due to nature of examinations and demanding school activities (Aktaruzzaman, Rashedul Huq Shamim, & Clement, 2011). This action research study conducted in a private school was based on initial level of integration of ICT with chemistry. The research constitutes two cycles each consisting of three stages: pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention. Data was collected through observation, focus group interviews with students, and reflective dialogue of action researchers.

The first cycle was periodical and only limited to one chapter of the curriculum. At this level a chapter was taught with the aid of animated videos and presentations. The learning resource was compiled in CDs and was made available in the college’s library. Although this raised the issue of limited access of the resource for the students but it developed students’ interest in chemistry and an understanding of micro-level concepts of the subject through the use of animated learning.

The second cycle was carried out as an extension and improvement of the first cycle. This cycle included development of resources of the entire curriculum of chemistry. The resources were built in form of web logs as to share information beyond class boundaries, and resolve the issues related to CDs.

After feedback taken from students and teachers on the second cycle and reflection on it, more organized and advanced resources were made and categorized according to the two examination boards the college is following. This work is still in progress for making the resources more effective and productive for the students.

The study as a whole implicates that innovation in teaching methodology and ICT integration at higher secondary level can make learning process more interesting and meaningful. However, challenges faced during the study imply that changes in culture and attitude towards learning,
structured time for reflective meeting and availability of appropriate resources are required for successful implementation of such programs.

Key words: ICT Integration, Chemistry & ICT, Chemistry Blogs, Classroom Learning, Teaching Methodology, Reflection, Teaching Innovation, ICT at higher secondary level, ICT in science.

Introduction

Information and communication technologies are not a panacea or magic formula, […]

But they can improve the lives of everyone on this planet. (Annan, 2005)

The rapid escalation and advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), low cost and increased power of computers has given an easy access to information. Technology not only inspires learners and boost their motivation level, but also connect them to a range of information sources, enhance mutual learning, and permit teachers to facilitate more in classrooms (Moallem, 2003; Roblyer, Edwards, & Havriluk, 2004; Wilson & Lowry, 2000). ICT integration in education is therefore an integral part of innovative learning and has therefore become a great deal of discussion for many educators.

ICT integration can be divided into three areas: curriculum (macro), topic (meso), and lesson (micro). ICT integration in curriculum normally involves ICT to facilitate significantly in subject content. Examples of such ICT integration are multimedia curricula delivered in CD-ROMs (Wang, 2001) or web-based courses. This is the initial level of integration that we have done in our research.

Another level of ICT Integration which is in the topic area, ICT covers certain topics within a lesson. This integration covers smaller units of knowledge which are usually interrelated to further elaborate the concepts. Example includes DNA or cell division. At the micro level, ICT is used to support specific lesson unit, such as DNA within a single lesson.

Rationale and Background

Integration of ICT into teaching and learning is not a novel concept. It is as old as other technologies such as radios or televisions. However, it has gained the worldwide popularity because of rapid emergence of web technology. ICT is basically a tool. It can take the form of hardware, software, or even both. In the educational context, it is considered as the utilization of various computer resources and tools to facilitate linking various learning groups together in new and different ways and support new instructional approaches (Taylor, 2000, p. 4). Educators agree to the fact that ICT has the power to augment student learning and efficacy once it is used properly (cf. Wang, 2001).

Similarly, ICT integration in this paper is conferred as a process of using any ICT (information resources on the web, multimedia programs in CDs, or other tools) to enhance student learning (Williams, 2003). It is more of a process rather than a product. This integration will engage learners, challenge students and develop their analytical skills.

The integration comprises resources being built on weblogs for the students. In order to assess the effectiveness of weblog and the learning process, the students are evaluated through multiple quizzes.
Research Questions

This action research is conducted to assess whether the ICT integration that has been carried out in chemistry department of higher secondary school is beneficial for the students and does it increase the efficiency of teaching-learning process.

Definition of Key Terms

The term ‘technology integration’ refers to the use of computers and the Internet to facilitate the process of teaching and learning across the curriculum of both the educational boards at college being researched.

Context of the Study

The shift from teaching to learning as a paradigmatic change in the way we learn in Higher Education can be highlighted in this age of digital information. This shift indicates a new progression in education that affects profoundly the ways we are used to hold our lectures. The innovative powers of the latest technologies pave the way for the creation of substitute paths to information sources for teachers and students alike. The facilitators and mentors have to adapt to the new role of the lecturer, that is, to shift from the traditional teaching style to a position where he instructs and assist the more independent, self-directed learning processes of the students.

ICT Integration in Education

According to different authors (UNESCO, 2004; Grégoire, Bracewell & Laferrière, 1996; Karsenti & Larose, 2002; Tardif, 1998), ICT in education is the use of combined technologies for not only processing information but also disseminating it for purposes of learning and educational expansion.

The scientific literature portrays diverse informative approaches to the integration of ICTs into education. Raby (2004), building on the works of Lauzon Michaud and Forgette-Giroux (1991), clearly differentiate between two different types of ICTs integration: physical and pedagogical. Physical integration is using technological equipment by instructors and students and motivating its use for pedagogical needs. Physical integration therefore leads to the institution and/or deployment of technologies in the educational facility.

However, the pedagogical integration of ICTs is habitual and adequate use of ICTs that produces valuable changes in educational practices and improves students’ learning (Depover & Strebelle, 1996; Isabelle, 2002). This involves the regular use of ICT tools in teaching and learning practices.

At the second World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, November 2005), Kofi Annan also emphasized on the importance of technology by saying that we are living in a world of rapid change where technologies play a multifold roles. The way we tap this technology can shape the future. One cannot remain indifferent to this powerful transformation.

ICT has its existence worldwide and has been a part of all education levels at varying degree both in the formal and informal sectors. It also facilitates distant education to mentors and other professional learners. However, in various education systems across Asia, ICT is increasingly
considered as a separate discipline. ICT when integrated with pedagogical practices foster the quality of teaching and learning across disciplines.

Hepp, Hinostroza, Laval and Rehbein (2004) identify the following factors for the application of ICTs in education:

- The need of new skills in information society: This knowledge based society needs to have access to computer resources and to develop competency in using the powerful tools for information processing.
- The increased productivity: As educational institutes are knowledge sensitive; management tools of ICTs are vital at all levels of an educational system.
- A search for quality learning: Educational institutes should strongly review their current teaching practices and resources and continue to create more effective learning environments.

Moreover, Papert (1997) identified that ICT in education brings positive effects on students by enhancing creativity once they enter the new learning environment and encourage systematic collaborative work between individuals and groups. Students are able to generate knowledge and capacity to increase their problem solving skills with the increased opportunity of research and disposition to real social challenges.

Similarly, Hepp, Hinostroza, Laval and Rehbein (2004) state that the roles ICTs play in the educational system can be pedagogical, cultural, social, professional and administrative.

**Pedagogical Tool Role:** ICTs provide a structure to foster improved teaching and learning practices such as shared, project-based and self-paced learning.

**Cultural, Social, and Professional Roles:** The cultural, social and professional roles of ICTs are exercised through an efficient use of the vast amount of information sources and services available via Internet and CD-based content for students, teachers, administrators and parents.

**Administrative Roles:** ICTs play vital role in making administrative tasks less burdensome and more effectively integrated to the official information flow.

**ICT Integration in Chemistry**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are fundamental building blocks of modern and knowledge based society. It has now become a necessary part of education to master the basic skills and concepts of ICT. New models in teaching and learning are being evolved as a response to the new opportunities that are becoming available by integrating ICT and in particular Web-based technologies. The level of effectiveness of integration however, depends mainly on teacher’s acquaintance and capacity with the IT learning environment. Science teachers need to know exactly how ICT is used as a teaching and learning tool, for their own purposes and to help students to use them. This action research is an initiative to integrate ICT as a tool in the chemistry classroom with the overall aim of increasing the effectiveness of teaching and improving students’ learning.

The integration involved two cycles. First cycle was periodical and only limited to one chapter of the curriculum. At this level a chapter was taught with the aid of animated videos and presentations. The learning resource was compiled in CDs and was made available in the college’s library. Although this raised the issue of limited access of the resource for the students
but it developed students’ interest in chemistry and an understanding of micro-level concepts of the subject through the use of animated learning.

The second cycle was carried out as an extension and improvement of the first cycle. This cycle included development of resources of the entire curriculum of chemistry. The resources were built in form of web logs as to share information beyond class boundaries, and resolve the issues related to CDs.

After feedback taken from students and teachers on the second cycle and reflection on it, more organized and advanced resources were made and categorized according to the two examination boards the college is following. This work is still in progress for making the resources more effective and productive for the students.

**Research Methodology**

This part of paper gives a detailed description of research paradigm, method, investigative techniques, tools, and participants of the study. It also provides information related to data collection and analysis plan. In addition to this, it states assumptions and limitations of the study.

**Research Model**

The research is purely qualitative. Since this research aims to analyze the effectiveness of ICT Integration with Chemistry in classroom using weblogs, qualitative research is the most suitable paradigm. Also, the form of the data (semi-structured interviews of convenience sample of students) anticipated for the study identifies a qualitative design which calls for generation and analysis of non-numerical data.

**Research Design**

For carrying out this action research a group of 30 students (morning and evening shift) are selected and their responses were gathered through semi structured interviews. These responses are then analyzed to assess the result of ICT Integration in Chemistry. The aim of research was fulfilled by taking the responses of students as to find out the effectiveness of web log and the level of understanding that has been established using this resource.

The responses were based on semi-structured interview where students were asked open-ended questions in order to know their perception and opinion on web blog and its effectiveness. They were also asked about the issues that they face in using it at home and at college.

**Population Sample**

Population sampling was done using convenience sampling. A group of students were selected from both the education boards of AKU-EB and Karachi Board functioning in college who were easily accessible and readily volunteer to participate in the research. The participants were students of First Year and Second Year from Pre-medical and Pre-Engineering group who take Chemistry as a compulsory subject. Participants were both male and female as the research does not pose any requirement of gender balance. A convenient day was scheduled for recording the semi structured interviews with the students.
Instrumentation
A list of open-ended questions for semi-structured interview was prepared. The list comprised of the following questions:

- How did you come to know about the web blog?
- How did you find it effective?
- Using any example of topic illustrate what impact in any way it had on your understanding level?
- What difficulties do you face when using it?

Data Analysis
The semi structured interviews that were conducted revealed that students of the college (that has been object of action research) were well equipped with the internet and computer facilities both at home and at college. Only the problem of connectivity or slow speed of the internet was identified which is an uncontrolled external element. The students that lacked internet facilities at home were also provided the material through external storage device like USB. However, students’ responses (*their names have been changed to maintain confidentiality) regarding efficiency and effectiveness of blog can be categorized under following heads:

Clarity
“The points that were not cleared to me in the class, when I studied them through blog it seemed like a piece of cake! It was so clear and so easy to understand!” This was the statement given by Ali Hassan* when he was asked about the efficiency of blog. Another student Sara Qazim* said, “Mujhay pehlay laga yeh blog itna effective naheen hoga, it would simply have lectures in form of text, but when I used it, it increased my level of understanding! Aur meray class test main marks bhi achay aye.” When students were taught using materials prepared using ICT they were able to filter out the key points. Information displayed on (CDs in first cycle and) weblogs in second cycle using features such as typed text, color for emphasis was helpful and increased the focus on a particular piece of a more complex picture where there may be a lot of distracting information. Students reported the marked improvements in quality of notes.

Inspiration
Hira Khan* when asked about the usefulness and efficiency of blog said, “The videos that were there on the blog really helped me understand the atomic models easily.” Rida* said “The links to other resources are really useful.” Students reported the increase in level of inspiration as the useful resources (presentations, animated videos and hyperlinks to other useful resources) provided a window to anywhere in the universe: microscopic or macroscopic, everyday or imagined. Examples include being able to tell chemical stories illustrated with still images or video clips or to display an interesting website.

Adaptability
The teaching experience was increased using generic software such as Microsoft Office® applications allows the design of electronic materials that are easy to update, for instance, to
reflect changes in curriculum specification, experience in using them, a different approach to
teaching or different demands from learners. This is in contrast to traditional resources such as
‘cut and paste’ handouts or overhead transparencies where any changes mean that the resource
needs to be made all over again.

Interactivity
Shazia* claimed that “the blog was very useful as it has quizzes to assess their level of
understanding and helped her in her board examination.” Student’s level of interactivity
increased as the materials encouraged thinking problems. This also helped them increase their
analytical skills as it was the demand of examination pattern.

Conclusion
With the arrival of ICTs the definition of Teaching- Learning process is completely transformed.
The conventional way of teaching has taken a new and fresh shape of more interactive and
innovative learning. ICT tools not only enhance distribution of information but also manage
educational services and make them affordable and accessible anytime, anywhere.

It is advent that our future generation is already exhibiting signs of being totally computer and
technology dependent. It is a fact that over the years, education has progressively become more
complex, with more and more information disseminated to the student. In such information
packed environment, it is important for students to have an interesting, interactive and
experimental mode of instruction that will make learning more enjoyable and easy. ICT based
education is definitely a new direction towards which the whole world is progressing. ICT use in
the classroom in developing countries is still in its infancy. Its overall effectiveness can be
enhanced by better software and hardware as well as greatly increased availability of high
bandwidth internet connections.

There is no single secret for determining the optimal level of ICT integration in the educational
system, creative teachers at all levels of education has always found ways to incorporate
innovative teaching tools and strategies in their classes. However, ICTs should be used currently
in conjunction with well planned classroom teaching.

References

A STUDY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: THE TRANSLATION OF THEORY INTO PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Professional development programmes are criticized for not meeting the practical needs of teachers and teachers are blamed for going to their comfort zones despite their participations in professional development programmes. This qualitative case study explored effectiveness of the program of primary education certificate course looking into participant teachers’ new knowledge, skills and attitude gained from the programme and the implementation of their new learning into their respective classrooms. Nine teachers and 27 students participated in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, classroom observations, documents analysis and focused group discussions with students.

The study reports a shift in teachers’ non-reflective attitudes to more reflective attitudes. The quality of their reflections however found to be technical in nature showing their inability to detect limitations of their teaching. The study also found graduate teachers using more learner-centered pedagogies but required more content specific trainings to teach some concepts. The findings also suggest that the graduate teachers developed skills in pedagogy and the utility of those pedagogical skills in their classrooms reshaped their beliefs of teaching, learning and learner. The positive experiences in turn reconstructed teachers’ conception of classroom environment vital in fostering learning of students.

Key Words: professional development program, teacher learning, teacher change, reconceptualization, pedagogy

Introduction

Professional Development Centre Chitral (PDCC) as a subunit of Aga Khan University-Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) Karachi Pakistan aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools through professional development of teachers, headteachers and other stakeholders. PDCC offers a number of courses under the auspices of AKU-IED since its establishment in 2003. Certificate in Education: Primary Education (CEPE) comprised of face-to face and workplace components being offered each year for primary school teachers to bring improvement in the teaching and learning processes in primary schools through enhancing content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of primary schools teachers. This paper reports the impact of CEPE programs on teachers’ changed perceptions of teaching and learning and their pedagogical knowledge.
Literature Review

Professional development programmes are considered important in enhancing teachers understanding of content knowledge and pedagogy and impact on teachers’ practice; impact on students’ learning outcomes; and, impact on teacher efficacy (Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005; Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 1999) & Supovitz and Turner, 2000). Guskey (2010) argues that significant change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs occurs primarily after they gain evidence of improvements in students’ learning which results changes in teachers classroom practices. For Martha and Pennington (1995) change in the behavior of teachers occurs as a result of trying something new, reflecting on its consequences, and then trying it again with alterations as needed or desired. Halai (2003) suggests to see the impact of any intervention in social setting as a change process and Rizivi (2007) suggests that professional development opportunities must help teachers to critically reflect on their practice, knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy and learners. Thus, focus on reflective practice, on pedagogy, on subject matter and attitudinal and behavioural changes of teachers are some of the important aspects of professional development programmes.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The teacher change model of Guskey (2010) provided insight as a theoretical guideline for this study. We explored the programme effectiveness looking into teachers’ new knowledge and skills in three areas e.g., (a) teachers’ reconceptualization of teaching and learning and reflectivity (b) instructional strategies, and (c) change in teachers’ attitudes towards students and classroom environment and increased ability to manage their classrooms more effectively. Thus the following conceptual framework was developed for the study.

![Conceptual Framework Image]

Methodology

A qualitative case study method was used for its appropriateness to explore perceptions and practices (Merriam 1998) of primary programme graduates. Since case study method being the
study of specific and particular case (Stake 2006) was appropriate to investigate the effectiveness of a specific (CEPE) program. Keeping in mind the appropriateness of case study for the exploration of a bounded system (Simons 2009) we investigated the program graduate teachers’ changed practices and perceptions of teaching and learning in real schools contexts where graduate teachers were in-action.

This study was conducted in 9 participating schools and nine primary teachers and 27 students were selected through purposive sampling (Merriam 1998). Data was collected through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, classroom observations, documents analysis and conducting focused group discussions with students. In order to avoid of getting socially acceptable responses as Shamim (2003) suggests we assigned the responsibility of fieldwork to the researcher who had less interaction with the graduates during face-to-face sessions and used multiple tools for data collection. This study mainly relied on teachers self-reports before and after the programme.

**Findings**

**The Glimpses of technical Nature of Reflective Practice**

The findings indicate superficial change in graduate teachers’ reflective practice. One of the research participants said that reflection helped her to be suspicious of her own practices and in knowing what went well and what did not go well? During post observation conference a teacher reflected on his classroom action in terms of objectives. He expressed his satisfaction of doing a good job because he thought his students were able to discuss and identify different means of transportation and shared advantages of transportations. He could not discuss the misconception he had developed ignoring the disadvantages of the modern means of transportations. Majority of participants had difficulty in reflecting on their new classrooms practices. More often their reflections on their lessons appeared to be simple description of what they had done in their respective classrooms and what they thought were the strength of their lessons. They rarely identified their limitations nor suggested any other strategies to teach the lessons differently. The teachers found to be reluctant to detect their own assumptions of teaching and learning and approaches which informed their classroom actions.

**Learner-Centered Instructional Strategies**

The study reports graduate teachers shifting from traditional way of teaching to activity based teaching engaging students in various types of meaningful activities. Before the courses the teachers used chalk and talk and translation methods of teaching as one of the course-participants remarked:

“Before attending this course I used old methods to teach the students. I would read a paragraph while the students would listen and then repeat the sentences. I used to tell them the meanings of difficult words. Often I asked the students to memorize the taught lessons by heart” (Teacher interview).

Another participant teacher specifically referred to the use of group works, group discussions, presentation, role plays, picture reading and holding quiz programmes also validated during classroom observation. Students also termed the new teaching and learning strategies interesting and productive in comprehending the concepts. A graduate teacher described his new teaching approaches by saying, “now display students work, ask higher order questions, and involve my
students in practical activities”. A teacher reported her difficulty in teaching English due to her own poor content knowledge. Some teachers also referred to difficulty in teaching concepts such as teaching about time and using the globe in Social Studies.

Effective Classroom Management

The findings reveal one aspect of teacher change in their increased abilities in managing their respective classrooms. A graduate teacher shared that:

“Before attending the program managing my classroom was a headache for me. But after course I learnt how to involve students. I grouped the weaker students with the good ones and assigned them different roles and responsibilities as group members. Now classroom management is not an issue for me as it was before” (Teacher Interview).

In six schools the teachers termed the techniques taught during the course effective in managing classrooms. They said that the ways of involving children in classroom activities, development of friendly relationships with students and developing classroom rules proved to be very successful in managing their classrooms. However in three schools no obvious change in teacher classroom management was reported.

Teachers’ Pedagogical Creeds

The findings of the study reveal somewhat success of the programme in terms of changing teachers’ beliefs of teaching and learning. One of the programme graduates shared her perceptual change as below:

“Before [attending the course] I thought that students learn best when there is more talk from teacher on any topic or concept. That is why I always attached importance to lecture method. But after doing the course I learnt that students learn not only from the teacher but also by interacting with each other while working in groups. Students learn by doing. They learn when they are asked to solve a problem by themselves” (Teacher Interview).

Another teacher referred to the change in his conception thus:

“Now I realize that learning takes place when students are engaged and active in the process of learning. So, I constantly keep them busy by giving them various tasks relevant to their interest and level. These strategies help students learn things in their own styles” (Teacher Interview).

A similar reflection of a teacher goes like this:

I was very tough with my students and always maintained distance and never tried to establish any friendly relations with them. Now develop good relationship with students. I considered marinating strict discipline necessary for learning but now I believe friendly environment necessary for learning (Teacher Interview).

Discussions of the Findings

This study brings forth some important insights which have implications both for academicians and practitioners. The study confirms suggests that it takes time for the teachers to develop reflective skills and teachers need continuous workplace support in enhancing their reflectivity. Unless support is not provided in real classroom setting, teachers’ level of reflection remains to be technical in nature rather than practical or critical. The study found teachers giving superficial explanations of their teaching and unable to identify the limitation in their teaching. They could not detect their own practices which led to misconceptions as in the case of modern means of transportations referred to above. The insight lies for teacher educators is that developing teachers as reflective practitioners is contextual as well as practical enterprise. Teachers become reflective when scaffolded to reflect on their own classroom actions.
The impact of the course on teachers’ classroom practices is visible in the form of the adoption of new practices or improvements in their prior teaching practices. These new techniques appear to be more responsive to multiple learning styles of students. The role of teacher as the transmitter of knowledge as an authority has been replaced with learner-centered approach where teachers’ role is to facilitate the learning of students as evident from various learner-centered pedagogies mentioned above. However, this shift must not be assumed as indicator of absolute deconstruction of prior concept of teaching and learning.

Their willingness and commitment to further improve their instructional strategies is somehow similar to the sequence of teacher change presented in the alternative model (Guskey 2010). The research findings illustrate that the teachers felt themselves more capable due to their participation in professional development programme and changed their beliefs about learner-centered instructional strategies when observed the effectiveness of such activities in their classrooms.

The learner-centered pedagogical strategies seem to be less productive as ought to be due to teachers’ superficial content knowledge. The findings show teachers improved practices and changed attitudes in their respective classrooms but the support needed by participant teachers in content knowledge emerged as an area where participant teachers could not show better performance. Rather they always felt the need for an external support to teach content. This is congruent with Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) who highlights that the strongest criticism of many professional development programs has been the lack of support for teachers in their classrooms as they apply new ideas and skills. Therefore, teachers must be provided on the spot support so that they could use the instructional strategies and techniques effectively, otherwise this problem is likely to prevail despite teachers’ training in pedagogy.

Some important insights emerge from the finings in terms of assessment practices of teachers. The programme graduates elucidated that as a result of going through the understudy programme a considerable change in the way the learners are assessed has taken place. Teachers demonstrated recognition of the importance of formative assessment taking it as a tool for improving teaching and learning. The participant teachers found questioning their assessment practices for measuring rote learning and encouraging memorization and reproduction. Their appreciation of aesthetic nature of learning and their shifting focus on assessing students’ presentation skills, quality of their art work and their life skills demonstrates their new learning of assessment responsive to multiple intelligences of students. However, teachers still required support in preparing tools useful for formative purpose of assessment. Findings of the study reveal somewhat success of the programme in terms of changing teachers’ beliefs of teaching and learning. The data suggests that as a result of the course, teachers view teaching as responsible and informed facilitation rather than a rationale activity controlled by teachers.

Likewise, they see learning as a process of constructing knowledge through active participation and problem solving. This conception of learning can be linked with the notion of constructivists learning theory in which learning is an active process of knowledge construction. The reconceptualization of teaching and learning seems changing teachers’ outlook and image of learner as an active individual as compared to passive receiver of knowledge.

Almost all the research participants acknowledged that as a result of attending the course, now they have started to bridge the gape between them and their students. Therefore, the abolishment of corporal punishment and establishment of enabling learning environment seem driving
teachers’ pedagogical decisions. The participant students also validated this change referring to teachers changed attitude who were amusing them with funny jokes, making them laugh and encouraging them. Almost all the students being interviewed were of the opinion that after their teachers have attended the course they are no harsher with them and do not punish them in the classroom. The findings not only show the decreasing gap between teachers and students but they also reveal graduate teachers’ recognition of possible implications of the establishment of conducive learning environment in the classrooms.

Teachers changed perceptions of effective classrooms management is another aspect of the changes in their pedagogical creeds. Teachers found trying out the tips of using variety of instructional strategies, developing classroom rules to empower and to make students responsible and assigning responsibilities to different students. Teachers believe that doing so they can make students responsible and make them feel empowered. These activities have helped the teachers become more efficient and skillful in managing their classrooms. The insight is that variety in teaching strategies, developing good relationship with students and developing ground rules for students are helpful techniques for teachers in managing their classrooms.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion the findings suggest some perceptual as well as cognitive changes which drive the classroom practices of participant teachers as a result of their participation in the primary course. This study reports various changes in the classroom practices, skills, and attitude of participant teachers. The course has helped the teachers in reconstructing their ideas and restructuring their classroom teaching practices by replacing their traditional teaching method with learner-centered pedagogies. The better results of the new instructional strategies in their respective classrooms have further contributed in changing teachers’ conceptions of teaching, learning, learner and the conception of what kind of teacher-student relationship and learning environment fosters students learning.

The participant teachers reflect though in some cases superficially on their teaching practices as well as classroom environment. They have somehow adopted some innovative instructional strategies which can be seen as a departure from text-book oriented teaching mode. This shift has helped them manage their classrooms successfully in most participating schools although classroom management seems still a concern for some teachers. The graduate teachers are no more autocratic in their attitudes towards students rather viewing collegial classroom culture and friendly environment as a stimulus for deeper learning of students.

**References**


LEARNING BY TEACHING: TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES OF MODERN PEDAGOGIES

Tayyaba Zarif, Newpots Institute of Communications and Economics, Pakistan

Abstract

The modern era of globalization and transforming trends in all the fields of study advocate the shift from conventional to latest but effective pedagogical approaches. Such is the theory of “Learning by Teaching” that transcends the boundaries of modern pedagogical approaches and provides a ‘student centered’ platform for teaching-learning in any classroom. This study analyzes the effectiveness of ‘Learning by Teaching’ for enhancement of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students of secondary level at a purposively selected school. Low-achieving and shy students from a class were selected through purposive sampling and with the help of teachers. At the initial stage of the study, around twenty low-achieving and shy students were selected through purposive sampling. The pedagogy of ‘Learning by Teaching’ was implemented on this separate group of students for more than three weeks. The Teacher filled relevant tools. Next, the selected group was mixed with their mainstream classmates to attend their regular classes. A month later, the areas of observation sheet & performance were discussed with teachers to gauge the effectiveness. Overall findings were analyzed in %. There was a conclusive and evident improvement in the students with regards to their knowledge, skills and attitudes. At the end, findingssuggest that low-achievers and shy students in any mainstream setup can be transformed into sharp and bubbly individuals with a side-step from conventional approaches. This paper can also serve the purpose of threshold for the other learners excluding the sample students.

Keywords: Pedagogy, knowledge, skills, attitudes, mainstream

Introduction and Literature Review

‘Teaching’, although conceptually broad, can be fundamentally quoted as the act of a teacher to share educational content like skills, knowledge and habits to students in a specific context, whereas ‘learning’ comes to mind as a complement to teaching. (Moore).

Vygotsky’s understanding as depicted in the theory of learning, divides learning into two levels; interaction with others and then knowledge integration with individual’s mental structure. On the other hand, Piaget said that learning results from adaptation to the interaction with environment. New experiences that a student acquires in time add to the previous knowledge thus creating an imbalance.

By using distinctive modes for thinking, relating and creating, individual students can be better suited to learning in a particular way. Varying teaching strategies also tend to accentuate the notion of distinct learning styles of individuals in this regard. A relatively modern trend in respect of approaches adopted by teachers can be the idealistic ‘student-centered’ approach. In
this approach of teaching-learning, the learner is actively engaged in order to foster the skills which produce healthy behavior.

In addition to above, there are also some considerations for learning which are apparently “listless” in this particular case. Students planning their own learning experiences can be an example of such a case where they are given time and topics to identify areas of further study and contribute relevant information for study while suggesting the respective follow activities.

According to Skinner:

“What's the best way to motivate listless, uninterested students? Simply turn them into teachers!”

Prof. Dr. Jean-Pol Martin, who teaches foreign languages in Germany, has immensely worked on the typology of “Learning by Teaching”. He is the founder of the teaching method “Lernendurchlehenren - LdL” (German), which means “Learning by Teaching”.

Dr. Martin has been distinctively working on this “Learning by Teaching”(LdL) strategy since the 1980s. A comparison of his publications over the last two decades exhibit that not only has he been working to improve his method but he has also extending its scope of application, usage and efficiency from just pure language classes but to other areas of learning and living, for instance (Martin, 1985, 1994, 2002).

According to Dr. Martin, the transformation of students into teachers dramatically increases their motivation levels. Not only do the students speak with more confident and freedom in the class but they also overcome their fears and problems related to relevant subject areas in the most brief span of time. A sense of camaraderie prevailed in the class when and the teacher-student divide that conventionally prevails to oppose learning astonishingly vanished. Of, course the teacher always remained the final expert with absolute opinions and views where he could always interrupt, correct, add and conclude. At the same time, the students assumed different tasks which were formerly the un-necessary ambit of the instructor.

According to Skinner, the fundamental idea behind this ‘didactic’ method of Dr. Martin can also be applicable to students of university level in different programs and all kinds of courses. In this particular method, the students prepare a complete or part of a lesson by themselves for teaching in class. Meanwhile, it is also essential to highlight that there is a clear difference between ‘learning by teaching’ and presentation of or lecture of a lesson by students. Similarly, ‘LdL’ is also different from tutoring as the teacher entirely supports and controls the learning process on the whole. As for the method of LdL, the students have the leverage to develop their own methods and instructional techniques for teaching of selected content to their class fellows. This naturally motivates and persuades students to prepare themselves to teach lessons or selected topics.

From a student perspective, the ‘LdL ‘method demands and thus induces self-confidence, creativity, independence and essential attributes such as team work, complex thinking, explorative behavior, presentation skills, project competence, generating knowledge as well as disciplinary merits such as punctuality, patience and reliability. LdL broadens the horizon of the students and inspires them to think out-of-the-box. LdL provokes them to look for options and not necessarily rely on the linearity of classroom teaching, which is somewhat unrealistic at its core. LdL incites students to confront and tackle the realistic qualms and uncertainties of life. In order to make topics more and more linear, students have to put in efforts and develop more qualitatively and quantitatively for improving their cognitive plans. The ‘Control Competence’
as described by Martin shows that in order to be in control of various walks of life and fields of study, the human beings systematically strive to enhance their competence. According to Martin, the achievement of this “control”, leads to “flow effects”, which can better be described as a feeling of happiness or satisfaction. (Grzega, J, 2003).

Fundamentally based on LdL, this research is carried out in a Higher Secondary School of average category with a diverse background of students. ‘LdL’ was implemented and focused on the students who were terminally de motivated and lacked fundamental skills. This research gauged the effectiveness of ‘Learning by Teaching’ for the practical realities and uncertainties of life.

Research Questions

This study principally seeks answers to:

- How can ‘Learning by Teaching’ simplify skills development?
- How can ‘LdL’ affect the students’ behavior, confidence and motivational level?
- How can ‘Learning by Teaching’ affect the students’ learning in terms of concept clarity in content-based subjects?

Research Objectives

The broader objectives of this research can be summarized as:

- To include students in direct teaching activity as much as possible while allowing them to be creative and original in their own approach.
- To explore the extent to which the students experience and exhibit a ‘communicative turn’ while teaching (LdL).
- To determine the effectiveness of ‘Learning by Teaching’ for content enhancement of students

Methodology

This study analyzes the effectiveness of ‘Learning by Teaching’ for enhancement of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students of secondary level at a purposively selected school. Low-achieving and shy students from a class were selected through purposive sampling and with the help of teachers. At the initial stage of the study, around twenty low-achieving and shy students were selected through purposive sampling (Grzega, J, 2003). The teacher of English who also taught Chemistry was selected to facilitate the proceedings. The pedagogy of ‘LdL’ was implemented on the selected separate group of students for more than three weeks duration vacations. The Teacher filled relevant tools. Next, the selected group was mixed with their mainstream classmates to attend their regular classes. A month later, the areas of observation sheet & performance were discussed with teachers to gauge the effectiveness. Overall findings were analyzed in percentage. The method has been used for more than just linguistic competence.
Findings

Students’ side (Quantitative data in %)

Observation Sheets

Table 1: Classroom Observation Sheet (Before treatment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Total YES</th>
<th>Total SELDOM</th>
<th>Total NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Figure 1: Graphical representation of Classroom Observation (Before treatment)
Table 2: Summary of classroom observation (Before)

In %

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<th>Average (Before)</th>
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<td>10.27</td>
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<td>73.94</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 2: Graphical summary of classroom observations

Table 3: Classroom Observation Sheet (After treatment)

In %

<table>
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<th>Total SELDOM</th>
<th>Total NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3: Graphical representation of Classroom Observation (After treatment)
Table 4: Classroom Observation Sheet (After)

In %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average (After)</th>
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<th>Seldom</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47.77</td>
<td>31.72</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Graphical summary of classroom observations (After)

5.1.2 Test Achievement

Table 5: Class Achievement Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Achievement (Before)</th>
<th>Marks between %</th>
<th>Students %</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 to 50</td>
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<td>51 to 60</td>
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<td></td>
<td>61 to 70</td>
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<td>71 to 80</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81 to 90</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91 to 100</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 5: Class Achievement Analysis (Before)**

![Bar Chart](#)

**Table 6: Class Achievement Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks Between %</th>
<th>Students %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 40</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 50</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 to 60</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 to 70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 to 80</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 to 90</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 to 100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers’ side (Qualitative data)

According to the teachers, the students have relatively become motivated to participate in classroom activities. The teachers were glad to observe the fact that the shy students were now vocal and anxious to post questions and participate in discussions. In addition to that, these students had also started to study in a group for their own with a motive to overcome their weaknesses and capitalize their strengths. Although the test results have been phenomenal, yet there were a couple of students who were still relatively shy or they did not participate as compared to others.

On the whole, the LdL has yielded good results as far as the overall skills of students are concerned. Not only do they learn and practice far more English, they also develop the important skill of communicating information to a group, and they begin to learn to think critically and independently in the other subject where LdL has assisted students in enhancing their concepts and difficult content of chemistry. It was also astonishing to see that the students had developed a strong bond and they were increasingly supportive for each other.

Results and Discussion

Before the implementation of the ‘Learning by Teaching’ pedagogy, the observation checklist administered in classroom by the teacher(s) depicted that only 10.27% students were participating impressively in all aspects such as behavior, skills development, team work and leadership qualities, conceptual clarity and other attributes. However, 15.77% of the students only seldom came across as outstanding and 73.94% were below expectations in all aspects. On the other hand, after the implementation of the LdL pedagogy, 47.77% of the students showed good improvement most of the times in participation and 31.72% were only good occasionally whereas 20.5% were still below expectations.
Test Performances

Average Achievement (Before LdL)

In the test before LdL implementation, around 17% students achieved less than 40% results, 66% students got between 41 to 50 marks, 11% students got between 51 to 60 marks, 5% students took marks between 61 to 70% and no one scored higher than that.

Average Achievement (After LdL)

However, after the implementation of LdL the test conducted showed different results. Around 11% students achieved less than 40% results, 44% students got between 41 to 50 marks, 22% students got between 51 to 60 marks, 17% students took marks between 61 to 70% and 5% scored between 71 to 81 marks whereas no one scored higher than that.

Conclusion

The implementation of LdL shows that there was noticeable improvement in overall communication and interpersonal skills and attributes of the students. At the beginning of the strategy, the students were uncertain and hesitant but gradually accepted and assumed their new roles as teachers. They showed enthusiasm and willingness in every aspect of their role while making their own strategies for teaching-learning. This improved their critical thinking and analytical skills, especially in extempore situations.

By giving students a chance to use their English actively in class, it was noticed that their self-confidence improved significantly. Not only that, the conceptual clarity was also evident as far as chemistry is concerned. The students prepared their sessions and indulged in reading, information gathering and small-scale researches. The other students also played a key-role during the classes. The overall environment was very comforting and supporting for the student teachers. The pre- and post- test analysis also advocates the level of improvement in the students, although not too great, but still LdL served to prompt a change in this context.

Recommendations

The findings suggest that LdL can be a good strategy for improving language and communication skills effectively. At the same time, other content based subjects (such as chemistry which has been opted in this study as well) could also be piloted keeping in view the effectiveness of this strategy specifically at high school level. With LdL, students get the chance to practice complex thinking in order to generate knowledge.

Limitations

This study has been conducted only on male respondents (boys) of 10th standard as mentioned in research methodology. At the same time, the school belonged to a community of low and average income only.
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The Koblenz Model within Anglo-American Cultural Studies at German Universities by Jody Skinner
from: http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/koblenz1_jody.htm
ALTERNATE PEDAGOGY FOR DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Zubeda Bana, Aga Khan University Institute for Education, Pakistan

As the growing concern for educational reforms worldwide is on developing transformational leadership that is responsive to the needs of the local as well as the global contexts, teacher educators are still searching for pedagogies, which could help them to develop transformational leaders.

This paper offers some scope to teacher educators to critically analyze current teaching learning pedagogies while preparing transformational leaders for the 21st Century. While the paper does not share any formula or prescription about how to develop transformational leaders, it does share some insight from the author working in the Professional Development Programmes held for practicing and aspiring educational leaders, at the Institute for Educational Development, in one of the private international Universities in Pakistan.

Utilizing the allegoric approach as an alternate pedagogy for developing transformational leadership, this paper deliberates upon the relevance and efficacy of the role of aesthetic tradition of learning in leadership development programmes in eastern contexts. The paper claims that aesthetic approaches such as allegories, parables, metaphors, stories, kathas, pictorial images, poetry, etc. have power which help leadership learners to internalize principles and values in a language, which is more relevant to their contexts. It is argued that aesthetic pedagogies engage learners in critical and self-critical stimulating discourses which help them to reconceptualise their roles and responsibilities as transformational leaders. Yet, current pedagogies in professional development programmes in most instances, while theorizing transformational leadership, devote time and efforts in discussing thoughts and literature developed and designed as a result of conventional-rational pedagogies rooted in scientific traditions of learning. Aesthetic traditions of learning which could, in fact be a great source of wisdom to be offered, to this newly emerging field of educational leadership, are not considered within the realm of current pedagogies; thus, it is nowhere captured in the process of professional development of transformational leaders in education.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Pedagogies, Professional development programmes, Aesthetic tradition of learning

Introduction

Educational leadership has emerged globally as a field of study and as a subject of heated debate over the last few decades (Samier & Bates, 2006); most educational reformers around the world strive to implement the current global agenda in a speedy way, to cope with the fast changing socio-economic realities of the world. In this process of reformation, education and educational leadership, has become the central schema of the current wave of reforms. Governments, administrators, policy makers, educators and researchers have started altering their policies and pedagogies to help develop transformational leadership as a panacea for educational reforms world-wide (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).
However, in this climate of reformation, the overt dimension of leadership development is given the utmost care and is considered as sum-total of heroic qualities to produce the ‘real educational leaders’ to cope with immediate agenda of reforms. Exhaustive literature (Glanz, 2002) has been produced for finding out leadership behaviours and styles by undertaking scientific and descriptive research (Burns, 1978) or fine-grained research on how transformational leadership could be measured (Bass, 1985) which predicted a wide variety of performance outcomes for educational leaders (Bass & Bass 2008). These leadership theories and styles either build on assumptions such as: i) traits and great men theories, focusing on personal characteristics and qualities of leaders ii) contingency and situational leadership theories which deal with context and situational perspectives of leadership iii) transactional leadership focus on reciprocal exchange of leaders and followers and so on and so forth (Sadler, 2004). These notions were mostly inspired by market ideologies which have heightened levels of competition and have created turbulent, unstable and competitive environments. As a result education systems rapidly became centralized in order to manage global economic agenda that supported standardization and accountability. At the same time, the notion of transformational leadership was used to decentralize decision making but mostly focused on narrow and often contradictory goals and objectives. This dichotomy in approaches to leadership development has violated the entire notion of transformational leadership.

**What is Transformational Leadership?**

Transformational leadership, as understood, is a capacity to go deep into the content of one’s thoughts and be able to liberate self and others to hear the voice of their inner selves. Transformational leaders are aware of the purpose of their lives and work, and are able to make intelligent decisions to change themselves and the people around them. They are influential as they work altruistically and help others to achieve their fullest potential for improving the quality of their lives and work. They share abundant mentality of giving and hence are considered as trustworthy. They value both the diversity and the unity in the oneness of humankind and use intellect as their core value to address the most pressing challenges facing their societies. They use reflective practice as their fertile learning ground. They never go from theory to practice, or research evidence to application (Fullan, 2011 p. xii). They have creative capacity to reach to the minds and hearts of people by artful persuasion and meaningful discourse, which help them to go beyond learning the craft and unveil the core of knowledge embedded in wisdom.

Transformational leaders deal with a fluid, dynamic and complex area of human development, which needs creative pedagogies in a language that is inspiring and engaging to engender collaborative cultures in their organisations. Market models of leadership are mostly motivated by self-interest, self-preservation (Kubicek; 2011) and short-lived objectives and hence always turn out to be eventually self-defeating; whereas, transformative models of leadership are altruistic, humble and life-affirming and view the large picture as a ‘whole’ in which each ‘individual’ is respected, valued and connected. Transformational leaders work on their sense of self-worth and enable themselves and others to do more than they originally intended and thought possible (Bass & Bass, 2008 p.618). They invest in human capital development that is to be reflexive and responsive to their needs.

A bulk of literature in the field of leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1992; Conners & Arbon, 1997; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Fullan 2001) confirms that transformational leadership has distinct attributes from heroic leadership models which display
individual elitist leadership styles. Transformational leaders believe in close relation with affective nature, moral responsibility, mutual stimulation and obligation to transform followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents.

In the current scenario where capitalism and market economy have dominated the education systems world-wide, the notion of transformational leadership is diluted with corporate business world philosophies which have heightened competition, exploitation, and inequalities in education. The irony is aggravated when we, as professional developers, continue to educate inspiring and practising educational leaders in ways which serve to produce efficiencies rather than efficacies in education. Many attempts such as school effectiveness, school improvement, school restructuring and school re-culturing towards current wave of education reforms, in one way or the other, are ended-up with moral and ethical dilemmas in leading education. To address these paradoxes, the crucial challenge is to bring back the dialogues on what matters most in education right to the centre of our inquiry, discussions and practices (Fullan, 2011). Aesthetic tradition of learning may help us as professional developers to generate such critical dialogues which lead us to understand the core of transformational leadership.

Allegory - a powerful aesthetic tradition of learning

Allegory is considered as one of the powerful aesthetic traditions of learning. Allegories help leadership learners to internalize principles and values in a language, which appeals to the whole of their being. Allegories convey multi-level meanings in form of extended metaphors in joyous and inspiring ways. They generate critical dialogues which otherwise are difficult to communicate directly to those who are mostly mesmerised with heroic models of leadership. Allegories engage learners in critical discourses which help them to reconceptualise their intellectual and emotional terrain within their value-system, socio-cultural norms, and educational goals. Allegories have power to transform people from the state of self-preservation (Kubicek, 2011) towards the state of more concentrated and organised pathways of leading and learning.

In a small-scale open-ended survey administrated within the course participants of leadership development workshops which I conduct, it was discovered that leadership learners find allegories as different and hence interesting learning experience, because as mentioned by them is that it makes more sense to them. They feel that conventional rational approaches or texts are difficult to understand because according to them, very few authors have ability to draw a picture of a scene or a context in readers’ mind, while in allegoric approach the learners are exposed to stories, plays, poems, pictures or other work of art in which the characters and events represent multiple ways of knowing and contextualizing ideas as food for thought for the readers. The learners can easily put themselves in the characters shoes and see themselves instead of the characters that perform in the allegory. This helps the learners to be an active part of learning process rather than a passive part because through engaging learners in the allegory, they replace themselves with the characters. This replacement can create attachment between the characters, and the learners. This attachment could be long lasting and would not only remain in the learners mind as information but it can also easily integrate itself in the actions and behaviours of the learners. It also adds to the interest of the learners by engaging them in the learning process rather than the teachers’ reading into the students’ ears all through the classes.
The participants further consider allegories as symbols which are rich and open to multiple interpretations and can be contextualized by the experiences of learners, which means it not only gives learners a message but also helps them to understand situations of their life and world. There is also an imaginative and sometimes visual component to an allegory so one also involves and gets a stimulus on which one can react, reflect and respond.

It was revealed in the said survey that allegoric approach is not only powerful learning tool for leadership learners but also for teachers because it gives a new way to present an idea, theme, concept, event or vision. Administrative leaders as well as teacher leaders can learn something in one context and they can implement/share it in other contexts, in a way that the readers can understand the concept indirectly from the script, story, picture or any other form. They find allegories as one of the powerful pedagogies particularly to share complex issues to professionals and adults.

However, current professional development programmes in most instances, while theorizing complex notions such as transformational leadership, devote time and efforts in discussing thoughts and literature developed and designed as a result of conventional-rational tradition of learning which is an important dimension to be learnt for practical application and cannot, and should not be ignored. Nevertheless, there is a dire need felt to invest time and energies to cultivate intuition, imagination and inspiration in leadership learners to unveil the essential principles and core values embedded in aesthetic tradition of learning to discover “self” as a “leader” and as a “learner” to cope with the challenges of educational reforms in the current Century.

**Plato’s allegory of the cave - an example**

Plato, the great Greek philosopher and a pedagogue, for example, has used this allegoric approach for generating critical discourse with people around him. His Allegory of the Cave (http://www.wsu.edu/-dee/GREECE/ALLEGORY.HTM) is one of the unique, elegant and powerful examples which help understand the complex notions such as power, authority, heroism, charisma, command and control and their implication on shaping human lives and the world around them. The allegory considered cave dwellers as prisoners, shackled with chains around their necks and feet and confined with blinders on both sides of their eyes, so that they could see only what was shown to them. They were controlled not to see the whole scenario of their surroundings. Thus, the shadows caste by the puppeteers, on the wall in front of them, in the light of the artificial fire lit behind them, were perceived as reality of their world. The prisoners were never exposed to the world outside the cave, which
symbolizes in terms of the sunlight, which in itself is a very powerful symbol of enlightenment connecting human beings from the lower level symbolizing earth, to the highest level symbolizing sky.

Figure 1: Plato’s allegory of the cave

Such allegoric approaches have their inherent wisdom. They have power to travel across the boundaries of time and space because of universal truth highlighted through these allegories. Sidle (2005, p 7) in his book *The Leadership Wheel*, mentions how we assimilate the wisdom of the past for the sake of the future without losing the scientific rational freedom of thought, which we have fought so hard to gain.

Contemporary complexity leadership theorists (Griffin, 2002; Mary & Russ, 2008) are also searching for such alternate pedagogies which help unfold the fluid, dynamic, complex, adaptive and nonlinear process of leadership and change.

In their edited book *Aesthetic Dimensions of Educational Administration and Leadership*, Samier and Bates (2006, p 172) cited Taylor (2002) who argues that conducting research in the field of aesthetic tradition of learning when most of the organisational cultures are aesthetically mute, apart from superficial language for decoration, how to engender aesthetic discourse to underline the deep rooted applied problems related to educational administration and leadership, is difficult in current scenarios.

A study conducted to investigate the perceptions and practices of the District Education Officials (DEOs) in Pakistan, Khaki et al (2010) discover that leadership learners in this part of the world, highly appreciate aesthetic traditions of storytelling, and poetry as effective ways of developing their leadership skills to transform their organizations into learning communities. There are many examples of aesthetic tradition of learning in both eastern and western contexts, which have transformed human societies and cultures in human history.

**The allegory of the Simurgh**

Amongst these universal trajectories, there is an allegory of the Simurgh known as the *Conference of the Birds (Manteq-at- tair)* written by Farid ud-Din Attar (1120-1177), one of the twelfth century Muslim scholars from Persia. It is multi-layer allegory considered as one of the remarkably successful pedagogies to understand the complex journey of transformation. Attar has presented this allegory in an interesting and amusing way, which has moments of great psychological insights (Afkham & Davis, 1984).

The allegory is about a group of thirty birds out of hundreds, who set off on a long and difficult journey of quest to find out their king - the Simurgh. They were guided on their way by Hoopoe, the wise bird. The purpose was to search the Simurgh who was not an ordinary king. Before being able to reach him, there were a thousand veils of light and darkness to be crossed.

**The 7 Valleys of Ordeals and Adventures**

The birds gathered were expected to go through the seven valleys of ordeals and adventures presented below in figure 2:
Figure 2: The 7 valleys of ordeal and adventures

The first valley of quest was symbolised as endless desert, where the thirst was to hunt for the Simurgh. For crossing this barren valley, birds had to give up all that was precious to them.

The second valley of love was depicted as the valley of small fires symbolising the challenges an individual faces, when he/she falls in love with some great cause.

The third valley was the valley of understanding, which portrayed the journey from darkness to light, the knowledge. Each bird chose a different way to unfold the layers of knowledge and wisdom.

The fourth valley of detachment was represented as valley of practice and individual search. Here each bird got opportunity to search within their inner selves the answers to their connectedness with the Simurgh.

The fifth valley of unity was the valley where birds found themselves together again. Here, everything broken into pieces became one again. When the birds saw deep inside one another, they found harmony in themselves. Despite their diversity in colours and shapes, all of them were the same.

The sixth valley was the valley of astonishment and bewilderment, where the birds experienced many strange effects including day and night at the same time. They were unable to tell whether they were happy or sad, or alive. It was an astonishing mystery that contradictory to hearing and seeing nothing, they were able to hear and see everything.

The seventh valley represented the valley of selflessness and oblivion, where the birds felt that their shadows became one with the sunlight. They observed that the waves were melting into a vast ocean and the moths dancing around the flames of love were ready to die.

Ultimately, the group of thirty birds were able to arrive at their destination, which was the court of the Simurgh. They asked for permission to enter the palace of the Simurgh. First they were tested by refusal, and then allowed to meet the Simurgh. What they saw was amazing reality. The Simurgh was none other than themselves in the reflection - the thirty birds. Si in the Persian language means ‘the thirty’ and murgh means ‘the birds’. Simurgh- the king met Simurgh- the thirty birds. This mysterious journey of self-discovery and self-actualisation transformed each one of them, as master of its own destiny!
Key Dimensions of Transformational Leadership in the Allegory

The journey through the above mentioned seven valleys depicts a painful process of transformation. Attar, through the multi-layer allegory, has emphasized that this journey of transformation needs a long-term commitment and a continuous endeavor to search for real answers. Hoopoe, the leader bird in the allegory, was motivating and influencing those who started making excuses for not to continue the journey of quest. The seven developmental cycles in the allegory provided both the theoretical and the practical guide to understand roles and responsibilities of transformational leadership. Each valley implies essential lessons to be learnt to become a transformational leader.

The first valley, which was the valley of quest (Aban), teaches the lessons of patience and humility – to give up all that is precious to oneself. This is the most difficult task for those who are oriented in the field with contradictory models of leadership, where efficiencies are created to serve a few. It is evident today in this globalised world that more than two-third of world’s population is illiterate and living in ultra-poverty, ill health, miserable housing and acute hunger. These world societies are seeking for their dignity and respect as human beings. The lessons from the valley of quest help transformational leaders to be humble and patient to motivate and influence self and others to help transform the barren desert of illiteracy and ultra-poverty.

The second, most important lesson for transformational leaders in the allegory is, to face all odds encountering them in fulfilling their mission and vision. This is a gigantic task. It demands endless time and energies to fight against inequalities and inequities in education. Hence, the lessons of un-conditional love (Ishq) to humanity, derived from the experiences of the second valley, provide courage and strength to transformational leaders to act with purpose and empathy (Fullan, 2011).

The purpose to serve humanity as their core value grants understanding (Marifat) to explore further the root-causes of the problems and search for alternate pathways to address contextual as well as global challenges. This leads to commitment towards collective capacity building of all, no matter whether people are part of the problems or part of the solution. This two-fold capacity building is the third most important dimension of a transformational leader.

The above-mentioned triple principles that are i) quest, ii) love and iii) understanding, establish the theoretical ground for leadership learners to practice their vision and mission. Hence, the fourth valley of detachment (Istighnah) provides platform for individual critical reflections and actions which help refine current skills and competencies and enhance level of confidence to search for answers within their surroundings, to address the challenges of their respective contexts.

Succeeding, the fifth valley of unity (Tawheed) provides an arena to re-connect and practice the most fundamental learning, that is, the basic goodness in human beings, which further capitalise by developing networking and multiplying capability to achieve collective goals for providing quality education for all.

The sixth valley of astonishment and bewilderment (Hayrat) provides an opportunity to understand what is temporal and what is eternal. The power of perceiving nothingness and everything in ‘self’, help find out their source of relevance and identity - who they are?

This self-understanding as nothing and everything within themselves dismantles their identities as ‘individuals’, and prepares them to enter into the seventh valley of selflessness and oblivion.
(Fuqar and Fana). Here, the feeling of emancipation from the self-interest and short-lived objects provide uplift to see the large picture of human kind.

The significant journey of self-actualisation and self-discovery as masters of their own destinies, grounded in their experiences, provide the actual sense of empowerment which brings a sense of abundance and a feeling of deep satisfaction. This is the crux of transformational leadership.

Fullan (2011) has discovered these ideas in terms of seven key interrelated competencies for leading change. These are: i) cultivating deliberative practice, ii) being resolute, iii) motivating others through linking to their realities, iv) fostering collaboration, v) learning confidently, vi) knowing impact and vii) sustaining learning from practice. Bass (1985) while measuring the transformational leadership behaviour, also captured these ideas into four elements of transformational leadership i.e. i) individual consideration, ii) intellectual stimulation, iii) inspirational motivation and iv) idealized influence (Bass & Bass, 2008 p.620).

**Conclusion**

Developing transformational leadership is a high and serious responsibility. To do it well, it is important for us, as professional developers, to look beyond the current pedagogies and search for alternate pedagogies, which are both engaging and focused on the one hand, but also joyous and inspiring on the other hand.

The unique, elegant and powerful allegoric approaches provide both theoretical and practical guide to leadership learners to engage themselves in critical discourse on what matters most in education in the current context of reform. However, some argue that these approaches will create havoc and would not serve the purpose of changing nature of education for the current Century.

Indeed, such individuals have difficulty to digest this guide. Naisbitt states: ‘the most exciting breakthrough of the current Century will occur not because of globalisation and technological explosions, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be a human being’ (Naisbitt, cited in Sidle, 2005 p.1). It is believed that the complex challenges, uncertainties and upheavals of the world today, demand integrated humanistic pedagogies to re-orient transformational leaders, so that they should be reflex and ready to cope with the challenges of changing nature of globalizing world. It is contended that the current conventional-rational pedagogies have not and will never be able to address the global issues related to education world-wide, without practicing the deep rooted belief of oneness of humankind. The aesthetic pedagogies, may lead world societies to be attuned with understanding human purpose and life on this globe.

Therefore, the biggest challenge for professional developers today is, to search for integrated pedagogies which help transformational leaders to cope with the complexities of the current wave of educational reforms. Advanced technologies, economic and social growth and development in rational thoughts and empirical analysis, are important, and can and should not be ignored to face the challenges of the current Century. Nevertheless, there is a dire need to capitalize the power of self in transformational leaders to be servants as well as masters of their own destinies to reform and transform education in the current Century.
References


LEARNED LEARNING SPACES
INVESTIGATING THE COMPOSITION WRITING SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KARACHI

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Abstract
This quantitative study investigates the composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of grade VIII students across gender in private schools in Karachi. Further, the study explores variations regarding each of the sources of self-efficacy (i.e. mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states) across gender. Two assessment tools were adapted from literature including items from the ‘Sources of Mathematics Self-Efficacy Scale’ (Usher & Pajares, 2009; 2008) and the ‘Writing Self-Efficacy Scale’ developed by Shell, Murphy and Burning (1989) to measure the sources of self-efficacy and the composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of students, respectively. Data were collected from seven private schools in Karachi including boys’ (n=3) and girls’ (n=4) schools. Independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney tests were used to compare differences across gender. Results revealed that, on the whole, students’ perceived composition writing self-efficacy beliefs were moderately high; however, there were statistically significant differences across gender (p<0.001). Additionally, girls reported higher on each of the sources of self-efficacy (p<0.05) as well as on their overall composition writing self-efficacy beliefs (p<0.001) as compared to boys. Results reaffirm the theoretical tenets of Bandura’s (1995) social cognitive theory in a Pakistani context.

Introduction
This paper discusses the findings of a research study exploring the composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of grade eight students in seven private schools in Karachi. The study focused on comparisons across gender. Furthermore Bandura’s four hypothesised sources that inform these self-efficacy beliefs were also compared across gender.

Literature Review
In countries such as Pakistan where English is the official language and in mainstream schools where English is the medium of instruction (Siddiqui, 2007), it is imperative to examine the beliefs that learners have about writing. The present far from satisfactory state of ELT (English Language Teaching) in Pakistani classrooms can be attributed to different factors as underscored by Siddiqui (2007). At the school level teachers teach the language as it was taught to them often through the grammar translation method. Hence, inferring from the status of ELT in Pakistan it may be concluded that students use information from several sources (prior achievements, observations of others using the language, the encouragement and verbal judgments of significant others and the physiological and emotional states of fear, anxiety, etc. attached to certain tasks) to form their judgment of their perceived capability. This in turn influences the effort and persistence students will exert in achieving a goal or carrying out a task. Haider (2012)
stipulates that the condition of ELT in most Pakistani schools focuses on reading and reading difficulties while writing remains neglected.

Socio-cognitive views of learning hold that the probability that a student will imitate a modelled behaviour rests on his/her belief in his/her own capability of doing so. The belief in one’s own capability is termed self-efficacy (Santrock, 2008). Bandura as cited in Pajares (2003) stipulated that people’s behaviour may be predicted quite accurately by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities. These beliefs are termed self-efficacy beliefs. Smith and Foud as cited in Moreno (2010) advocate that high self-efficacy in one domain does not necessarily imply high self-efficacy in other domains. For instance, a student who is feeling very efficacious in English may not feel very efficacious in mathematics.

A recent development in the area of cognitive research in writing has focused on the meaning or sense that students make of the skills they possess. With this intent in mind researchers have begun to explore the area of students’ self-beliefs that underpin their motivation in writing (Hull & Rose, 1989; Beach; Fiagley, Cherry, Joliffe & Skinner; Pajares as cited in Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007). Hackett as cited in Pajares, Usher and Johnson (2007) stipulates that the writing beliefs that students hold about their writing capabilities strongly influence students’ writing performance. Students with high self-efficacy beliefs indicate high achievement as exhibited in the study investigating sources of self-efficacy beliefs in Mathematics as well as in writing as revealed by the study involving ESL (English as a second language) learners in Malaysia (Usher, 2009; Shah, Mahmud, Din, Yusof & Pardi, 2011). The results of the study exhibited that that students with low self-efficacy did not apply themselves when presented with a writing task. In contexts where English is not the first language self-efficacy is integral to writing performance as indicated by the study stated in the preceding lines. Hence, this study has established the ground that for students in the Pakistani context to improve their writing skills it is essential to build their self-efficacy beliefs. Understanding how the sources inform or shape efficacy beliefs will provide further clarification and direction to all stakeholders to provide opportunities to students to experience success.

A fundamental finding in self-efficacy research in the language arts is that girls perceived writing capabilities are stronger than boys in middle school (Pajares, 2003). An interesting finding was portrayed with reference to the formation of academic self-efficacy beliefs as a function of gender. Female students reported higher on mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and lower on anxiety as compared to male students in the area of writing. This was true of all three academic levels. Teachers too rated the female students as better writers.

**Methodology**

The intent of investigating self-efficacy beliefs across several schools and gender as well as the notion of generalizing the findings to the schools of the same school system prompted the selection of the quantitative approach for this study in general and the survey design in particular (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the focus of the study attempting to examine the effects of a difference – in this case gender – led to the selection of the survey design (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012).

**Sampling**

The sampling procedure employed for this study was convenience sampling. The researcher was constrained in relation to time and travel to remote areas in Karachi; thus, convenience sampling
as Denscombe (2010) propounds “suits the convenience of the researcher” (p. 37). Table 1 presents a series of nine steps that narrowed the sample size to nine schools that fulfilled the selection criteria and were willing to participate. From each of the participating schools one section of grade eight students were selected as the participants of the study.

Table 1: Criteria to narrow sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Total number of schools run by the system of education in Karachi</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Urdu medium schools</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>English medium schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Of the 21 English medium schools:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Schools of nursery and primary level only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Remotely located schools</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>School having a system of education different from the one the other students are studying</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Schools not willing to participate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Schools that fulfilled the selection criteria and were willing to participate</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Schools for pilot testing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Schools for main study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample: Size and Composition

The population and sample were determined with respect to the aims of the study. The study involved students of grade eight which Usher (2009) stipulates is most fitting when investigating the self-efficacy beliefs of school students as students at this level are at an important junction of entering high school thus, the population comprised grade 8 students of one school system. By grade 8 students would have already accumulated a history of academic performance and motivation. Additionally, students at this level are quite capable of reflecting on their own learning. Table 2 presents the details of the sample in terms of size and composition.

Table 2: Sample- size and composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys' schools</th>
<th>Number of students in each of the boys’ schools</th>
<th>Girls' schools</th>
<th>Number of students in each of the girls’ schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No. of schools</td>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>No. of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>02</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>n= 121 male students</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>n= 130 female students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Collection**

Data were collected through a questionnaire which had been adapted from literature. The research tool items were taken from the ‘Sources of Mathematics Self-Efficacy Scale’ (Usher & Pajares, 2009; 2008) and the ‘Writing Self-Efficacy Scale’ developed by Shell, Murphy and Burning (1989) to measure the sources of self-efficacy and the composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of students, respectively. The questionnaire was directly administered to the students in each of the seven schools.

The second phase was data entry. Analysis of the data was done by computer software popularly known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The ethical protocol adhered to in this study involved the measures described in the following lines. First, informed consent was sought from the principal of each school as well as the participants. Second, it was ensured that no harm came to the participants. Attempts were made to confirm that nothing in the questionnaire would be embarrassing, or that causes low self-esteem, high anxiety, etc. Third, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process of data collection as well as writing the dissertation. Pseudonyms have been used for the school system, the participating schools as well as the research participants.

**Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study reaffirm the tenets of Bandura’s theory in a Pakistani context. On the whole, the grade 8 students had moderately high (M=71.51; S.D=12.76) composition writing self-efficacy beliefs. The analysis interestingly divulges that on average there are variations in the composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of male (M=66.81; S.D=13.20) and female students (M=75.89; S.D=10.65) and that this difference is statistically significant (U=4720.0, p<0.01, r=-.35). Table 3 presents the results of the comparison tests across gender for the sources of self-efficacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of self-efficacy</th>
<th>Mean (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.80(0.53)</td>
<td>P&lt;0.05</td>
<td>r=0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.94(0.54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.86(0.37)</td>
<td>P&lt;0.001</td>
<td>r=-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.08(0.33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social persuasion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.43(0.62)</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>r=0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.72(0.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological and affective states</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.36(0.64)</td>
<td>P&lt;0.05</td>
<td>r=0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.40(0.67)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 interestingly reveals that on all four sources of self-efficacy it was the female students who reported stronger than the male students. These differences were statistically significant. It is important to note that findings from this study revealed variations in the overall sources of composition writing self-efficacy beliefs of grade 8 students across gender. Hence, results from this study attest that effects of the sources of composition writing self-efficacy beliefs vary as a
function of gender in the Pakistani context. The results of the comparison tests (Independent t
test, Mann-Whitney test) intriguingly reveal that female students reported stronger mastery
experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and lower anxiety in composition writing
as compared to their male counterparts. These findings resonate with research findings in other
contexts like the United States (Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007). Moreover, literature states that
when students engage in tasks they make sense or interpret the effort they exert in performing the
task. Students employ those very interpretations to develop their self-efficacy beliefs in the
academic domain in question (in this research composition writing). This is done in order to
engage in tasks and to act in harmony with their created beliefs (Pajares, Johnson & Usher,
2007).

Although vicarious experience is considered a less powerful source in comparison to mastery
experience, in situations wherein students are not too sure about their own capabilities, they are
more susceptible to this source of self-efficacy. However, an important feature of this source is
that students are more likely to modify their self-belief in harmony with the degree to which they
identify themselves with the social model. In the case of composition writing models the students
reported to be most strongly influenced by adults. This is perhaps because teachers as expressed
by Pajares, Johnson and Usher (2008) are looked on as writing models who demonstrate editing
skills. In the academic domain of writing teachers serve as models who can strongly influence a
student’s self-efficacy in the said domain (Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007).

As regards social persuasion the fact that female students reported higher than males. This may
be imputed to the notion of Erikson as cited in Usher and Pajares (2006) who propounded that
the for girls contentment with relationships rather than accomplishments play important roles in
defining their identity.

The lower anxiety scores of girls towards composition writing perhaps reflects the thoughts of
Pajares and Valiante (2001); Usher and Pajares (2008) who hold that writing is considered as a
female activity or within the female domain. The findings of this study make evident the
challenge facing language arts educators that is of modifying students’ beliefs about composition
writing. Hence, it is cardinal to ensure that composition writing is regarded by both male and
female students as a pertinent and profitable activity (Pajares & Valiante, 2001).

Having said that further research in other academic domains such as Mathematics and Science
will further strengthen the finding of gender variations in self-efficacy beliefs as literature
propounds (Pajares & Valiante, 2001) that there exists evidence to support the fact that
differences in the self-efficacy of students is more a function of the academic discipline rather
than gender. Hence, these gender differences may be very well the result of stereotypic beliefs of
gender (gender orientation). Further research is required to substantiate this assumption.

**Conclusion**

Only composition writing self-efficacy beliefs were explored in private schools of a particular
system of education. Owing to the fact that self-efficacy beliefs have markedly strong influences
on students’ performance and competence, extensive research in self-efficacy beliefs of other
academic domains such as Mathematics and Science is needed. The study made use of self-
reported data which has certain limitations including recalling only those events that are
remembered, exaggeration, etc. As Denscombe (2010) argues that a limitation of questionnaires
lies in the fact that the researcher has no other option except for taking the respondents’ answers as true.

References


BUILDING CAPACITY OF TEACHER EDUCATORS TO IMPLEMENT ACTION RESEARCH: FEASIBILITY OF A LOCAL MODEL

Nahid Parween Anwar, Aga Khan University Institute for Education, Pakistan

Abstract

In the area of in-service professional development programmes, action research is considered to be a tool for generating practical knowledge and bringing improvement in practices. Teacher could use action research as a process for professional learning, and to improve classroom practices, where students could be one of the beneficiaries. However, the task is challenging in a developing country like Pakistan, where the concept of classroom research is not well recognized. Therefore, responding to the demands of the changing world and knowing the significance of action research, AKU-IED had offered Action Research course to two cohort of participant under Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) project. Two variants of intervention were implemented as part of this course including: (i) face to face only; and (ii) face to face with field support. All course participants (CPs) were practicing teacher educators with no research background, from distinct teacher education institutes of Sindh and Balochistan. This paper reports how much this course helped to improve CPs’ knowledge and understanding about action research and explored their experiences and skills to implement action research in their workplace. In order to gauge participants ‘knowledge and understanding’ as well as ‘experiences’ of using action research in their context two assessment tools were administered before and after the course. The internal consistency of the knowledge test (α = 0.61) and experience questionnaire (α = 0.87) was found to be satisfactory. Data were analysed using appropriate statistical strategies to describe knowledge & understanding (mean) and to make comparison between two variants of the course (t-test, effect size). Overall, the result exhibits significant increase (p < 0.01) in mean test scores as well as confidence in implementing action research across two variants. However, the magnitude of this difference was comparatively bigger (test r = 0.70; experience r = 0.91) for face to face (f2f) and field support as compared to the face to face only (test r = 0.37; experience r = 0.86). In other words, field support seemed to have contributed positively in participant knowledge and reported skills of implementing action research. Based on these finding it is recommended that including action research course in teacher training programmes would be beneficial to nurture inquiry based culture in education. Furthermore, initial researchers would benefit more by scaffolding their learning through field support.

Introduction

In the area of in-service professional development programmes, action research is considered to be a tool for generating practical knowledge and bringing improvement in practices. Teacher could use action research as a process for professional learning, and to improve classroom practices, where students could be one of the beneficiaries. Action researchers have advocated the importance of action research as a mean to bring improvement at personal and institutional level. That is why action research is gaining popularity as a mode of practicing research among practitioners. Learning through action leads to personal and professional development (Koshy,
Action research involves practitioner in rigorous cycle of planning, observation, action and reflection which can lead to change in practice, hence transformation (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005; Koshy, 2005; Peters, 2004; Hopkins, 2001). Main aim of action research is to develop teacher’s competencies through reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) where teacher identify problems, reframe problem during action, analyze to suggest solution and construct new meaning for further action and plans. Hence, teachers are empowered by having ownership of the professional knowledge gained (Kang, 2007).

In recent years, action research has been adopted in teacher education programmes at university level. Though its importance is widely accepted, even then, the task is challenging in a developing country like Pakistan, where the concept of classroom research is not well recognized. Responding to the demands of the changing world and knowing the significance of action research, AKU-IED had offered Action Research course to two cohorts of participants under Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) project. STEP is a multi-faceted intervention that seeks to improve the quality and delivery of elementary education services by strengthening the professional development and performance of teachers, teacher educators and education managers. The project is working in 7 districts of Sindh, 3 districts of Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. One of its major aims is to improve performance of teacher education institutions in providing quality teacher education. To fulfill this aim, 12-day short course in action research methods was designed to improve capacity of the faculty from teacher education institutions (Provincial Institute for Teacher Education, Government Elementary College of Education and Government College of Education) in Sindh, Baluchistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. All course participants (CPs) were practicing teacher educators with no research background, from distinct teacher education institutes. This paper reports how much this course helped to improve CPs’ knowledge and understanding about action research and explored their experiences and skills to implement action research in their workplace.

The course aimed to help the teacher educators to enhance their understanding about action research as a method within the qualitative paradigm; and assimilate action research as a core function of their professional being. The course, therefore, helped CPs to, acquire basic knowledge and understanding about the action research method, acquire skills for undertaking small scale action research, develop proposal and conduct action research in their institutions to bring improvement in the identified area. 12 days short course was offered in three distinct phases: i) 8 days face to face (f2f) session at IED, ii) implementation phase in the field and iii) report submission and seminar in contextual clusters. STEP project has offered the course to two cohorts of participants (cohort I without field support and cohort II with field support). In cohort II faculty worked closely with small groups of CPs during f2f and field components.

**Data collection tool and Analysis**

Two assessment tools were administered to assess participants ‘knowledge and understanding’ and ‘experience of using action research in their respective contexts. The Knowledge test comprised of 10 multiple choice questions, covering the basic understanding of the term action research, teachers as researcher, phases of conducting action research and history of action research. The other tool was designed on a 4-point rating scale (1 = not confident at all to 4 = highly confident) to determine CPs expertise in different phases of carrying out an action research project i.e. from conceptualizing a study till report writing. In order to develop content validity the tool was reviewed by the research teaching team. The purpose of the review was to
establish whether the measurement scale covers the appropriate content to measure knowledge and understanding and explore their experiences. The reviewers were asked to make judgments according to their understanding of the definition of the items in the scale (Robson, 2002; Mertens, 1998). They reviewed the tool with reference to the ‘aim of the course’, ‘appropriateness of content’, and ‘clarity of language’. They individually rated each item on a five point rating scale (1 = completely irrelevant; 5 = completely relevant). Reviewers were also requested to suggest any additions or deletions in the tool. In addition, reliability of the tools was established through Cronbach’s Alpha (α). The internal consistency of the knowledge test (α = 0.61) and experience questionnaire (α = 0.87) was found to be satisfactory. Tools were administered at the beginning and end of the course (pre-post). Data were analysed using appropriate statistical strategies to describe knowledge & understanding (mean) and to make comparison between two variants of the course (t-test, effect size).

The overall result showed a significant difference (p<0.001) between the pre (M=4.2, SD=1.7) and post-test (M=5.8, SD=2.3) scores of knowledge test. The difference was also found to be significant (p<0.001) between the confidence-level of the participants in carrying out a research project at the beginning (M=1.9, SD=0.57) and end of the action research course (M=3.1, SD=0.38).

The findings from the pre and post-test results of both the variants (field support/No field support) shows a positive trend. There was a significant difference found in the pre (M=4.2, SD=1.9) and post-test (M=6.3, SD=2.4) results of the knowledge test score when a field support was given (p<0.001); and between the pre (M=4.2, SD=1.6) and post-test score (M=5.2, SD=2.1) when there was no field support provided (p<0.01) to the participants. However, the magnitude of this difference was comparatively larger for the field support (r=0.7) as compared to no field support (r=0.37). This shows that the element of the field support in an action research of such a nature contributes significantly to the knowledge of the course participants. A similar trend was found on the participant’s expertise of conducting an action research study. The pre (M=1.9, SD=0.58) and post-test (M=3.2, SD=0.40) results was found to be significant when a field support was given (p<0.001); and between the pre (M=2.0, SD=0.57) and post-test (M=3.0, SD=0.34) results of the same when there was no filed support (p<0.001). However, the magnitude of this difference was comparatively bigger for field support component (r=0.91) as compared to no field support (r=0.86). This shows that field support provided by the faculty during implementation phase helped CPs to reflect, re-plan and act more confidently as compared to the situation where they were working on their own. In other words faculty guidance during field work gave a better understanding of the process while action and reflection was in progress.

**Findings and Conclusion**

The study aimed to gauge CPs knowledge & understanding and experiences of developing and implementing action research project. Teacher educators from different teacher education institutes (n= 86) participated in the study. Overall, there is increase in knowledge score and CPs shared higher degree of confidence in developing and implementing action research after going through the whole process of working on action research project. The result exhibits significant increase (p < 0.01) in mean test scores as well as confidence in implementing action research across two variants. However, the magnitude of this difference was comparatively bigger (test r = 0.70; experience r = 0.91) for f2f and field support as compared to the face to face only (test r
= 0.37; experience r = 0.86). CPs have acknowledged the importance of action research as a method to bring improvement in the identified and targeted area.

It is worth knowing that CPs in cohort II with field support developed a better understanding of the process and reported to be at higher degree of confidence in developing and implementing action research plan as compared to cohort I. In other words, field support seemed to have contributed positively in participant knowledge and reported skills of implementing action research. Based on these finding it is recommended that including action research course in teacher training programmes would be beneficial to nurture inquiry based culture in education. Furthermore, initial researchers would benefit more by scaffolding their learning through field support. This study has contributed to an important aspect of teacher education at university level. It provides some interesting findings for the course developer at project level. Having said that, it is imperative for these teachers to continue using action research as a tool for improvement Attached to this is the motivation to work in group to bring improvement at institute level collectively.

References


KNOWER’S ROLES OF AUTONOMY FOR KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION: A CASE OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB) CURRICULUM

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Introduction

Autonomy is broadly defined as an ability to take responsibility for leading one’s own learning (Holec, 1988). The potential for autonomy is realized when the learner is equipped with the relevant skills such as critical thinking, analytical writing and decision-making through various learning experiences (Little, 2007).

National Education Policy for Pakistan highlights one of its aims as, “to develop a self-reliant individual, capable of analytical and original thinking” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11). However, operational curriculum and prevalent schooling practices fail to address this aspect of quality education. In order to conceptualize spaces for empowering autonomy, empirical evidence is needed to comprehend how a curriculum which already has a critical thinking component influences the autonomy of learners.

The research paper focuses on exploring the quality of experiencing of knowers by elucidating students’ enacted roles that exhibit their autonomy for knowledge construction in the context of one such curricular instance i.e. Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). The core component of TOK attempts to develop critical thinking through study of epistemology. It features the ways of knowledge and areas of knowledge that a knower uses while exercising a central position (Figure 1). Therefore, the study refers the research participants as knowers (IBO, 2011).

![Diagram of Tok Model](image)

Figure 1
Diagram of Tok Model

The research question which guides this paper is:
How do the knowers perceive their roles and meaning of autonomy in the learning processes of TOK in specific and IBDP in general?

Conceptual Framework

Feature of Autonomy
Autonomy has been associated with various decentralized concepts of education such as independent learning, student-centred learning or flexible learning (Benson, 2001). Holec (1988), one of the initial proponents of autonomy, defines it as “taking charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). Dam (1995) refines this definition by including the concept of readiness which entails both capacity and willingness to take charge to act both independently and in co-operation with others. Capacity involves the ability to perform tasks with independence, whereas willingness highlights the intrinsic motivation or strength of intention.

Characteristics of Autonomous Learner
Some common features of autonomy can be identified from the multitude of definitions that are at our disposal. These features include internal reflection, meta-cognition awareness and competence. Autonomy is practiced when one’s beliefs and desires are a result of “rational and informed reflection” (Carter, Kramer, & Steiner, 2007, p. 323). Consistent with the feature of reflection, autonomy is also about meta-cognitive awareness that is “consciousness” of one’s beliefs and actions. It consists of focus and self-evaluation of what one knows, what one is currently doing and what is one’s cognitive and affective state/capacity is (Hacker & Dunlosky, 1998; Wilkins, 1996; Wenden, 1991). This helps an individual to make informed decisions about his/her learning and to readily employ the resources which are available.

Participants in research of Chan (2001) highlighted some attributes of autonomous learners such as being highly motivated, inquisitive, well-organized, hardworking and interested in the topic being explored, active initiators, flexible and make use of every opportunity to learn (pp. 512–513). These features provide a framework to highlight autonomous practices of knowers.

Methodology
Since the study explored role of the knowers in exercising autonomy for knowledge construction in a bounded context of IBDP’s TOK course and related curricular spaces, therefore Qualitative Case Study was used as a research paradigm to explore, observe, and understand perceptions and opinions of knowers regarding their learning practices and experiences (Gerring, 2005).

The study was conducted in a private school The Urban Academy in Karachi, Pakistan which follows two-year long IBDP curriculum at higher secondary level (16-19 years). The study participants (Table 1) including three students from Year 1 of IBDP: two female (Ariana, Sabaina) and a male student (Ayaan) and the TOK teacher (Simak) were chosen using purposive sampling to select information-rich cases. The selection of participants was based on relative extents of classroom participation and adequate participation of both genders in the research.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knower</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Prior Schooling</th>
<th>Degree of Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ariana</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Transited from MYP. Prior to that, she has received her schooling in Kenya where she studied in a school which taught O levels curriculum.</td>
<td>An active participant in the classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayaan</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Joined IBDP after completing his Matriculation and getting some work experience at a software house.</td>
<td>An alternate way of participation. He always comes up with the questions on the readings which he discusses with the teacher in spare time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaina</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Joined IBDP after completing her O levels (secondary education).</td>
<td>Relatively participates less than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simak</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>He has received B.A. in Literature and Economics from a foreign liberal art college. He has been teaching for last five years and completed his M.Ed. in Critical and Creative Thinking from a foreign university. He has joined The Urban Academy from the recent academic year as a part-time teacher.</td>
<td>Pedagogue for the TOK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study employed multiple methods for data generation such as tape-recorded semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Study guides, textbooks and students’ essays were also reviewed as part of document analysis. The data from multiple sources was transcribed/reviewed/triangulated and analysed continually to identify emerging themes (Merriam, 1998) which are discussed below.

**Findings**

The data suggest the knowers enact the roles of a questioning mind or an inquirer, reflective thinker and creative communicator.

**Knower as a Questioning Mind**

The findings suggest that one of the core practices of knowers in learning processes is that of questioning. Students were observed asking questions during discussions, employing inquisitiveness during their independent readings and using e-tools to find information during classroom sessions. Such questions led to meaning-making and transformed their constructs of various concepts.

For instance, in one of the assignments, Ariana used an example which was not discussed in the class. When she was asked about how and why she incorporated a fallacy of knowing in that assignment which was beyond classroom learning, her response resonated the same prominence of innate interest or curiosity in the topic of study:
Because I was thinking and I started questioning what would be another fallacy in this kind of knowing. Curiosity made me read ahead, in the book and on the internet and I wanted to put those learning in the assignment. Your book cannot answer all your questions so you have to look into more sources. The main question of assignment matter but my own questions also matter equally to me. (Interview with Ariana, March 14, 2012)

Sabaina also shared similar views regarding her learning engagements where discussion plays a vital role in directing her towards independent searches, “For me, discussion leads to questioning things, then I think about it and research on it on my own.” (Interview with Sabaina, March 12, 2012)

On the other hand, the data indicates that if knower does not have self-confidence on either the ability to construct knowledge or adequacy of their own constructed ideas then they would require external support and affirmation. In Sabaina’s situation, she is still not sure about how to carry out learning tasks because she doubts whether she is fulfilling the task expectations. As a result, despite of knowing the content, still she is sometimes unable to translate that knowledge into an organized process of creating a knowledge product. It creates a challenge for her autonomous learning practices. According to Sabaina:

The reason I want supervision is that I guess I am not quick enough; I don’t have enough belief in myself. You get confused but when you know that it’s the way everyone is doing it then you do your work accordingly. A lot of times, in the essays, I have not been able to complete them as I didn’t know how to go about it. Sometimes when I reach the required word limit, I just submit the essay and don’t feel like working hard over it. (Interview with Sabaina, March 08, 2012)

Furthermore, in such a situation, the freedom to think loses its usefulness when the person is not skilled to deal with that freedom.

**Knower as a Reflective Thinker**

The data reports that knowers were actively engaged in constructing knowledge during classroom discussions and essays by reflecting on their daily life experiences. For example, Ayaan, in one of his essays, had reflected and transformed his conception of hedonism or self-pleasure in light of community service. The glimpses of the same process also resonate in the opinions of Ariana, “TOK gives you a certain bridge to reflect. Like does an activity appeal to emotion or reason and why is that important and how it is helping you to learn something?” (Interview with Ariana, March 08, 2012)

Knowers also shared the content in the book helps knowers to build upon their knowledge as it challenges their thoughts. Students also feel that pedagogue helps them to understand the concepts. Moreover, Simak also thinks that “TOK helps students to understand themselves in relation to the rationale of what they are doing.” (Teacher Interview, February 8, 2012). In document analysis, it was noted that every chapter in the book starts with a list of quotations and proverbs. Some of them are also part of activity boxes which are placed throughout the chapter;
It is engaging and interesting to read because of the informal way in which it is written, like someone talking to you. It also has activities, pictures and linking questions to other topics which help me to reflect from multiple perspectives. Similarly books of other subjects also have boxes (bubbles) which tell how the content relates to TOK. (Interview with Ariana, March 14, 2012)

**Knower as a Creative Communicator**

Research data provided evidence regarding creative approach for presenting knowledge. In a knowledge piece on using reason in daily life, Ariana contained originality of argument. During this assignment, she placed the self practically in the centre of discourse and actually analysed minute activities that she herself undertakes from morning to night was a novel approach of understanding ‘reason’ as a way of knowing. Every creative endeavour involves some risk-taking because it drives beyond the convention. She communicated:

> When I wrote an assignment through a different approach, I was not really sure how it would be received. I have always written objective pieces which have concrete or established concepts. This time I felt like taking a risk and included subjective personal experiences. (Interview with Ariana, March 14, 2012)

Similarly, for example, Sabaina’s first assignment for TOK course was filled with images and she thought these visuals helped aid the communication of her views regarding the topic of discussion. She elucidated, “It is about the writer’s choice because some people can express their ideas better through pictures. Sometimes you know, instead of writing a paragraph, you put a picture and that speaks all” (Interview with Sabaina, March 12, 2012). It can be inferred that her assignment took images from outside sources and tried to interpret those images by weaving in her personal ideas to construct a new meaning. It was a risk to be innovative as creativity comes with a price. Her assignment was not that well-received because in their school’s context, students have to follow conventions of essay-writing; they can be creative through words only and using images are not encouraged.

However, it was identified during document analysis that the study guide itself allows videos or posters to be part of presentations and there is no explicit mention of not using metaphors. Yet, the data from interview suggests that knowers have built these perceptions based on the guidelines and feedback they have received on their assignments. This has limited the creativity and originality of their ideas and therefore their autonomy for knowledge construction as well.

**Discussion**

In light of findings, knowers become autonomous through two processes/conditions; firstly, development of their competence by provision of knowledge and skills of critical thinking. The findings show that each knower is willing to take the responsibility of reflecting upon their daily life experiences, areas of knowledge and larger existential questions. They have started exploring depths of their thoughts and the complexities of subsequent questions that emerge out of those intellectual wanderings which are evident from their responses in interviews. The reasons for
their behaviours, choices and actions of learning come from inside within the consciousness of self (Benn, 1988). As mentioned in the findings, participants feel that IB curriculum in general and specifically TOK course encourages the questioning and justification of one’s beliefs and claims of knowledge. Little (1991) considers autonomy as a capacity for critical reflection. The knowledge of epistemology helps students to think analytically in TOK and other learning endeavours. Secondly, knower’s act autonomously when they have self-confidence about their capacity of critical reflection and meaning-making.

As a result, knowers are more willing to take risks, present and defend their ideas in creative ways, value their own questions and have confidence in their independent quests. Surprisingly, they recognize constraints and do not become overly affected by those limitations. Conversely, they manoeuvre their ways to work in those constraints. For example, students are not allowed to use images in their written assignments; however students still try to be creative and imaginative by quoting a variety of examples.

Nevertheless, not everyone is at peace with this task. It is not an easy task as it creates disequilibrium in the prior cognitive and current emotional state; social and academic expectations create such disturbances. Pedagogue first needs to comfort students that knowledge would certainly create paradoxes because dissonance is vital for constructivist learning and it is also the agency of knower in knowledge construction which proposes the solution (Moon, 2008). Moreover, the students should be aware that there is no one right answer; rather it is the intellectual rigor which counts the most.

The findings show that knower is agency for knowledge construction is related to autonomous interdependence (Atkins, 2009). Even when a knower interprets his/her personal experiences independently, those experiences are still rooted in a social interaction. Even one a person is engaged in an epistemological course to build improve critical thinking, s/he requires a classroom to build the competence or a book written by another person to learn those concepts. Reading is not the end of an autonomous learning experience. Knowers’ need of spaces for interaction, discussion and dialogue in the classroom is one of the most dominant findings of this research.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The data suggest that knowledge construction starts from questioning which then leads to the search for explanations. These explanations arise by thinking upon content resulting from their searches and reflecting upon life experiences. Inferred explanations are then communicated through classroom discussions and their knowledge-based essays. The content of the course and one’s confidence in critical reflection skills helps autonomous learning.

Briefly, it can be asserted that, the roles of being Inquirers, Thinkers, Risk-takers, Reflective and Creative mentioned in the learner profile and also their enactments highlight the learners’ initiative, critical thinking, diverse perspectives, creative expression and self-reflection.

In light of the research findings, it is recommended that the curriculum should provide opportunities where their voices and interpretations are essential.

1. Introducing the use of visual mediums for meaning-making and representation as part of their written assessment.
2. Scaffolding through guided approach, reflective questions and proper communication of role expectations should be provided by pedagogue in independent readings.

3. Employing cooperative learning strategies such as debates, drama and case-studies to support relatedness in autonomy by provide spaces for interaction among students to share their concerns while performing independent tasks.

References


ASSESSING IMPACT OF AGA KHAN ACADEMY MOMBASA’S (AKA, M) OUTREACH PROGRAMME ON STUDENTS’ LEARNING OUTCOMES – AN EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Anthony Gioko, Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa

AKA, M has been offering professional development programmes to English teachers and headteachers as part of its outreach activities since 2009. The Academy invited AKU-IED to develop AKA, M capacity in the area of monitoring and evaluation with a specific focus on outreach programmes. In response to this invitation, a small scale study was carried out to pilot teachers’ and students’ assessment tools developed as part of the capacity building workshop held in Mombasa, Kenya. The evaluation study aimed to examine the impact of AKA, M outreach programmes on students’ (grades 4 to 6) learning outcomes in English language in intervention areas of Mombasa. Three tools were administered to assess students’ cognitive (English Achievement Tests) and non-cognitive (English Language Attitude Scale, Student-Teacher Relationship Questionnaire) outcomes. A quasi-experiment was employed for the small-scale study to compare outreach (n=3) and non-outreach (n=3) classes. A sample of 367 students was recruited from the target classes. This paper focuses on pilot results of students’ learning outcomes.

In general, students’ assessment tools have demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. However, a few extremely difficult items can be reviewed before launching the main study. Results of group comparison have revealed that outreach classes have scored higher in achievement tests than their non-outreach counterparts in grade 4 and 6 with a significant difference in the latter (p<0.05; r = 0.16). Similarly, outreach group has shown a more positive attitude towards English language (p<0.001; r = 0.35) and has reported more positive student-teacher relationship than non-outreach group (p<0.05; r = 0.13). Interestingly, those students who have reported more positive attitude towards English language tend to perform better in achievement test (r = 0.267; p<0.001). Conversely, relationship between students and their English language teacher did not demonstrate a significant relationship with test scores (p>0.05).

The study has begun the process of accumulating evidence that the outreach programme evaluated can serve as a model of teacher development within professional development activities of AKA, M. It also provides a modest foundation for a larger and more representative sample study to produce generalizable data.

Introduction

The Aga Khan Academy, a unit of Aga Khan Education Service, Mombasa is part of an integrated network of schools offering an international standard of education from pre-primary to senior-secondary levels with a rigorous academic and leadership experience. One of the distinguishing features of the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa (AKA, M) is the provision of high quality professional development programmes for educators focusing on subject content acquisition, general pedagogical skills, interactive learning techniques and student-centered
teaching methodologies. These programmes are available both to the Academy’s faculty and teachers mainly from government schools with the aim to develop a pool of well-trained teachers regionally. As part of its outreach activities AKA, M has been offering professional development programmes to English teachers since 2009. The programme is designed in three tiers where duration of each tier is 150 hours. Tier one aims to improve teachers’ own English fluency skills; tier two focuses on strengthening teachers’ pedagogical skills to teach English language; and tier three empower teachers to develop teaching/learning material using low-cost and locally available resources.

In order to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess efficacy of its outreach activities, AKA, M invited the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) to support it in this regard. The first author represented AKU-IED to help the academy develop an evaluation framework. As part of this collaboration, the representative visited AKA, M in July, 2012 to conduct a 5-day workshop in order to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluation and pilot it on a small sample in English language classrooms in target schools. The workshop was attended by a team of 12 members with diverse backgrounds in teaching and research.

The evaluation study aims to examine the impact of AKA, M outreach professional development programmes on students’ (grades 4, 5, 6) learning outcomes (cognitive and non-cognitive) in English language in intervention areas of Mombasa, Kenya. Furthermore, it aims to assess teachers’ classroom practices and their views about the school environment. The study is planned in two phases: the first phase which has recently been completed aimed to: (i) develop/adapt/adopt assessment tools; and (ii) examine trends of how students/teachers in outreach classes have performed/taught differently from non-outreach classes; phase two will be a relatively large-scale impact study. Due to limited sample size, quantitative analysis for data collected from teachers could not be carried out. Hence, this paper focuses on results of students’ data.

**Impact Study Design**

A quasi-experiment design was used for the study where outreach classes (n=3) represented the intervention group while comparison classes (n=3) were recruited from the same school. An inclusion of an outreach class helped measure the progress of the outreach group against a ‘soft’ comparison group. For the main study comparison classes will be recruited from matching schools.

**Sample and Sampling**

Three intervention schools were selected for the Mombasa pilot study. Students from outreach (n=184) and non-outreach (n=183) classes participated in the study. The sample represents two systems of schools including government (grades 4 and 6) and private (grade 5). Demographic comparisons revealed that the outreach and non-outreach groups were comparable on most of the aspects (e.g. average age, gender ratio). All workshop participants (n=12) and the facilitator participated in data collection which was completed as part of the workshop in July, 2012.

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3Some private schools have also benefitted from the programme.
Developing/Adapting Impact Assessment Tools

Keeping in mind the nature of the intervention both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of students were included in the framework in order to capture their learning in a holistic manner. A summary of students’ assessment tools are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: A summary of students’ assessment tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Example item</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Achievement Tests</strong></td>
<td><strong>Content:</strong> Vocabulary, Grammar, Comprehension and Composition Items: Multiple Choice Questions (24) and Constructed Response Questions (1)</td>
<td>25 (26 for grade 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Learning Attitude Scale (ELAS)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It assesses students’ attitude towards English learning in out of school and its importance in life.</td>
<td><em>I look forward to my English lessons &amp; English helps to get good jobs.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Views of Teacher-Student Relationships Questionnaire (TSRQ)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It focusses on student-teacher connectedness, availability of the English teacher and his/her communication skills.</td>
<td><em>My English teacher likes me &amp; I can go up to my English teacher any time.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*English achievement test for grade 4, 5 and 6 were adapted from available samples of Zonal English language tests and examples of achievement tests developed and tested in Pakistan.*

*ELAS (Kind, Jones, & Barnby, 2007) was a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree)*

*Student-Teacher Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) was used to elicit students’ views on their relationship with English language teachers (Leitão, & Waugh, 2007). It was a 4-point Likert scale (1= not at all to 4= almost always)*

Assessment tools were developed during the AKA, M 5-day workshop through a rigorous multi-step process. Three grade-specific achievements tests were developed and piloted. All tests comprised four sections including: (i) vocabulary; (ii) grammar; (iii) comprehension; and (iv) composition. The first three sections comprised MCQs while the fourth section was designed to give a space for children to write based on pictures (composition). Non-cognitive assessment tools were adapted from other studies and were administered to the whole sample.

Analytical Strategies

A database was developed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) 19. Data for both cognitive and non-cognitive measures were entered at item level. All tests carried equal marks (30); however, the marks distribution across four categories (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, composition) in each test was not consistent. Therefore, raw scores were used for the overall average scores; however, it was imperative to use standardised scores for making any sensible comparison at category level. After standardising the scores the mean was set at 500 with a standard deviation (SD) of 100. The score for ELAS negative statements was reversed before computing the mean score. Analyses were undertaken in two steps. Psychometric analysis was carried out to establish reliability and validity of assessment tools. Difficulty indices of test items were computed. In addition, the internal consistency of the students’ learning outcomes was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha (Black, 1999; Robson, 2002). A comparison was made for the test scores and students’ ratings on non-cognitive measures in order to gauge the difference.
between outreach and non-outreach groups. Tests for comparisons were used based on the normality of the data - independent t-test or Mann-Whitney (Field, 2005). Correlations were computed to explore association between cognitive and non-cognitive assessments.

Results

Psychometric Results

A summary of results of Difficulty Indices (DI) of achievement tests are presented in table 2. It is evident that there was a wide spectrum of the level of difficulty across grades and a majority of items were in the ‘acceptable’ range. Altogether there are only five items which were attempted accurately by less than 14% students. These questions will be revised before launching main study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades (items)</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
<th>Items (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4 (26)</td>
<td>Less than 0.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 (25)</td>
<td>0.15 - 0.30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6 (25)</td>
<td>0.31 - 0.50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.51 - 0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.71 - 0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of Cronbach’s alpha (α) for cognitive assessments were within the acceptable limits with the highest being 0.81 (grade 4) and the lowest was 0.60 (grade 5) Similarly, alpha values for all, save one, non-cognitive assessments fell within acceptable range with the highest being 0.83 (ELAS for grade 6) and lowest being 0.64 (TSRQ for grade 4) (Harms, Jacobs & White, 1996; Field, 2005). Grade 6 TSRQ demonstrated a lower level of internal consistency (α <0.6); however, it would be appropriate to retain TSRQ for the main study for which a larger and more diverse sample will be recruited.

Comparisons

English achievement tests: comparison across groups

The total mean test score for this sample was 15.7 (52%; SD = 5.1), while outreach classes scored higher (M=16.1, 53.6%; SD= 5.1) than their non-outreach counterparts (M=15.1, 50.3%; SD= 5.4). However, the difference was not significant [t (365) = 1.216, p>0.05]. As shown in table 3, results have followed the same pattern in grades 4 and 6; however the difference favoured outreach group only in grade 6 (p<0.05) with a small magnitude (r=0.16). Non-outreach group has an edge over outreach group in grade 5; however the difference was not significant (p>0.05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>15.9 (5.7)</td>
<td>15.3(5.8)</td>
<td>t(140) = 0.561; ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>19.6 (3.6)</td>
<td>20.5(3.0)</td>
<td>t(65) = -1.210; ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 shows a comparative overview of scaled mean scores across four categories of tests. The outreach group has performed significantly higher in composition (M = 531; SD = 89) than their non-outreach (M = 469; SD = 101) counterparts \[ t (365) = 6.293; p<0.001 \] with a medium effect size \( r = 0.33 \). In contrast, non-outreach group has scored slightly higher in vocabulary; however, the difference was not significant \( p>0.05 \).

Figure 1: English achievement test – comparing scores of test categories across groups

Table 4 presents group differences across grades for each category. Of the twelve comparisons presented in table 4, only four depicted significant differences. Of these differences, three (composition scores for target grades) were in favour of outreach group with a large (grade 4); medium (grade 5) and small (grade 6) effect size. Conversely, grade 4 of non-outreach group has scored higher than outreach group in vocabulary with medium effect size \( r=-0.48 \).

Table 4: English achievement scores – comparing category scores across grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>574 (103)</td>
<td>600 (93)</td>
<td>( t(140) = -1.604; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>408 (30)</td>
<td>440 (30)</td>
<td>( t(65) = -4.360; p&lt;0.001; -0.48 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>460 (53)</td>
<td>448 (48)</td>
<td>( t(156) = 1.389; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>464 (38)</td>
<td>458 (42)</td>
<td>( t(140) = 0.986; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>679 (75)</td>
<td>703 (53)</td>
<td>( t(65) = -1.498; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>454 (32)</td>
<td>454 (29)</td>
<td>( t(156) = -0.083; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>418 (77)</td>
<td>441 (79)</td>
<td>( t(140) = -1.817; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>515 (61)</td>
<td>511 (46)</td>
<td>( t(65) = 0.294; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>570 (81)</td>
<td>545 (103)</td>
<td>( t(156) = 1.694; ) ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>499 (63)</td>
<td>405 (74)</td>
<td>t(140) = 8.151; p&lt;0.001 (r= 0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>574 (45)</td>
<td>522 (59)</td>
<td>t(65) = 4.059; p&lt;0.001 (r = 0.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>542 (112)</td>
<td>504 (106)</td>
<td>t(156) = 2.202; p&lt;0.05 (r = 0.17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean (Standard Deviation)

Non-cognitive assessments: comparison across groups

ELAS ratings revealed that students in outreach group have shown a significantly more positive attitude (M = 4.1; SD = 0.5) than their non-outreach (M = 3.7; SD = 0.5) counterparts [Mann-Whitney U = 10096.500; p<0.001] with a medium effect size (r = -0.35). As shown in table 5, results followed the same pattern in grade 4 and 6 with a substantially large magnitude in grade 6 (r = -0.68) and small in grade 4 (r = -0.17). For grade 5 non-outreach group has reported a slightly more positive attitude; however the difference was not significant (p>0.05).

Table 5: Comparing ELAS scores across grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>3.9 (0.4)</td>
<td>3.7 (0.6)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 2024.000; p&lt;0.05 (r = -0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>3.9 (0.6)</td>
<td>4.1 (0.4)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 485.000; ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>4.4 (0.4)</td>
<td>3.6 (0.5)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 663.500; p&lt;0.01 (r = -0.68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean (Standard Deviation)

TSRQ ratings demonstrated that students in outreach group have experienced a more positive relationship with their teachers (M = 2.9; SD = 0.5) as compared to non-outreach (M = 2.8; SD = 0.5) group [Mann-Whitney U = 14312.500; p<0.05]; however, the magnitude was rather small (r = -0.13). As shown in table 6, results followed the same pattern in grades 5 and 6 with a significant difference only in grade 6 with a medium effect size (r = -0.38). In contrast, for grade 4 the significant difference was in favour of non-outreach group (p<0.05) with a small effect size (r = -0.18).

Table 6: Comparing TSRQ scores across grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Non-outreach</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>3.0 (0.4)</td>
<td>3.2 (0.5)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 1968.000; p&lt;0.05 (r = -0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>2.7 (0.5)</td>
<td>2.5 (0.7)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 413.000; ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>2.9 (0.5)</td>
<td>2.6 (0.3)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U = 1768.000; p&lt;0.01 (r = -0.38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean (Standard Deviation)
**Correlations: cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes**

Overall ELAS score has shown a positive association with students’ performance ($r = 0.267; p < 0.001$). In other words, those students who reported to have more positive attitude towards English language tend to perform better. Unlike ‘more positive attitude’ better relationship between teachers and students did not demonstrate a significant association with the overall achievement test scores ($p > 0.05$). As shown in table 8, ELAS has maintained the trend of positive relationship with overall test scores with the relationship being significant for grades 4 and 6. TSRQ followed the trends which were observed for overall scores – no association with test scores.

**Table 7: Correlation with overall score of English achievement test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>ELAS</th>
<th>TSRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * p<0.05; ** p<0.01

**Conclusion**

The newly developed/adapted assessments have managed to ‘pick’ differences across groups. Although results were not consistent across categories of the achievement test (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, composition), more differences were in favour of the outreach group. It is argued that the study has begun the process of accumulating evidence that the outreach programme evaluated can serve as a model of teacher development within professional development activities of the Academy. Evidence is presented for the impact of the language professional development programme on enhanced child outcomes in specific cognitive areas (e.g. composition writing) and selected non-cognitive aspects (e.g. attitude towards English).

In summary, this was the first step that was undertaken to provide a modest foundation for the main study. To illuminate and broaden understanding of the impact of outreach programmes at classroom and student level larger and a more representative sample study is required in order to have sufficient power to produce generalizable data. Furthermore, once the evaluation model is developed by recruiting a larger and more varied sample it can be expanded to add other components for evaluation.

**References**


SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVE LEARNING IN TEACHING PRACTICES
IN EARLY YEARS

Sarwat Mifzal and Sukaynah Shoaib, Al-Murtaza School, Pakistan

Introduction

We are working in the Pre-Primary Branch of a trust operated school system which lay equal emphasis on students and teachers learning. Therefore staff development has always been an integral part of the system. It is worth mentioning that the School has its own Professional Development Center (PDC) and provides us with a rich learning experience of growing as a classroom teachers and working with adult learners.

As a part of the team, we get various opportunities for our professional growth. We teach students of Nursery and Class 1 and always wanted to provide meaningful learning to our students we discuss amongst ourselves what worked in our class and what did not. As Richard A (1995) has said “teachers learn by inquiring in to their practices. They think of their classroom experience in order to ‘make sense of them’” (p.2) There were times when we could not make sense of our practices but exposure to various professional development opportunities started opening our minds. We were fortunate to be selected by the school management for Certificate Programme of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) organized by AKU-IED in 2007. During the course we learnt how to create learning environment and establish daily routines according to High Scope Approach.

After the completion of this course we started implementation of our learning in daily teaching practices. In addition to it we also shared our learning with our colleagues by first inviting them in our classroom and then by “peer coaching” and “micro teaching”. Besides this we got the opportunity to be the part of ‘Executive Committee Member’ of Early Years Learning Association (EYLA) in 2008. We conducted 10 days work shop for teachers of Ismaili Tariqa Board which was coordinated by Dr. Neelofar Vazir who is AJKU-IED ‘s Senior Faculty for ECED. This experience made our beliefs stronger on using High Scope Approach.

From 2009 – 2011 we worked as team members of facilitator for ECED course at our PDC. In 2012, on the basis of our learning experience PDC provided us the opportunity to coordinate, plan and conduct a 10 days ECED short course.

Currently, both of us are working as level co-coordinators, (Sarwat Mifzal for class I and Sukaynah Shoaib for Kindergarten). We provide support to the teachers working at the same level to create learning environment and establish daily routines according to High Scope Approach through various modes.

Our Mode of Working

The following mechanism was practiced with the fellow teachers

- Provided Content knowledge on High Scope Approach, how children learn and the child’s developmental stages with learning theories
We demonstrated how teaching is done through High Scope Approach
Invited teachers to observe our teaching and physical setup of classroom.
Co teaching was done with teachers of our own School
Observed them in Classes and regular reflection on teaching was done as a routine practice.
To disseminate our learning we worked with the teachers of other trust operated School and we followed the following steps.

- Designed need based Programs
- Provided them input on ECED theories and approaches.
- Executed activity based session where participants got the opportunities to get hands-on experience of setting a classroom based on High Scope Approach. Later they were required to plan activities for ECED level and do micro teaching.

Lessons Learnt

1. **Enhancement of content knowledge**
   - Enhancement of content knowledge with reference to
     - Early Childhood Education and Development
     - Learning Theories
     - Teaching approaches in ECED such as High Scope Approach /Kindergarten Approach /Montessori Approach.

2. **Learned to Work with people from diverse background:**
   - As our role is to facilitate not only our student’s learning but also to provide support to our fellow teachers. So we practiced reflecting on our experience this helped us in identifying gaps in our teaching.
   - As level coordinator we worked with our team of 6 – 8 teachers.
   - As professional development teachers (PDT) we work with our colleagues as well as other school teachers those who attended summer programme in our PDC.
   - I (Sarwat Mifzal) as a member of EYLA executive committee have a responsibility to conduct at least 1 session in a month based on different pedagogies of high scope approach, in Karachi and other cities of Pakistan. In this regard I have conducted workshops on “How young children learn” at Sukkur, Quetta, Khairpure and Hyderabad.

Supporting Factors

- In our School we have on-going professional development and mentoring system.
- School administration helps and supports us a lot in promoting learning environment.
- Cooperation of our colleagues play a significant role in implementing our learning.
- We got a lot of support from AKU-IED as our facilitator Ms Saima Khalid and Ms Imrana Raza were coming and observing us during our ECED course. It was a great support to establish and maintain conducive learning environment for young children.
- Dr. Neelofar Vazir is always with us when ever we need her guidance and support. She, as a mentor encourages us to keep learning and taking risk of trying and exploring new ideas.
• And of course we have lots of support from our family members, they provided us comfortable environment to learn more and be able to give time to our profession.

Challenges and Proposed Solutions

• Establishment of learning centres
  According to High Scope Approach we need to establish learning centers in the class. Due to less space we decided to create learning centers in a separate room for all classes. Through this practice we realized that children did not get the feelings of ownership, it took long to settle down children and no one took the responsibility to keep the room properly.
  We discussed about this matter with all colleagues and we all agreed to create learning centers in their own classes. It made children more responsible, confident and develops a sense of ownership.

• Increased work load
  Traditional way of teaching focused more on reading and writing but according to the High Scope Approach children learn best through manipulating material and interacting with environment. Each child should get the equal opportunity to explore the environment. These practices take long time and more work load on practitioner.
  We go through with our curriculum and time table and design daily routines in which focus is on less writing and more interactive sessions leading to meaning for learning.

• Preparing resources
  As we earlier said that each and every child should get the equal opportunity to explore the material, in this regard we have to prepare enough material for all of them.
  We use low cost no cost things to prepare materials and school also provides material for the same purpose.

• Challenges from colleagues
  To create an active learning environment we have faced some challenges from our colleagues those who were not familiar with the whole notion of ECED.
  In this regard we have designed an action research plan with them, as well as we have done peer coaching and micro teaching.

• Acceptance from parents
  Mostly parents are not aware with this way of teaching and learning, they expect more written work in copies.
  Before starting new academics session we conduct orientation meeting to make parents aware about High Scope Approach by giving them demonstration and make them visit class rooms.

Conclusion

We have implemented our learning at our School and focused on creating conducive learning environment and a good relationship among teachers and young learners.
Through this practice we are able to sustain active learning in our daily routines. We easily use active learning as a tool to develop language skills, deliver mathematical and scientific concepts of our students and enhance their social and moral skills. Most importantly through this practice we are also working to achieve our School’s vision. AMS vision is “To develop our students as confident, responsible and enlightened human beings equipped with courage, compassion and a sense of mission to play an active role in making our world a better place to live in.”
APPENDIX

HIGH SCOPE APPROACH

The High Scope Early Childhood Education approach was developed in the Ypsilanti, Michigan in the 1960s and in practices in various countries.

The philosophy behind High Scope is based on child development theory and research, originally drawing on the work of Jean Piaget and John. Since then, the High Scope Curriculum has evolved to include the findings of ongoing cognitive-developmental and brain research. In its teaching practices, the High Scope Curriculum draws upon the work of developmental psychologist and educator Lev Vygotsky, especially the strategy of adult scaffolding, supporting children at their current developmental level and helping them build upon it in a social setting where children have opportunities to choose materials, ideas, and people to interact within the projects they initiate. The adults working with the children see themselves more as facilitators or partners than as managers or supervisors. Children learn best through hands-on experiences with people, materials, events, and ideas. That principle validated by decades of research is the basis of High Scope's approach to teaching and learning. By adopting the High Scope Curriculum and learning to use it effectively thousands of educators and caregivers worldwide are making a difference in the lives of children, youth, and families.

ACTIVE LEARNING

2400 years ago a famous Chinese philosopher ‘Confucius’ said

I hear I forget
I see I remember
I do I understand

The High Scope Curriculum emphasizes active participatory learning. Active learning means students have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children's interests and choices are at the heart of the High Scope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. In active learning settings, adults expand children's thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions. The High Scope Approach to ECE believes that young children learn most effectively through ‘real’ experience and by using their senses. When learning is strengthened with practical experiences, it lays a firm foundation for abstract learning later and so children learn best when they are active learners. While active learning children are actively involved in changing, moving, making things themselves and just not passively watching or listening. Active learning means children are acting and discovering things independently. Children learn actively when they are given opportunities to handle materials. When they mix water and sand and see the change, learn to use a pair of scissors, express them through paint, make models and squeeze a sponge full of water etc.

Essential Ingredients of Active Learning

MATERIALS

- Enough provision of material for all.
- Natural and teacher made material.
- Space and time to use materials.
- Easy to handle.
- Age appropriate.
- Open-ended
- Safe

**MANIPULATION**
- Children explore actively with all their senses.
- Discover relationship through direct experience.
- Transform and combine materials.
- Children use their gross and fine motor skills.

**CHOICE**
- Children initiate activities that grow from personal interest and intention.
- Children choose materials.
- They decide what to do with materials.

**LANGUAGE**
- Children talk about their experiences.
- Children talk about what they are doing in their own words.
- Meaningful discussions between adult and children.

**ADULT SUPPORT**
- Adult form partnership with children.
  - Put themselves on children’s physical level.
  - Encourage children’s ideas and interests.
  - Converse in a give and take style.
- Acknowledge children’s choices and actions.
  - Watch children how they explore with the material.
  - Ask children about their intentions.
- Adults listen and encourage children’s thinking.
  - Value children’s ideas while working and playing.
  - Intervene children while they are thinking or doing.
  - Focus on children’s work.
  - Make comments that repeat, amplify and build on what the child says.
  - Pause frequently to give children time to think and gather their thoughts into words.
  - Accept children’s answers and explanations even when they are not appropriate.
- Adults encourage children to do things for themselves.
  - Watch out patiently while the children handle the things independently.
  - Except children’s mishaps, if any, open heartedly.
  - Let children interact their ideas, assistance, and conversation with their parents.
  - Encourage children to ask question and give them space to find out answers from the surroundings.

**References**
Teachers who teach Teachers Reflection on Teachers Education (T.Russell and F. Korthagen 1995)
SCHOOL SNACK HABIT OF CHILDREN (4-6 YEARS)

Seema Barkat Ali Bhamani, Habib Girls School
Ayesha Zahid Khan, The Aga Khan University, Human development Programme

Abstract

The main objective of this research paper was to assess school snacks habits of Pakistani children 4-6 years and to explore the reasons of this snack selection. The study design was qualitative, and it is an exploratory, descriptive study. Convenient sampling was used. Data was collected from 30 children (4-6 years) of Habib girl’s school, pre-primary class, and their mothers. Anthropometric data, observations of snacks and interview from mothers was taken along with 24 hour dietary recall of the children. The findings of the study reveal that all children bring snacks to school regularly. Majority of children consume healthy school snack as school emphasizes on healthy snacks. But when the overall dietary intake and home snacks of these children are analyzed results reveal that these children do not have healthy diets.

Findings of the present study indicate that school snacks are not the major problem of children health as now most schools emphasize on healthy snacks. But there is a need to improve children eating practices at home. Therefore more attention needs to be given to plan for nutrition education programme for mothers so that they give importance to healthy eating of children at home.

Keywords: snack habits, children

Background and Introduction

Nutrition plays an important role in a child’s healthy physical and mental development. The foundation for good health is laid in early childhood and involves establishing good eating habits.

“Good nutrition is the corner stone for survival, health and development of current and succeeding generation. Well-nourished children perform better in school, grow into healthy adults and in turn give their children a better start in life” (Ramzan et al. 2010).

Children of South Asian and Pakistan have unsatisfactory intake of milk, fruits, vegetables and a high intake of fat (Hydrie, Basit, Badruddin & Ahmedani, 2004). Effects of inappropriate dietary intake in children are: underweight, wasting and stunting. (Ramzan, Moorani & Shahid, 2008). Childhood malnutrition in developing countries and Pakistan is attributed to inappropriate food intake and nutritional deficiency (Subzwari, Hasnain & Ali, 2009). Malnutrition and infectious diseases are a major cause of mortality, morbidity and a hindrance to national development. (Badruddin, Agha, Peermohamed et al. 2008)

“Malnutrition is one of the major killers of children in developing countries”. (Gulati, 2003). Malnutrition is defined as the imperfect nutrition (under or over nutrition) or an imbalance between body’s needs and intake. Under nutrition is insufficient intake of food to meet dietary
energy requirements resulting in underweight and deficiency. Over nutrition or intake of excess dietary energy results in overweight or obesity. (Ramzan et al., 2010).

One out of every three children under-5 years in developing countries is malnourished (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2005). In South Asia 46% of children under-5 are moderately or severely underweight (UNICEF, 2005). According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) 50% of the children in South Asia are undernourished. Rattan (1997) reported that half of the world’s malnourished children are found in three countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. (Gulati, 2003)

In Pakistan child malnutrition is a public health problem. National figures report 40% children are underweight, 50% are moderately malnourished and 14% are severely malnourished (NHSP, 1996).

“Appropriate nutrition during the childhood is essential for maintenance of normal growth and good health” (Pakistan ministry of health, 1997). To provide essential nutrients, a child’s meals and snacks should include a variety of foods from each group in amounts suited to the child’s needs. Serving sizes should increase with age. A portion of meat, grain, fruits or vegetables for children is loosely defined as 1 tablespoon for each year. (This rule of thumb applies until child reaches to the age of 12) (Nutrition Information Centre-University of Stellenbosch).

Preschoolers and school going children are important for a society. Their growth development and health is important for the community and for the whole nation (Vashisht R.N et al). This is an important stage of life where nutrition has long lasting effect till later years (Khattak K, Ali S).

Young children learn eating patterns and develop concepts of healthy through their parents and caregivers (Stanek et al., 1990). Research evidences that dietary patterns high in fats and saturated fats and low in fruits and vegetables are linked to increased risks of coronary heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, hypertension and obesity (Frazao, 1998). Child nutrition is important for the development of a society, playing an effective role in physical, mental and social emotional development of a child. “There cannot be health without proper nutrition” (Rhode Jon. E)

**Methodology**

This qualitative, exploratory, descriptive study aimed to study the school snack habits of children (4-6 years) and to explore the reasons behind these habits. Convenient sampling was used. Study participants were 30 children (4-6 years) of pre-primary, and their mothers. This study was conducted in Habib Girl’s School, Karachi. Ethical approval was taken from AKU-ERC.

**Data Collection**

**Observational diary** was maintained during school snack time by two observers for two weeks. Each observation was of 15 minute duration. This diary recorded the snack item, quantity brought from home and quantity consumed.

**24 Hour Dietary Recall (24-HDR)** of the children’s diet was taken from the mothers.
**Height** was taken with the help of a tape measure. **Weight** was taken on a bathroom digital scale.

A **semi structured questionnaire** was used for interview of mothers. Appointment for interview was set according to convenience of mothers with in school hours. Each interview was of 45 minute. This questionnaire **Section 1** assessed demographic information. **Section 2** evaluated dietary intake and determined the reasons for selecting snacks.

The collected data was qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. Data received through observations and in-depth interview was coded under different categories and analysis was done manually. Themes were identified and further analysis was done. The height and weight of the child was analyzed with 2007 WHO growth charts. Interview of mothers helped to determine reasons behind snack selection and correlation with other factors. The 24 HDR gave an insight of the child’s over all eating habits and the importance of the school snack in the day’s menu.

**Results**

The study participants were 30 female pre-primary students aged 4-6 years. The mothers of all participants were approached for the study but 27 out of 30 mothers consented. The 3 refusals were due to mother’s busy schedule or illness.

Out of 30 children 29 were of normal height and 1 child was below average. Weight measurement revealed that 90% children were of normal weight and 10% were underweight.

It was observed that all children bring snacks to school regularly and majority of them bring healthy snacks (Table 1). Very few children bring unhealthy snacks. (Table 2). Mothers give 3 to 4 type of snacks every day but children consume only 1 or 2 items (Table 3).

**Table 1**

*List of snacks being brought by children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almond</th>
<th>Chicken piece</th>
<th>Melon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>Chicken wings</td>
<td>Milo milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>Chocolate spread sandwich</td>
<td>Nuggets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boil beans</td>
<td>Cucumber</td>
<td>Pakola milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boil egg</td>
<td>Egg sandwich</td>
<td>Plain biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boil potato</td>
<td>Egg paratha</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter bun</td>
<td>French toast</td>
<td>Pomegranate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken spread sandwich</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>Samosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken paratha roll</td>
<td>Jam sandwich</td>
<td>Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken burger</td>
<td>Kababparatha</td>
<td>Spring rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese sandwich</td>
<td>Kabab sandwich</td>
<td>Sweet butter bun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chick peas</td>
<td>Kabab burger</td>
<td>Tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken chunks</td>
<td>Mayonnaise sandwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
*List of unhealthy snacks being brought by children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brownie</th>
<th>Cream cake</th>
<th>Orange juice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cake</td>
<td>Dairy milk chocolate</td>
<td>Patties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart papyri</td>
<td>French fries</td>
<td>Perk chocolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Frooto juice</td>
<td>Ring chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate donut</td>
<td>Jelly sweet</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracker chips</td>
<td>Macaronis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cream biscuit</td>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
*The snacks been send by mothers and consumed by children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>ITEMS CONSUMED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>1 pack biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 piece cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>1/2 box maggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 cake piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 nugget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 chicken piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>1/2 sandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack cocomo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>2 bites sandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 chicken spread sandwich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was identified that children are given a choice for their school snacks otherwise the child does not eat the snack. The 10 most common snack items given as mother’s choice are listed in Table 4.

It was found that 88% of the children had breakfast daily and 14% skipped breakfast. However, all children consumed a healthy school snacks and a proper lunch. Finding showed that 70% of children have lunch and dinner with family and consume all items on the table. From the remaining 30%: 3.7% children consumed selected items as per their preference (chicken and raw vegetables like cucumber, carrots and boil peas). Moreover, 3.7% children consumed only beans, potato and rice and 7.4% children did not consume any vegetables but ate only meat items and
remaining 11% children did not take a proper lunch as they eat junk food such as chips, biscuits, sweets and fruit drinks.

It was found that most children like to eat fast foods such as pizzas, burgers, French fries and chicken rolls. However, parents were not getting these food items more than once in a week or once in 15 days as they think that it was unhealthy and will ultimately affect their children’s health. Probing identified that 51% of children were taking chips, sweets and chocolate daily and others were in a habit of consuming these items twice or thrice a week. Moreover 22% of children were taking carbonated drinks daily and 77% had drinks and canned juices occasionally (Table 5). Mother’s perception about the importance of children dietary habits was that it is important in children’s growth and provides the needed vitamins, calcium, and calories.

Table 4
Ten common snacks selected by mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biscuit</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownie</td>
<td>Kabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cake</td>
<td>Maggi noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French fries</td>
<td>Nuggets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French toast</td>
<td>Sandwich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
24 hour dietary recall analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSUME</th>
<th>DAILY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All food items</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected items</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dal, potato and rice</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken and Vegetable</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junk food</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Poor eating and physical activity habits in childhood are responsible for problems in later life, particularly in relation to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and cancer (Stanner 2003). This study was conducted to assess school snacks habits of children (age 4-6 years) and explore the reasons of these snack selections. Literature shows that majority of Pakistani schools going children do not taking healthy food and are in a habit of taking more junk food as compared to healthy food. This study reports similar findings. It was found that 51% children consume junk food in daily routine.
School going children are important for our society. Their growth, development and health are important for the community and for the whole nation. Study data found that children bring snacks to school regularly and majority of them consume healthy snacks like sandwiches, fruits, chicken nuggets, however, few of them consume unhealthy snacks like chocolates, sweets, chips, cream biscuits and French fries. Availability of snack foods and soft drinks at school has a significant impact on overall child nutrition (Templeton 2005 and Kubik et al. 2003). “Appropriate nutrition during the childhood is essential for the maintenance of normal growth and good health” (Pakistan ministry of health, 1997). Preschool age is an important stage of life where nutrition plays an important role and has long lasting effect in the later years of life. In this study it was observed that mostly children are consuming healthy snacks in school. But the 24-HDR data found that 51% children consume chips, chocolate, sweets daily and 22% children take cold drinks and juices in their daily routine. “Dietary patterns that result in high intake of fats and saturated fats and low intakes of fruits and vegetables are linked to increased risks of coronary heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, hypertension and obesity” (Frazao, 1998). It was observed that children consume healthy school snacks because schools emphasize on healthy snacks. But at home they do not consume healthy diet. Two case studies of children’s 24-HDR are presented below. Consumption of processed foods rich in fats, sugars, and salt and low indietary fiber, all known risk factors for obesity, have also risen considerably (Uauy et al, 2001; Albala et al, 2002; Kain et al, 2002) One factor attributing to poor dietary intake is unawareness about balance diet.

**Case Studies**

**CHILD 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School snack</th>
<th>24 hour dietary recall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 small sausage</td>
<td>2 sausages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 nuggets</td>
<td>1 bounty chocolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicken pulao with potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 glass Pakola drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack biscuit with tea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beef gravy and rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Pakola drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milk with roafza</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHILD 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School snack</th>
<th>24 hour dietary recall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 piece cake</td>
<td>Milk with chocolate chip biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pack biscuit</td>
<td>Butter with ½ paratha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 apple</td>
<td>Chicken gravy and chapatti with 1 big glass of 7up drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 pack chips and chocolate chip biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 big glass 7up drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 large cup milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dal and rice with 1 big glass of 7up drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the present study it was found that 11% children did not take lunch properly as they were consuming more junk like chips, biscuits, sweets, and drinks. It was also found that most of the children liked to eat fast food like pizzas, burgers, French fries and chicken rolls. Consumption of fast foods and fizzy drinks has negative effect on health of young generation. "Children who ate with parents, siblings, or both at mealtime also had better diet, more defined as taking more servings from the five basic food groups (Stanek et al., 1990). Result of present study can also be compared with the observation by Stanek et al., (1990) that 70% children are having meals with their family and were consuming all items and had better diet.

Findings of the present study indicate that school snacks are not the major problem of children health. Children are taking healthy school snacks as schools emphasize on healthy snacks. There is a need to improve eating practices at home. There is a need for nutrition education programmes for mothers.

Reference


Feeding Children 4-6 years. Nutrition Information Centre University of Stellenbosch. *Division of Human Nutrition*.


Kajornboon, A.B. Using interviews as research instruments.


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RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT
TEACHER APPRAISAL IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN PAKISTAN

Afsheen Fatima Agha and Sherwin Rodrigues, Notre Dame Institute of Education

Abstract

This quantitative study compares the experiences of higher elementary school teachers (grades VI-VIII) as regards the existing system of Teacher Appraisal (TA) in their schools. A questionnaire with 30 items was developed that comprised two sections with 8 and 22 items, respectively. Government (n=75) and private (n=79) higher elementary school teachers were recruited for filling out the survey questionnaires in June 2012. Results indicate that TA in government schools is not linked with teachers’ performance; instead it is related with qualification and years of experience that leads to its ineffectiveness in government schools. The focus of the private sector is on improving performance; hence, all the aspects of purpose and criteria for appraisal are greatly practiced in private schools as compared to government schools. It was also found that there is no uniformity in the frequency of appraisal in the government schools as compared to the private schools where the frequency of TA is mostly once, twice or four times a year. Since this study did not include an exploration of the whole system of appraisal there is a need to explore methods of classroom observation and feedback. It is recommended to replicate the same quantitative research in different cities of Pakistan to strengthen the results for generalization to the country.

Background of the Study

Teachers and school leaders are professional employees and in managing their performance, their personal as well as professional development is essential (Shahzad, Bashir & Ramay, 2008; Naseeruddin, Dad, Iqbal, Shah and Niazi, 2011). Research studies by Barrens, Ovando, Tiang and Zarro as cited in Zhang and Ming Ng (2011) demonstrate that teacher professional development is greatly facilitated by teacher appraisal. The Pakistani education system is not uniform throughout the country where several different kinds of systems or type of schools prevail. For example, public schools, private schools, NGO Schools, Madaris, Cadet Schools, Garrison Institutions and missionary schools (Iqbal, 2011). Since there is a difference of system among the schools, different kinds of teacher appraisal systems are being followed.

The government schools follow Annual Confidential Reports (ACR) where the district level Executive District Officer, Education (EDO-Education) is responsible for the administrative control of personnel, effective utilization of resources, mapping of schools, inspections of schools, and the preparation of appraisal reports for teachers and school heads (Khan, 2005). The study also confirms that in ACR salary increment is dependent on promotions and promotions are dependent on raising the qualification standard by the teacher or on three years of experience by the teacher in the same school.

On the other hand, private schools do not follow a uniform system of Appraisal. Every school has its own method of Teacher Appraisal (TA). However, there are strict rules regarding absenteeism and teachers’ enthusiasm for improvement that are not in place in the government
sector (Khan, 2005). The author further confirms that teachers in private schools are more prone to losing their jobs, of not getting promoted or receiving any salary increment in the absence of better performance.

The population council report by Ghuman and Lloyd (2007) states that there is consistently better performance of private school students as compared to government school students although Imran (2008) reported that the number of qualified teachers with M.Ed. and B.Ed. degrees is more in the government sector as compared to the same in the private sector.

**Research question**

Is there a difference between the experiences and effects of teacher appraisal on teachers’ performance in classroom instruction among public and private higher elementary school teachers?

**Literature Review**

Appraisal is a key component of the performance management system that determines how well an individual teacher has performed over a period of time (Middlewood, 2002). Performance is the behaviour to achieve the target (Armstrong, 2003). Effective performance appraisal tries to balance both the functions of appraisal i.e. accountability and professional development (Stronge, 2006). Brown and Benson (2003) found that effective appraisal can improve commitment and productivity of the employees through planning promotions and compensations by the management.

**Performance domains, standards and indicators**

Stronge and Tucker (2003) assert that an effective teacher appraisal system is based on well defined job standards for all educators. Performance responsibilities can be categorised into three tiers: domains, standards and indicators (*ibid.*) as shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Bases for an Effective Appraisal System**

(Adapted from Stronge & Tucker, 2003)
Performance indicators are the observable behaviours for evaluating performance standards derived from domains. For teachers’ appraisal these indicators are observed or documented to determine the degree to which an employee is fulfilling a given performance standard. A research study done at a university in Punjab revealed that appraisees and appraisers of that university have contradictory standards of evaluations and this ambiguity has led to ineffectiveness of the existing system of appraisal (Rasheed, Aslam, Yousaf & Amna, 2011).

**The Process of TA**

Landy and Conte (2010) have suggested three components of the continuous process of performance appraisal.

The process starts with defining the purpose and criteria of TA through a meeting between the head and the teacher. Secondly, data of evidences of teachers’ performance is collected through various means such as informal or formal classroom observations, students’ results, parents’ and students’ survey remarks, self and peer evaluation, teachers’ portfolio containing his/her lesson plans, samples of students’ work, self-reported questionnaires, reflection sheets and achievement of previously set goals (Marsh, 2000). The third step is the communication between the head and the teacher that can be enhanced through reflective sessions on performance, small achievable targets with clarity of practice, and follow up sessions for future development of the present job and for career and professional development of the individual.

**Relationship of Teacher Appraisal and Performance in Pakistan**

Researchers have found that the correlation between TA and performance is weak in Pakistani institutions (Ahmad & Shahzad, 2011; Shahzad, Bashir & Ramay, 2008). It means that in Pakistani educational institutions appraisal does not improve the performance of teachers. The reason for this weak relationship as explicated by the two studies is the ineffective existing system of appraisal in the institutions. Furthermore, the researchers believe that government institutions follow the typical annual confidential reporting of performance which leads to its ineffectiveness on teachers’ performance.

Research suggests that there are several factors that act as hindrances in achieving the benefits of TA (Anjum, Yasmeen & Khan, 2011). For example, untrained appraisers, exclusion of multiple raters, the absence of constructive feedback and the non-involvement of teachers in the appraisal system. Teachers see TA only as a source of collecting information for administrative purposes.

**Method**

The study aimed to explore and compare government and private school teachers’ experiences of the existing appraisal system in their schools. The sample selected was 153 teachers of grades 6, 7 and 8. There were 74 teachers from 6 government schools whereas 79 teachers were from 4 private schools. A questionnaire containing 30 items with 8 questions in section ‘A’ and 22 items in section ‘B’ was used. A letter of permission to the administration of each school was presented to make the process of research ethically acceptable. A consent form was attached to each questionnaire to ensure the agreement of the respondent teachers. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were taken care of by writing a code number on each questionnaire instead of writing respondents’ names.
Data Analysis

Sixty-seven percent of the teachers are aware of TA in their schools but a considerable number (27%) of teachers are less aware of TA in their schools. It is revealed from tables 1 and 2 that government school teachers are highly qualified as compared to private school teachers which is also reported by Imran (2008). But the evidence of in-service training is negligible in government schools. The high rate of provision of in-service trainings for teachers depicts the emphasis of the private sector on improving teachers’ performance.

Table 1: Teachers’ Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>&gt;1yr</th>
<th>1-5yrs</th>
<th>6-10yrs</th>
<th>11-15yrs</th>
<th>16-20yrs</th>
<th>&lt;20yrs</th>
<th>&gt;1yr</th>
<th>1-5yrs</th>
<th>6-10yrs</th>
<th>&lt;10yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current study has confirmed the findings of Khan (2005) that reported that promotions in government schools are linked with increasing academic qualification and years of experience. Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the government school teachers focus on increasing their academic and professional qualifications and years of experience rather than improving their performance.

Table 2: Teachers’ Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Matri</th>
<th>Inte</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>Master’</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>B.Ed.</th>
<th>M.Ed.</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current study has confirmed the findings of Khan (2005) that reported that promotions in government schools are linked with increasing academic qualification and years of experience. Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the government school teachers focus on increasing their academic and professional qualifications and years of experience rather than improving their performance.
Figure 2: Frequency of TA

Figure 2 provides evidence of appraisal being held once in 5 years and sometimes never happening in schools. Majority of the teachers in the government sector experience appraisal biannually whereas, in the private schools, the frequency is once, twice and four times a year.

Figure 3 depicts the highest to lowest values for the sources being used for TA in Pakistani schools. Classroom observation is the major source of gathering data for the appraisal of 125 (out of 154) teachers followed by students’ report cards as reported by 112 teachers.
Evidently private schools are considering all these sources to a greater extent as compared to the government schools (figure 3). For government schools, students’ report cards are the major source for providing evidence of teacher performance. At the second level classroom observation is considered as the most practicable source for TA data collection. While facilitating respondents in filling out the questionnaire a government teacher provided a clue for not using peer evaluation as a tool for data collecting in that it tended to provide a chance for putting the non favourites down.
Similarly, the purposes of TA are also arranged according to the highest to lowest responses prevailing in the government and private sector schools. The comparison of responses in figure 4 depicts that private schools consider all the stated purposes of TA to a greater extent than the government schools. A huge difference in the purpose of annual increment is evident through figure 4. Teachers (n=73; 79%) saw TA as an incentive for classroom performance. As compared to private school teachers, only 21% (n=19) of government teachers saw the purpose of TA as an annual increment in salary. This major difference sheds light on this important factor of connecting compensation practices with performance evaluation. Research undertaken in the universities of various cities of different provinces by Ahmad and Shahzad (2011); Shahzad et al., (2008) and Shahzad, Rehman and Abbas (2010) have demonstrated a high correlation between teacher appraisal and salary increment.
All the mentioned criteria of TA have received more than 50% positive responses but again figure 5 is depicting surprising comparative results. The focus on the criteria for content knowledge is of major concern for government schools. All the stated criteria have received major responses from private school teachers. A noticeable statistic regarding the criteria of classroom management has received the lowest responses i.e. 28 out of 74 which is 37%. This finding leads to the conclusion that classroom management being the most important along with others in the private sector, is of least importance in the government sector.

**Conclusion**

The reason for the non-effectiveness of TA in the government sector is its focus on increasing teacher’s qualification and experience rather than performance. Private schools focus more on all aspects of administrative and developmental purposes of TA as compared to government schools. The criterion of classroom management is of the lowest importance in government schools. In all the areas of TA, private schools focus more on teachers’ improved performance in the classroom as compared to the government schools.

**Recommendations**

There is a need to tie annual salary increment and promotion with better performance rather than years of experience or seniority. This will further motivate the teachers to work efficiently and effortlessly for the improvement of their own performance in the classroom. The school administration needs to focus on the developmental purpose through identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers through careful observations and hence develop
strategies for providing professional development opportunities to teachers to improve their classroom performance. Teachers’ efficiency and performance can be improved by providing them assistance through in-service training or supportive feedback. The teachers should also take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school administration and effortlessly apply the newly gained knowledge to grow professionally.

The heads or the principals need to define the purpose and criteria of appraisal at the onset of the academic year so that the teachers can focus on the purpose and criteria during their teaching. Appraisal done on the basis of predefined goals and objectives makes the appraisal fair and satisfactory and is more acceptable by the teachers.

References


NEED ANALYSIS OF ASSESSING TRAINING PROGRAMS OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY

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Abstract

The study was designed to analyze the needs of assessing training and development programs of universities faculty. The scope of the study was limited to all the faculty members of public and private sector universities in Karachi. Two major hypotheses were formulated. The population was large and diverse, therefore stratified random sampling design was adopted. The sample size was sixty teachers drawn from six universities. A tailor-made questionnaire, focus group discussions and an structural interview protocol were developed to collect data. Data were analyzed and it was found that most of the individuals were selected without need analysis. The training agencies are not caring and collecting the information related to post training impact and transfer of the knowledge to other faculty members. The individual efforts of the faculty members were not with regard to dissemination of adequate knowledge and skills. On the basis of findings, concrete recommendations were made.

Key Words: Need analysis, assessing training programs

Introduction

The research was conducted to analyze various aspects from designing, selection, approval and the impact of the training program initiated by institutes at university level in Pakistan. Training is a process through which groom individuals to perform in an efficient way on a required or about level of performance. Training is beneficial to develop and improve knowledge, skills and bring change in attitudes. It inculcates competitiveness, managerial and organizational processes related with professional development.

Process of training has four steps or phases: need assessment, designing of training program, delivery and evaluation of the whole process. What an organization require and what are faculty needs can be assessed through job tasks and individual analysis. Training design must consider both organizational and individual needs. The effectiveness of training can be enhanced by active participation of learners, improving learning climate and by collecting continuous feedback of the trainees at their place of work. Human resource development is directly related to organizational development.

Educational organizations have been spending their limited resources on initiating different training programs. The study attempted to assess all these phases of a training program which are assessing training needs, training process and efforts to disseminate the impact of training.

The overall objectives of the study were:

- to analyze assessment needs,
- to assess selection procedures used in different institutions/organizations for identifying persons to be nominated for training,
to assess how far purpose of different trainings have been achieved by the training provider agency,

- to analyze the level of satisfaction among individuals after completion of training,
- to get the feedback about dissemination of the knowledge and skills acquired through the program by the trainees.

The study was designed to analyze the needs of assessing training and development programs of university faculty. The research was conducted to have in depth knowledge of the various aspects from designing, selection, approval and the impact of the training program initiated by institutes at university level in Pakistan. The scope of the study was limited to all the faculty members of public and private sector universities in Karachi who had acquired training. Two major hypotheses were formulated. The hypotheses were on the basis of control of institution and training acquired. The study would help in advancement of knowledge related to effective training programs. It would provide guidelines to the authorities concerned to take appropriate measures to improve the effectiveness of the training programs. It helps in reducing the cost and ensure to maximum utilization of resources.

Literature Review

The need and demands of training program and its requirements plays a significant role in its success Gupta (1999). As a result of training staff work smarter, productive and efficient. Effective training program results in enhancing the professional knowledge and skills of the staff and holistic development of the institute. The objectives and procedures of the training are not static but they are changing as per the demand of the individuals and institutes for whom the training is required. Smart and effective working can be developed through effective training. Evaluation of training programs play key role not only in improving the individual capabilities but it enhances the program’s overall quality and efficacy (Koontz, 2004).

Selection procedures in training and its impact on professional development of individuals and dissemination of knowledge reflects effectiveness of training ( Gadeceau , 2012 ). Generally the individuals after completion of training do not try to disseminate the acquired knowledge and skills. This kind of attitude results in wastage of resources. The dissemination of knowledge by trained workforce is directly associated with the selection criteria. An effective need analysis lead to professional development and improvement of practices. Systematic and proper selection procedures for selection of participant teachers help in result oriented outcomes. It helps in improvement of performance. Grossman and Salas ( 2011) pointed out that dissemination of knowledge and skills acquired through training to the actual job practice and to the peers is dependent on numerous factors. Few important factors are, the personal traits of the individuals, level of motivation, practicality of knowledge and skills related to job and administrative support. It is concluded that the proper selection procedures and dissemination of acquired knowledge and skills have been directly related. Bulut and Culha, ( 2010 ); Xie and Wu,(2001) mentioned that focus would be solely on selection of right participants. The effective and outcome based training programs would be designed in a logical and systematic manner. It is based upon the professional needs of the individuals and the institution in terms of the existing resources. The attention would be on maximum utilization of resources and to minimize the leakages. Need-based training program enhance the trainees commitment, work motivation and level of job satisfaction.
Catwright, (2003) described that learner’s readiness; motivation and ability to learn are important factors which influence outcome. Training process is essential component with regard to quality assurance. Higher Education Commission is continuously making efforts in this regard. All educational organizations are trying to meet set standards. The only way to meet set standard is to provide a systematic and quality training through which human capital can be used efficiently and effectively.

A very important part of any training program is its evaluation. It is comprised of matching the post training results to the pre-training objectives of trainees, trainers and the organization. According to (Miller and Osinski, 2002) and Carliner, (pp.117-229, 2004) the effective designing of training program must focus on need assessment, instructional objectives, implementation and evaluation. Further it selects right person in the light of set goals, required level of knowledge, competencies and skills desired.

Stanley, (2002) stated that the staff should work in efficient manner to enhance cost effectiveness and productivity. Gupta (1999) talked about fast paced environment and changes in training programs. Carliner, et al., (2004) described the following benefits of training: (i) training increase job satisfaction and motivation (ii) efficiency in process resulting in cost effectiveness (iii) increase capacity to adapt new technologies and production (iv) reduce employees turn over (v) practice innovate strategies (vi) enhance quality and quantity of products.

Whenever there is a need which arises for bringing any change for improvement, the adequate procedures would be adopted in light of the changes desired. Assessment by the employer (universities, organizations or by the quality enhancement cell of Higher Education Commission, Pakistan) can provide useful data to meet the demands of the training programs. Unless there is correspondence between individual and institutional needs, the aims of the organization can not be converted into practical action. Mostly training programs organized for faculties or employees are based on their present needs. There must be a link between present and future needs as well as individual and organizational needs. In all training programs a functional approach should be used and efforts should be done to improve abilities.

Methodology

Mixed research method was adopted so both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The research was divided into three steps.

1. Collecting information related to need assessment of trainees at University level.
2. To analyze the training process and procedure.
3. To devise the strategies for rapid dissemination of the knowledge and skills.

Population: Population of the study comprised of all universities functioning both in public and private sector in Karachi. All university teachers who have minimum 2 years of teaching experience and at least have knowledge about various aspects of training program are part of population.

Sampling: The population was large and diverse. Therefore stratified random sampling design was adopted. The sample size was sixty teachers drawn from six universities (three each from public and private sector) were selected.
Instruments: A questionnaire was designed. It was comprised of two sections viz, particulars about the respondents and a measuring scale. The measuring scale is related to (me) personal need assessment,

(ii) Training process (iii) dissemination of knowledge by trainee. Items of the instrument were drawn from related literature and in consultation of the experts in the field. The researcher also developed three broad questions for focus group discussion. It was conducted with a small group (n=10) of university teachers. An interview protocol comprising of six questions was developed. Ten senior teachers having 10 years of experience were part of interview.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments a pilot study was conducted. The procedure helps in improving the instruments. The content validity was censured by consulting the experts in the field of training and trainees. Their expert opinions and suggestions were incorporated.

Data Collection: The data were collected through personal visits. The procedure ensured rapid collection of data and it helped in answering the queries raised by the respondents.

The following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis No. 01: There will be no significant difference in the contribution of trained and untrained faculty to facilitate the peers in acquiring the latest concepts gained through the training.

Hypothesis No. 02: There will be no formal system of feedback enacted by the organizations who imparted training to the teachers of public and private universities of Karachi.

Data Analysis: The data were analyzed by using t-test (inferential statistics).

Results

Hypothesis No. 01

Referring to the table of t at df =2 and level of significance = 0.05, the tabulated value of t=2 is greater than the computed value of t= 2.99. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that both trained and untrained teachers are not equally contributing in a same manner to share their exposure of new knowledge and skills with their peers.

From inspection of the table it is clear that trained teachers to some extent are better in sharing of the learned knowledge and skills with their peers.

Hypothesis No. 02

Referring to the table of t at df =2 and level of significance = 0.05, the tabulated value of t=2 is smaller than the computed value of t= 4.564. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is no proper system to collect the feedback from the trainees. Some organizations are completely ignoring the trainees while few of them are in contact with the trainees.

Conclusions

It was concluded that trained and untrained teachers were contributing in a same manner to update their peers in terms of exchange of experiences. It was concluded that trainings generally do not influence the behavior of teachers. Most of the teachers of the opinion that they are
exchanging and sharing knowledge with their colleagues at their free will. Some senior and more qualified teachers due to their expertise and experience have been supporting their juniors to solve discipline-related problems. It is concluded that there is no proper system to collect the feedback from the trainees. Some organizations are completely ignoring the trainees while few of them are in partial contact with the trainees. This approach results in wastage of meager resources in terms of time, finance and human resources. The training agencies are not caring and collecting the information related to post training impact and transfer of the knowledge to other faculty members. The individual efforts of the faculty members were not adequate with regard to dissemination of knowledge and skills.

Focus Group Discussions and Interviews: The responses from the focus group discussions and interviews are supporting the results obtained through analysis of hypotheses. General trend is not to share the learning experience from training. Few teachers supported the idea of sharing the experiences with other staff members. They are exchanging and sharing knowledge with their colleagues at their free will. It was concluded by the respondents that the selection process would be made transparent and need–based. The need of the individual faculty members and the department must be taken care of. Respondents criticized the attitude of organizations conducting trainings without prior and proper need assessment system.

**Recommendations**

- Utilization of resources in an efficient manner.
- The economic feasibility of the training in terms of quality and improvement of practices must be ensured.
- A body is evolved to assess the whole process of training programs offered by HEC/Universities
- Making it mandatory to give a thorough report of all aspects of training received
- The trainees would be compelled to disseminate the knowledge to their peers within two weeks after acquiring the training.
- A thorough need assessment of the training programs should be done
- Communication: proceedings of all training programs should be communicated with all concerned quarters verbally and in written form.
- Selection of persons to be sent for training should be based on performance, willingness and on needs of individual as well of the organization
- Check and balance system should be developed about resultant benefits of the training programs
- Time frame should be given to the person for disseminating the knowledge and experiences acquired through training.
- A forum should be given to a trained teacher for disseminating the knowledge and expertise gained through his training.

**References**


PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY: CONTESTING THE NOTION OF QUALITY

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National Education Policy (2009) has regarded quality of education as major casualty of the system’s inefficiency. Quality of education has emerged as a serious concern throughout education policy with a reference to differentials in quality and consequent opportunities of children. As such improving access with a focus on quality was regarded as the most central strategic education policy priority. Tracing the history of education in Pakistan over the last sixty years, one can see similar emphasis on increasing access and improving quality of education have been a recurring theme in educational policy statements and development plans for the past six decades. Yet, the policies all have failed in impacting schools. This failure has serious ramifications for the government school system and has also led to a mushroom growth of private sector schools. This trend has been aptly documented in earlier studies:

The failure of the public system of education has enormous consequences vis-à-vis educational justice for all. For one, this failure makes possible the expansion of a private school system. The driving force for such expansion is mainly the perceived bad quality of public schools [——]. The scanty data that we have shown that by 1968, nearly 22% of total enrolment at the primary level and 42% at the secondary level was in the private sector, as were over half the students in higher education. By now, about 33% of total enrolment in Pakistan is estimated to be in the private schools. We cannot argue against a growth in private schools per se. What we worry about is that this growth indicates a serious failure of the state to provide quality public education to its children. Private sector can never cater for all children of Pakistan. Without an effective public education, we can never hope to develop a hopeful, enlightened, and tolerant citizenry. (CQE, 2007)

In the light of above, understanding what works, or rather what has failed to work in the government schools is a matter of urgent importance. In the Sindh province of Pakistan, there has been an influx of externally driven reform projects, many of which have “school development” as their ultimate focus. A statement by one of the key government officials has outlined the agenda of future inquiry, “as we begin to think about school development, we need to understand two related issues that impact school quality. The first is in understanding the reasons for the deterioration of standards in schools historically known for their high level performance and output. The second is the need to understand local perceptions of quality and underlying factors which have led to the erosion of trust in government run schools.”

The study proposal expected that the two related issues would be explored in two different components of the proposed study. Three well-resourced schools of good repute (in
past) were to be selected to develop their comprehensive profile to explore the concern of declining status of these schools. The study also aimed to investigate the second concern about local perception of quality through conducting a survey on parental perceptions of quality. Ethnographic study, through focus group discussions, was to further explore the issues, emerging from the school profiles and parental perception survey.

**Revisiting School Quality**

The current literature concerning school quality in South Asia ultimately results in a school choice debate between private and government schooling. In this debate, the literature aims to extrapolate factors that relate to parents’ decisions in regards to school choice and the bulk of the literature tends to draw its conclusions based on large scale census or household data analysis. While relevant, this type of analysis cannot fully answer the question as to why parents choose a particular type of school over another. Instead, the available literature posits that one school type, government or private, is better than another and uses analysis of cost-effectiveness of school resources, socio-economic background of families, distance to school from the home, and achievement of students to validate these claims (Alderman et al., 2001; Andrabi, 2008; Kingdon, 1996; Orazem, 2000; Tooley & Dixon, 2007). Such data analysis can make inferences based on the available data but is not able to fully explain parents’ reasons for school choice. Also, before one can quantify a “better” or “worse” scenario, a clear definition must be provided to adequately discern just what is “better” or “worse.” To identify what indicators use to qualify their choice in schools one must first have a clearly defined understanding of parents’ own perceptions of quality, what indicates a quality education and what detracts from a quality education.

In the current literature, the largest claims come from those interested in privatizing and those who believe that education is a responsibility of the government and rather than privatizing more should be done to strengthen government policy and government schools. However, the privatization claims, namely, that the creation of new private schools in neighborhoods where government schools already exist creates competition which, in turn, compels government schools to increase standards of quality in order to insure enrollment in their schools and that new systems of private education are affordable to all even the poorest quintiles of society, does little to explain what factors are being claimed when parents deem a school to be of “high quality” (Alderman et al., 2001; Andrabi, 2008; Kingdon, 1996; Orazem, 2000; Tooley & Dixon, 2007). Additionally, the proponents for government schooling claim that the very term “choice” in the school choice debates is fallacy as the opening of new private schools inevitably does nothing but cause a “cream-skimming” of students, which in turn allows private schools to take the best achieving students and those whose households have the most expendable resources out of government schools, thereby leaving an inequitable system of disenfranchisement of the ultra-poor in its wake (Hsieh & Urquiola, 2003, p. 13; Ladd, 2002; Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2007).

However, these claims are based on the assumption that all or most parents whose children
attend government schools do so for a lack of other choices. This, while interesting, is an inference not based in facts supported by claims that parents have themselves made.

This is not to say that none of the research surveys parents. From the research available, some researchers do survey parents as key stakeholders in the question of school choice. Amongst these, Tooley and Dixon (2007) claim in their study, titled Private Education for Low-Income Families: Results from a Global Research Project, that one of the reasons that parents in developing countries are choosing private education is because of “the deterioration of government schools” (p. 16). Tooley and Dixon (2007) site research was conducted in the northern states of India to define this deterioration as attributed to “a lack of teacher accountability, strong unions (which contribute to teacher complacency and lack of motivation to teach), poor facilities, high pupil teacher ratios, and poor management” (p. 16). Tooley and Dixon also claim that, “these same problems…were not found in the private schools serving the poor and low-income families. In the great majority of these schools, there ‘was feverish classroom activity’ ” (p. 16). However, the latter claims are based on observations, not based on private school students’ parents’ satisfaction of the teaching quality of private schools. Also, Tooley and Dixon (2007) do not provide a holistic picture of what parents’ perceptions of quality are, choosing instead to focus on the benefits of private schooling to meet the needs of education for all amongst society, even those amongst the poorest households.

Mehrotra and Panchamukhi’s study, titled Universalising Elementary Education in India: Is the Private Sector the Answer (2007), is another of the few studies that significantly validates parental perceptions of quality as a factor in ascertaining school choice. Mehrotra and Panchamukhi’s study provides an interesting assessment of the indicators that Indian parents in the Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal states deem important when choosing a school. However, Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2007) used these perceptions and indicators of quality to analyze the benefits and detriments to privatization and nationalization of schools in India. Moving the focus from what parents want and what are necessary implementations to quality in schools according to parents’ own perceptions of quality and shifting it to a policy debate about privatization and nationalization.

While commenting on self-sustaining primary schools in rural Pakistan in her study, titled “Road to success”, Farah (1996) identified school success as major outcome of school quality which can be measured through some indicators which include above average enrollment of boys and girls, high retention/low dropout rate, high attendance rate, low repetition rate, and high students’ achievement (p.39). Similarly, school and classroom climate, teacher ownership of schools, community ownership, teachers’ competence, and curriculum implementation have also emerged as key dimensions of school quality. Importantly, Farah (1996) also explored views of local clientele about school quality. A list of school quality indicators has emerged as a result which are in sync with the findings of the studies quoted earlier. According to the community of research context, children’s ability to practice and learn life and social skills, appropriate infrastructure (building and other facilities), positive interaction between students and teachers,
development of students’ literacy skills, punctuality and regularity of teachers, presence of a head, personal character of a teacher or a head and values they adhere to and teachers’ kind behavior towards their students are the manifestations of the quality or success of a school.

Marzano (2003) has identified three levels of factors which contribute to the school quality or school effectiveness. The first level of factors is based on the school itself with a focus on quality of curriculum (p.22-34), challenging goals and effective feedback on the same (p.35-46), parental and communal involvement (p.47-52), safety and order of environment (p.53-59), and lastly, the sense of collegiality and professionalism (p.60-69). The second level of factors with a focus on teachers emphasize on instructional strategies (p.78-87), classroom management (p.88-105), and classroom curriculum design by the teachers (p.106-122). The third level of factors focus students with a reference to their home environment (p.126-132), their learning roots, capabilities, styles and behavior (p.133-143), and their levels of motivation (p.144-156). The critical role of leadership and school administration in enhancing and maintaining school effectiveness and quality of the school is yet another important ingredient of school quality recipe. According to Marzano (2003), this last factor actualizes the above three factors that are playing key roles. It reinforces and combines the functionality of the former factors.

Methodology

The broad focus of the study was exploring school quality in Sindh Pakistan. Within this scope three components were identified:

Developing School profiles: This component of the study aimed at examining the cases of well-resourced government schools and comparable private schools situated within the vicinity. The conceptual premise of this component promised a comparative analysis of these two scales with reference to a set of quality indicators.

Survey “Parental perceptions of school quality”: This component of the study aimed at exploring perceptions of the parents of school quality through a survey.

Ethnographic component of the study: This component aimed to probe on issues emerging from the quantitative survey and school quality profile. The key strategies used for the data collection were the focus group discussions with parents (and where possible head teachers, teachers and management staff were engaged in discussion) and shadowing of students in all focus schools.

Developing School Profiles

Comparability was to be applied as a major principle while selecting two sets of schools for this component. According to the initial plan, the study was to focus on schools in Karachi only. However, during the Research Advisory Committee meeting held in 2009, the time was advised to extend the geographical scope of study by including rural or semi-urban context. After careful consideration, district Matiari was selected as a semi-urban context for the study. Travel
distances from AKU-IED (from manageability perspective) or security concerns were also considered while selecting rural or semi-urban school.

**Parental Perceptions Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scales</th>
<th>Sample Item</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Conditions/Facilities</td>
<td>Availability of clean drinking water in school</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum, Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Provision of co-curricular activities for students</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Regularity of students</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance and Leadership</td>
<td>Voice of Parents in decision making in school</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security &amp; Safety</td>
<td>Proper and secure boundary wall</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Simple, transparent and clear School’s policies and regulations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-education</td>
<td>Differentiated co-curricular activities for boys and girls</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One major component of the study was parental choice survey to be conducted in the focused schools in two different geographical contexts of research.

A five point scale (1=unimportant to 5=very important) questionnaire was developed in which the respondents were asked to rate the importance of each item under six subscales according to their perceptions about school quality. These subscales included physical conditions, teachers, curriculum, teaching and learning, governance, security and gender. Considering the linguistic diversity among potential respondents, the questionnaire was translated in Urdu and Sindhi.

**Ethnographic Component of the Study**

The study had an ethnographic component to probe on issues emerging from the quantitative survey and school quality profile in the sections above. It comprised of focus group discussions with parents and where it was possible head teachers, teachers and management staff were engaged in discussion. A total of 210 parents were invited to the focus group discussions. All parents were identified by schools. Each focus group was formed of 8-12 parents from school’s population. Research team had also provided refreshments for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

The ethnographic component of the study also included exploring a student’s one school day experience to simply understand how these students experience indicate quality. These students were identified by the focused schools (primary and secondary). These students were shadowed by the researchers. The shadowing and the focus group discussion allowed the researcher to observe teaching and learning techniques in the classroom, observed the governing structure of the school, as well as to garner a lived perspective of schooling and a local voice via the student. The data generated for this component contributed to the understanding of school quality and related issues emerging from survey and focus group discussions.
Piloting of the Study

The questionnaire was piloted in public and private schools. The respondents were invited to the schools in which their children studied. The researchers explained the research and also introduced them to the questionnaire. The focus of the pilot was on the following:

- Manageability of the tool by the potential respondents in terms of time and understanding of the contents/items of the questionnaire
- Identification of study focus related areas which can also be included in the questionnaire.

Content Validity

The piloting of the questionnaire was also followed by the review of this tool by two experts of methodology and content. The methodology expert was chosen for her expertise and technical know-how in quantitative research with a particular reference to developing questionnaires for surveys. The content expert brought his expertise in the areas of school improvement and school quality. Content validity addresses the adequacy and representativeness of the items to the domain of testing purposes. This was an attempt to validate the contents of the questionnaire if the subscales and items were adequate and represent the focus of study. Both the reviewers agreed that the questionnaire captures important dimensions of school quality and therefore, they should be retained. The synthesis of literature helped review the items in subscales of the questionnaire. In addition, to provide more space for descriptive responses three open ended questions items were included in the questionnaire.

Sample size of 2500 school parents whose children studied in 9 focused and 22 other schools (primary and secondary) were invited to participate in the study. The questionnaire was distributed to all 2500 parents and response rate was 70%.

Establishing Reliability

According to Fink and Kosecoff (1998) “one way to ensure the reliability and validity of survey is to base the survey on one that, someone else had developed and test. The Parental Perceptions about School Quality Questionnaire (PPSQ) has been established and is considered to be highly reliable since its reliability coefficient is 0.93. In order to examine reliability (internal consistency), Cronbach’s alpha was computed.

The total reliability estimated of the 1755 completed survey questionnaires for the 84 items in PPSQ is above 0.70 which is an optimal alpha value (Singh, 2007; Field, 2005). The acquired values of alpha demonstrate the reliability of this instrument to examine the parental perceptions about school quality in Pakistani context.
Data Management and Analysis

The survey data were entered into SPSS and analyzed to identify trends in parental perceptions about school quality with reference to the respondent groups on the basis of geographical regions, gender and school system (government/public and private). Qualitative data of the three open ended questions was analyzed to identify patterns.

The normality of the distribution of mean responses was assessed through different graphically methods (i.e. Box-whisker plot, P-P plot) and different numerically methods (i.e. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, skewness criteria). The distribution was found to be non-normal (skewed) which led to adopt non-parametric tests for analysis. We used the Mann-Whitney test to compare differences between two independent groups and Kruskal-Wallis Test to compare three or more sets of scores that come from different groups.

Major Findings

This section of the report presents the results of survey study which was carried out in Karachi and Matiari (a district) of Sindh, Pakistan. In the first part, survey findings are presented which is followed by the outcomes of ethnographic component.

Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Participants

The section of the questionnaire on demographic information of the participants inquired about types of schools (e.g. government or private, primary or secondary) their children were attending, the gender of the respondents, the medium of instructions in these schools, their geographical context (Karachi, Matiari), language/s spoken by them, and their religion. A synthesis of the data is given below to highlight the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Survey: Parental Perceptions about School Quality

The aim of this survey study was to explore parents’ perceptions about school quality. The section begins with a description of the research participants’ profile. This profile is followed by the discussion on the key findings of the survey.

School Systems

The participants of this survey study represented the parents whose children go to two different school systems: Government (n=942; 54%) and Private (n=813; 46%). Of the 1755

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4 It tests whether the distribution of target variable is significantly different (P<0.05) from normal distribution
5 If the value of skewedness is more than double of standard error of skewedness then the distribution is considered skewed.
6 MW test is a non-parametric version of independent t–test. The distribution in this study is skewed therefore Mann Whitney was used to compare two groups.
participant in the study, there were 46% parents with children from primary level and 54% parents with their children from secondary level of schooling.

**Participants’ Gender**

Of the 1755 participants of the survey, there were 47% female and 53% male. It is important to note that, majority of participant in sample, were male (31.0%) in government system and female (24.6) in private system.

**Religious Background**

The demographic data shows the religious diversity among the participants. A majority of participants were Muslims (96.3%) while a small number of participants were Hindus (3.1%), Christians (.4%) and others (.2%). The data also showed more religious diversity in the schools (53.3%) runs by the government education department as compare to that of in private schools (46.7%).

**Linguistic Background**

Linguistic diversity among the participants was an important highlight of the analysis of demographic data. While Urdu was language of the majority (65%), a significant number of parents also spoke Sindhi (25%) and other languages (7.0%). Out of 442 participants with Sindhi background, 289 lived in Matiari. Karachi, nevertheless, presented more linguistic diversity.

**Parental Perceptions across Different Quality Indicators**

The survey aimed at exploring parental perceptions of school quality in the focused schools of two different geographical contexts of research. A five point scale (1=unimportant to 5=very important) questionnaire was used to ask the respondents to rate the importance of each item under six subscales according to their perceptions about school quality. These subscales included physical conditions, teachers, curriculum, teaching and learning, governance, security and gender. Considering the linguistic diversity among potential respondents, the questionnaire was translated in Urdu and Sindhi. Here the key findings of survey are explained beginning with the overall analytical presentation of the perceptions of all the participating parents. The proceeding part presents analysis which explains the difference and effect size of different groups.

**FIGURE 2: OVERALL SUMMARY**

PC: Physical Conditions  
Trs: Teachers  
CTL: Student Learning Outcomes  
GnL: Governance and Leadership  
SS: Safety and Security
Figure 1 captures an overview of parental perceptions on various subscales which reflect the quality indicators ranging from physical condition to equity and co-education. It is obvious from the graph that subscale “Students learning outcomes (SLO)” scored higher (M=4.7) than all other subscales. The items in particular subscale asked parents how important they considered students’ regular attendance and punctuality, their good academic performance and them being happy with the school. The parents’ views were also sought to see what value or degree of importance they accorded to students learning social skills and good manners, developing confidence and good manners, and appreciating students’ performance through awards and scholarship. The study found a unanimous agreement among parents about the value of all the indicators of quality which reflect students’ learning and at school. In line with the assertion made by Andrabi (2008), Tooley and Dixon (2007), Alderman et al. (2001), Orazem (2000), Kingdon (1996) Farah (1996) about parents’ opinion, the parents from urban and semi-urban research contexts also recognized the achievement of students as a major indicator of school quality. Children’ ability to learn [and practice] social and life skills (Farah, 1996), and developing confident and polite demeanor also emerged as important quality indicators.

The survey revealed the parental perceptions about the subscale ‘physical conditions’ which was rated as second top indicator (M=4.5) of school quality. In particular, the availability of clean drinking water, and clean and well maintained school building seem to take majority of parents’ priority as important indicators of quality. Other aspects of physical environment rated by parents were availability of fans [with electricity], functioning toilets, playground, furniture, large and airy classrooms, well quipped computer and science laboratories, and library.

The survey data revealed equal value accorded to the subscale teachers (Tr), curriculum, teaching and learning (CTL), governance and leadership (GnL) and safety and security (SS) as parents rated them at around same level (M=4.2).

Teachers’ professional qualification and experience and their regularity and punctuality were rated higher within the subscale on teachers. On the other hand the study participants seem to have unanimous agreement on the little value they see in considering teachers’ religious background. In the subscale ‘Curriculum, Teaching and Learning’ parents emphasized on
provision of value based education and school’s performance in public examination as key indicators of quality. Punctuality of the students was also rated the highest by parents. Similar emphasis was also given to students learning good manners in schools. The subscale ‘Governance and Leadership’ inquired parents’ views about various dimensions of school governance and leadership which ranged from the provision of textbooks and transport facility to parents’ involvement in school and effectiveness of the head teacher. The study highlighted parents’ consensus on the need of a safe and secure environment of a school. Safe location of the school, secure building with proper walls, school home distance, and counseling for students’ social and emotional needs were important items in this subscale. Restricted access of outside community into the school was rated as the most important dimension of a quality school. Availability of healthy food options also topped in the parental priority list of quality indicators.

The subscales “Equity (Eq)” and “Co-education (CE) scored around same level (M=3.7). Parents across the regions valued students’ diverse background, respect for all and transparent school policy as important markers of equity in schools. Similarly a great majority of parents considered the nuances of coeducation in terms of separate toilets, and different rules for boys and girls.

Parental Perceptions about School Quality: Qualitative Analysis

Considering the limitation of a survey for its close ended questions, three qualitative open ended statements were added to elicit parents’ views on a) the core purpose of schooling, b) important outcomes of schooling, and c) critical factors which parents would consider while selecting a school for their children. Here a brief analysis of the qualitative data is presented.

Core Purpose and Outcomes of Schooling

The analysis of qualitative data of the survey questionnaire reveals a unanimous agreement among parents regarding the core purpose and outcomes of schooling. These core purposes of education can be divided into two categories. One category concerns itself with intellectual growth and nurturing of young minds. Making the child conscious and aware of the world and with the day to day affairs is seen as a purpose of education. Preparation for future life emerges as another core purpose of education. In particular, learning from education/schooling should prepare children to walk along in the modern competitive world so that they don’t lag behind and can meet modern day’s requirements. Schooling for some parents is to unfold the human capacities and to creating the ability of individuals to face odds in their lives. Bright future in terms of financially, socially and academically sound position with an ability to support their families is seen as both purpose and outcomes of education. Preparing children to secure a respectable place in society is also seen as an outcome of education highlighted by the parents across systems and regions.

Children’s development in affective domain is emphasized by parents. In particular, character building and making the youth ethical beings and “good human beings” emerge as
important purposes of schooling. Ability to distinguish between right and wrong and good and 
better is considered important value that youth develops through education. Children learning 
discipline and punctuality, and developing self-confidence are a consistent emphasis by the 
parents. Two quotes from parents about schooling’s role “for mental and social growth [of 
children]” and “Maturity of his [her] mind educationally and fit physically” also explain what 
parents expect from the schools/education.

   Education’s [schooling] role was also seen fundamentally important in developing among 
children a sense of patriotism. For instance, the expectation that education makes them dutiful 
citizens and helps them to work towards making their nation and country advanced nation 
indicates parents’ sense of belongingness to the nation state.

   Schooling for developing religious values among students to make them ‘good Muslim’ 
was seen an important purpose of education by few parents. Some, nevertheless, emphasized on 
schools’ role in imparting both religious (with an emphasis on Islam) and secular knowledge.

   The data analysis reveals parents’ views about purpose of education and the outcomes of 
schooling were quite general in nature. They did not identify any specific knowledge or skills 
which they expected their children to learn from schooling. Instead many parents shared that 
schooling is to enrich children’s information and knowledge and is to develop their aptitude and 
skills. Similarly, many parents emphasized intellectual growth as an important role of schooling. 
Very few identified specific knowledge and skill domains within school disciplines. Particularly, 
learning of reading and writing was perceived as an outcome of schooling by very few parents.

Critical Aspects of a School

   The survey also included some open ended questions which sought respondents’ views about 
the critical aspects of a school they would consider while selecting a school for their children. 
The analysis of this qualitative data will take into account the convergence with the survey 
findings. Some reference to the parental views as shared in the focus group discussions is also 
made.

The responses received can be broadly categorized as following:

- Enabling learning environment
- Academic credibility of school
- Qualified and experienced teachers
- School discipline

   The value of appropriate physical environment for teaching and learning process has been 
highlighted in school improvement initiatives undertaken by AKU-IED since 1999. The direct 
relationship between student learning outcomes and physical environment has been established 
in a recent study conducted by the STEP at the institute. The study (Ali & Ali, 2011) with a 
focus on students’ learning outcomes found that the students from the schools with better 
physical facilities performed better than the students at schools without or minimum facilities. 
Parental consensus in the present study around physical setting further reinforces the similar
emphasis on safe learning environment in the framework developed as Minimum standards by INEE. Enabling environment was reported here as one important consideration while parents make a decision of enrolling their children in a school. The enabling learning environment for parents meant a school with physical facilities, such as presence of big airy classrooms, electricity, clean drinking water, computer facility, sports ground and library etc. Availability of transport facility for children to commute consistently emerged as an important concern for parents in the focus group discussions as well. Nominal or affordable fees, distance between home and school, cleanliness are other important indicators of quality as reported by parents. Separate buildings for boys and girls for some parents was an important consideration. The ultimate outcome of providing students with enabling learning environment is summed up here by a mother, “The education [schooling] should lead to happiness for parents and children and should not cause pain.”

A consistent emphasis on the availability of qualified and experienced teachers transpires in parents’ views in survey and focus group discussion. Parents enunciated the presence of well qualified, knowledgeable, ethical and experienced teachers with effective ways of teaching a matter of great concern. Good teachers, good syllabus and children’s ability to learn were seen as interconnected quality indicators as summed up by a mother, “If there are good teachers, he/she will give good education to children. The school syllabus should be good too so that the children can learn new things.” Another parent felt that such qualified, dedicated and committed teachers would be able to effectively transfer knowledge. Relationship and coordination between parents, teachers and the students was perceived as important dimension of a quality school.

A great majority of parents also concerned themselves with the academic credibility of the school as a major and critical consideration while identifying a school for their children. This credibility includes aspects such as high standards of education, schools’ academic results, modern updated curriculum, English as a medium of instruction, combination of religious and secular education, teaching of important subjects including reading and writing, and co-curricular activities. The location of school, its background (e.g. faith-based, political backing, community run or public sector) and administrative and management structures play an important role for the considerations, background of the school. School’s name and reputation [for its academic performance and non-political environment] do matter as these might be reflective of certain level of quality. School’s stance on equity appeared to be an also important consideration for parents. This emphasis meant to enhance equity of opportunities as one parent shared, “Monthly fee should be affordable for the middle class parents. All children [should] have an opportunity to progress and avail scholarship without any discrimination. The [School should be] of best standard” (Female parent/respondent). Another parent’s stance reflected similar views as she explained, “[I will look for such school] to which [access] should not be limited to elite only but should be for everyone, [the child] participates in all kinds of activities, school should have all kind of discipline” (Female parent/respondent).

Discipline in terms of abidance of school rules and abstaining from any political activities in school was another important indicator of school quality. Security and related matters for the
majority of the respondents were identified as important considerations. The consistent emphasis on security as a major quality indicator by the parents and other stakeholders in survey and focus group discussions can be well explained by the prevailing law and order situations in the country at large. Political influence and schools’ involvement with individuals holding political influence was considered detrimental for the school quality.

“Unfortunately parents have limited options to choose from the schools which they can afford financially and are located within their areas (male parent)” were the words of a father who reflected on the dichotomy between the ideal and reality of school quality. While many parents explained the critical dimensions of school quality they would like to consider for their children, they were quite cognizant of their limitations, a sense of compromising on their ideals of school quality for their children’s education. The schools in the vicinity are either under-performing public schools or a poorly performing school owned by an individual or a private sector organization. In both cases, the school quality is far less than satisfactory. While public sector schools have purpose built building and all trained and qualified teachers, various other factors (e.g. poor governance, lack of accountability and monitoring) constrain the achievement of desired quality. The private sector schools are generally functioning in private residences with poorly qualified teachers. Absences of necessary infra-structure, frequent turnover of teachers and proper monitoring by the government have been viewed largely as reasons for poor quality of these schools.

A review of findings of survey and qualitative data above suggest a variety of parental perceptions around school quality which, nevertheless, indicate a conversion than diversion. Parents regardless their difference location (urban and rural) and access to different schooling system (public and private) where their children study have unanimous agreement about the key indicators of school quality. For instance student learning outcome, physical environment and qualified committed teachers emerged as absolutely fundamental to the existence of quality school.

**Profiling Schools**

A total of nine schools participated in the study for all three components of the study which included parental perception survey, school profile and ethnographic component. The findings of the survey have been reported in earlier section. Here, the findings of school profiles and ethnographic component are presented. The findings here are organized around the themes emerging from the analysis of the profiles of all nine schools. A separate theme “Students’ experience” report a concise analysis of the data of ‘shadowing’ in all the participating schools.

**Historical Background of the Schools**

The schools which participated in the research varied in terms of historicity. While one school enjoyed a history of one and half century, the others were established around four decades back. Majority of these schools are recognized for its illustrious alumni who made great strides
in the socio-political and cultural history of the regions and country. Particularly, the two public sector schools with a longer history take pride of its alumni who has contributed to the national and regional scenes in past. The analysis of the school magazines and other materials reveal a sense of celebration of the past. A reference to its alumni of the recent past particularly by the historically well reputed public sector schools, however, does not bring enthusiasm in the narration of yester years. This difference indicates the lost groundings of these schools over the years and the huge shifts of its clientele from upper class and upper middle class to the lower middle class or practically daily wage earning group. Although, the schools were unable to provide data about teachers for the past years, the analysis of the academic and professional qualifications of the teachers at present indicate a caliber (at least on paper) which may not differ radically from the strength of the teachers in these schools in past. The three private schools in the study also enjoyed a history of varied years ranging from more than half century to three decades. A consistent urge to improve the school quality was quite evident in the analysis. While the school with the history of six decades took pride of its alumni who have been contributing to the fields of medicine, art, culture and education, the second school expressed its delight in its graduates’ entry in professional institutions for tertiary education.

**Vision / Mission**

A review of all participating schools indicates special junctures in history that led to establishments of these institutions. For instance the school with the longest history was established during the colonial era with probably developing indigenous leadership. The same philosophy underpins the creation of at least two private schools. One of these two schools came into being due to the efforts of two farsighted siblings who felt the dire need of opening up quality facility for early year’s education to the distraught nation just after the great patrician took place in the sub-continent. Over the years, the school has progressed with multi-campus presence in the metropolis. The focus on providing quality education at affordable cost has remained consistent during the all these years. The second private school was also established with the same spirit by a group of individuals who concerned themselves with the masses’ lack of access to the quality education. The efforts of this group, in particular, were, “centered chiefly on improving education standard at primary and secondary levels and providing new school systems to address the needs of youth in rural areas and urban fringes”(Official website of SGA). It was also recognized that “In Sindh, except a few elite schools, the formal education provided by the state and the private sector is highly insufficient, besides being ineffective. They have not even matched the progress in the field achieved in other parts of Pakistan” and that the “Girls often face neglect or discrimination in the schooling process” (Official website of SGA). With opening of more schools in the different parts of the province Sindh, a centralized governance system has been now developed. Certain quality indicators (specific number of students in each class, physical facilities etc.) are also recognized as this school system expands over the year.

In general, vision and mission of all these schools, including the ones administered by the government, centered on the equal provision of quality education for all. A reference to
“access to education”, “Preparing enlightened and civilized individuals who are committed to the cause of Islam” has been made on the official website of the Education and Literacy Department of Government of Sindh (http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/EducationFinal/index.htm). The website also makes a reference to Quaid-e-Azam’s emphasis on kind and purpose of education that he deemed important for the youth of the new born state. The emphasis of the Quaid includes education for bringing up future citizens, for economic prosperity through scientific and technological education and finally for the character building of the youth. An overview of the stated vision and mission highlights unanimous consensus among the key stakeholders about aspired purpose and outcomes of schooling.

**School Management Structure**

School management varied in all these schools due to variation in the management structures and practices of the organizations with which these schools were affiliated. The dynamism of these organizations has reflections in the schools as well. Two of the three private schools are governed by management structures which bring together the professionalism and volunteer passion for the promotion of education. For instance, the Rahber School has a governance structure in which the Founding Trustees, Advisors, Trustees (chair person, general secretary, member trustees), Heads of the departments, chief accountant, director of all campuses and executive secretary all contribute to school management. Similarly, the Sunrise Organization along with the school level management team headed by the head teacher with administration staff play active role in governance. The management is further aided by various internal committees. Whether it is changing affiliation with public examination board or teaching and learning of English, a continuous urge for improvement is felt in the way these organizations managed these schools. Third private school in the study, as stated earlier, has experienced deviation from its original vision and has gone down to the route of commercialization. Now, the two school functions in two shifts (morning primary, afternoon secondary). Current owner, the administrator or principal and the head teacher form the overall conventional management structure.

Five out of six public schools are governed by the Education and Literacy Department of Government of Sindh. The education minister, secretary education and with respective highest officials according to the local administrative system of the provincial governance are key pillars of rather hierarchical governance and administrative body. The middle layer consists of officials such as education officers and supervisors who establish the connection between the top officials and the schools at the grassroots level. Theoretically, the governance is managed by the head teacher and the School Management Committees (SMCs) at the school level. The SMC consists of five members, three from parents (including the chairman) and two from teachers including the School Head as a General Secretary. This committee is formed for two years and supposed to have a meeting on monthly basis. However, it was reported that almost all the SMCs were elected some years back (e.g. around five years back) and that many committees have not been meeting regularly per approved mandate.
In the government schools all the important decisions are taken in education offices without analysing schools’ needs. One more thing I want to share. In our schools, SMCs have been established in response to the governments’ directives. The main goal of establishing SMCs is to improve government schools in terms of quality of education as well as providing required resources, but in actual SMCs are not working per its objectives because these are also powerless because EDOs and DOEs did not want SMCs to work freely. There is lack of supervision as well. (A female parent/teacher, govt. school Matiari)

Local level management is reported to encounter serious political influence. This is also true for the sixth public school in the study which is governed by the Federal Ministry of Education. In particular, the appointment of the teachers and other staff in these schools are guided by the political interest and affiliations instead of schools’ needs and merits. The individuals appointed through such process, hence, protect the political interests of their patrons. It was reported that the wider interests of the school and the students are thus pushed aside with the head teacher’s little or no control over the conduct of these teachers and staff. Little or no autonomy and lack of powers to exercise the role of the local manager seriously constrains school management processes. A female parent who also is a teacher has alluded to this issue in the quote below.

The standard of government schools is declining due to many reasons i.e. lack of resources, limited budget, mismanagement in monitoring, and irresponsibility of higher officials. Head teachers are powerless if they want to replace a teacher with a good one, they have no authority to do so because all transfers and appointments are in the hands of EDOs and DOEs, they even don’t ask the head teachers when a new teacher is inducted or any teacher is being transferred from the school. Due to this mismanagement sometimes they send a teacher (subject teacher) who is not needed. Head teacher has no power to induct or transfer any teacher if he/she needed one. (A female parent/teacher, govt. school Matiari)

The power, autonomy and the voice of the head teacher (or principal) is perceived crucial to the school quality. In the circumstances mentioned above, majority of these head teachers apparently struggle to maintain the status quo to protect their personal interests against all the odds. The management of the federally governed school illustrates somewhat different scenario. The principal with a significant level of autonomy manages the multi-section school. Apparently with his own political groundedness he attempts to refute the factors including political influence which hinder school’s smooth management. Somewhat similar example of management surfaced in a primary school which is part of the historically recognised large school. The head teacher with his political wisdom managed to change the medium of instruction to English and also managed to generate necessary resources using his acquaintanceship. He was thus able to attract parents and raise ever falling enrolment. Visible political patronage or political influence is the most widely observed lived experiences of the management officials and other stakeholders in these schools.
An example of SPHSS illustrates how constant presence of negative political influence derails school’s quality reputation. The school in 1855 had already had long history of repute before Indo-Pak partition in 1947. The quality and reputation of this institution gradually declined post partition and the school was in complete disarray when Mr AR Khan was appointed as a head teacher in 1972. AR Khan did two tenures as the head teacher and principal between 1972 and 1996. He reported teachers in the early 70s enjoying great political patronage and hence resisted Khan’s corrective measures by reporting to then minister of education and by making attempt on his life. He was even refused entry into the school due to his stance of management. Such was the power of the teachers in this schools which, according to Khan, had pulled the institution down from the heights of its prominence. Increase in enrolment, a basketball court, separate school for girls, and the up-gradation of the school to the higher secondary level were some successes of Khan’s time. Today, these three achievements of Mr Khan are there but with little usage. The school continues to experience the political influence which constrains the quality of teaching and learning processes. This has been explained by one key stakeholder of the school, “Teachers’ attendance is 1/3rd every day. Teachers come late or leave early because of their domestic tasks. If I even try to stop them they tell me what I can do. It’s because they are very much politically powerful and my [little or no] authority cannot harm them”.

The analysis of management practices of all nine schools does not highlight role of the community and parents in the school management. A rather deficit image of parents is portrayed with reference to their role in their children’s school performance. The establishment of SMCs reflects an attempt of the government education sector to engage parents in the school governance. However, the data analysis also suggests the implementation issue of this theoretically well-conceived concept of parental and community involvement in school governance and management.

**Provision of Facilities and Amenities**

Facilities in school’s physical environment (Tooley & Dixon, 2007; Farah, 1996; Marzano, 2003) and cost-effectiveness of school resources (Orazem, 2000; Andrabi, 2008; Alderman et al., 2001; Tooley & Dixon, 2007; Kingdon, 1996) are recognized as important indicators of school quality. Considering the data available from the focus schools, the study attempted to look at the available resources as a quality indicator. Physical environment includes school building, boundary wall, functional washrooms, water and electricity, a boundary wall, science laboratory, computer laboratories.

All nine schools had purpose built buildings. A sign of out of planned extension in the buildings was visible in the private schools while the schools run by the provincial government had a set pattern in terms of number of rooms, and other rooms (e.g. labs) to accommodate the strength of the students. For instance the two primary schools in the study had six classrooms with five or six washrooms in each of these schools. The high schools, on the other hand, had huge buildings with a number of rooms in each. The maximum number of room in a high school
was 60 while minimum number was 20 and 30 rooms in the girls and boys secondary schools (Matiari respectively. The science and computer labs were also present in the two high schools mentioned earlier. The huge building of historically recognized school had 7 labs (physics, biology and chemistry, computer), library, assembly ground, basketball ground (unused), and toilets. The rooms were generally found spacious with an exception of girls secondary school which reported to have at times more than 70 students expected to sit in a moderate size classroom. The teachers and parents reported overcrowded classes one major reason for girls’ absenteeism in this particular school. The utility of these classrooms is also a question. Absenteeism is a general pattern of the boys’ high school as well. It was reported by the teachers and the in charge head teacher that since the school started offering free education with free textbooks, an increase in enrolment is seen. However, all the registered students do not attend school regularly because despite their absenteeism everyone is allowed to sit for exam. The school also has “no student fails” policy. All those who sit in exam are promoted to the next class regardless their performance in exam and throughout the year. A classic example of underutilization of school building is Sindh Public Higher Secondary School. The enrolment in the 60 room school is only few hundred students. All the public schools reported to have functioning washrooms and the number of these schools varied. The quality of this available facility in terms of hygienic conditions and running water was not examined. No special arrangements for continued supply of the electric supply were observed as the schools also had their share of general power crises. The schools in rural Sindh particularly reported to experience the worst of power crises due to the scorching heat in the long summer days.

The parents in the survey rated physical environment as the second highest indicator of school quality. In the focus group discussion the quality of the physical environment was also discussed. For instance, parents (mothers) in the primary school were very concerned about the boundary wall half of which had collapsed. They felt that the absence of proper boundary wall risks their children’s safety as they may venture outside the school unguarded. Similarly, the availability of clean drinking water was another concern. Mothers felt that availability of clean and cold drinking water would have been healthier option for children who either carry water from home or remain without water during the whole school day.

The federally administered school has a grand building of 8 blocks with a library, museum and art gallery, 3 computer labs, auditorium, teacher development canter, mosques, playground, and conference hall. Utilization of classrooms and other facilities was observed during the school visits. Furthermore, the documentary evidence was also available in the school magazine which captured the students’ performance in debates, sports and other occasions. Since the school did not provide the data of number of enrolled students, the proper utilization of this grand facility could not be assessed.

The private schools in the study also had sufficient number of classrooms and other facilities. School building showed sign of need based extended construction as the schools went through up-gradation and inducted more students over the years. The physical facilities in these schools included the classrooms, computer and science laboratories, library and staffroom.
However, the quality of these facilities varied. For instance Noor Jahan Private School had all 32 rooms constructed in the small area which let no open space for a playground. The little available area spared from the construction of the rooms on the ground floor was also covered due to the constructions of the rooms on the first floor. The open space becomes quite congested when the students assemble for assembly and breaks. One exit and entrance point due to the covered area indicates security and safety risk in the case of an emergency. Other two schools (Rahber Private School and Sunrise School) have good to moderate level of physical facilities. The quality of the resources and utilization of space in the latter (urban private) was evident in the school and classroom observations. The libraries and the labs were seen used and updated. Students from primary section were observed engaged in exercises as the school band played for them. The courtyard cum playground in the centre-with some greenery and the huge shading neem tree seems to signify the historicity of the place. Well utilized playground for sports and band/ PT, library, staff rooms, School Health Service and Clinic, English Language Resource Room (books, journals and Audio-Visual-aids), classroom libraries, computer, biology, physics labs, School canteen and home economics lab/kitchen are the key resources which contribute to the physical environment of the school. School’s ability to maintain certain standard of its physical environment is apparently a major contributing factor of sustaining image of the school as a family school. Parents having studied in the school themselves reported to have their second generation in the school. The purpose built building of the Sunrise Private School (rural) with its moderate facilities consist of a total of 14 classrooms, 1 computer lab, 1 science lab, 1 library and 1 Head Teacher’s office. A playground cum area for morning assembly can also be seen as we enter the school. Apparently, there is an attempt and desire to further improve the facilities.

**Teachers and Students**

The table below provides specific details about the number of students and teachers in the school. It is obvious that all the schools in the study have a reasonable student teacher ratio. In the public schools it was reported that a specific number of the teachers is absent or on leave on any given day. All the teachers are academically and professionally qualified. A detail study of teachers’ profile and what drives their motivation will be important to further understand their contribution to school quality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh Public Higher Secondary School (SPHSS)</td>
<td>207 (boys &amp; girls)</td>
<td>60 (Boys, morn. Shift) Sindi med.)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noor Jehan Private Secondary School (NPSS)</td>
<td>930 (as per 2010 record)</td>
<td>62 and was 60 teachers from 2001 to 2008.</td>
<td>1 teacher for 15 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National F. Higher Secondary School (NFHSS)</td>
<td>Data not provided</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahber Private Secondary School (RPSS)</td>
<td>699 (as per 2011 record)</td>
<td>630 (as per 2011 record)</td>
<td>66 (as per 2011 record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher Govt. Boys Primary School (SGBPS)</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1 teacher for 23 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujala Govt Girls Primary School (UGGPS)</td>
<td>220 (including 92 students only in nursery class which was initiated and supported by an NGO)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 teacher for 31 students’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noor Govt. Boys High School (NGBHS)</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1 teacher for 21 students’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise Private High School (SPHS)</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 teacher for 27 students’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newstar Govt. Girls Secondary School (NGGS)</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1 teacher for 30 students’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching and learning (strategies, resources, teacher/student relationship, assessment)**

Parents rated students’ learning outcomes as the most important indicator of school quality. Similar emphasis during the focus group discussions with parents and other stakeholders necessitates critical analysis of the observation data to develop insights into the teaching and
learning processes as they were happening schools managed by different school systems. The analysis will be guided by the view that teaching and learning strategies, resources, teacher/student relationship and assessment are the fundamentals dimensions of teaching and learning process.

A cursory analysis of teaching and learning in these schools indicate the use of monotonous teaching and learning strategies across the schools with some exception in the Rahber Private School. The strategies teachers adopted generally included copying, dictation, text book reading by the teacher and students and explanation of the text. A general sense of what Freire (1972) has termed as ‘teacher narrative’ (p.44) prevails in the classroom with the students playing a role of passive recipient. Teacher narrative, as is obvious in the excerpt from an observation below, is more of mechanical routines and not well thought through teaching plan. Teaching strategies may also be guided by the realities of classrooms and teachers’ limited ability to shape their pedagogies. The phenomenon of large classes is quite prevalent in the public sector schools in rural and even in urban setting. Hussain, Shah, Waqar and Rana (2009) in their study of the prevalence of large classes in Sindh have indicated the challenge for teachers to cater for a large number of students who generally have diverse background, age and needs. In the case of SGBP schools, to engage a group of 114 young students, the teachers have to be very dynamic. The analysis of observation excerpt below reveals that both the teachers apparently resolved to dictation and reading as the most viable teaching and learning strategies in a large class. Students’ learning was also assessed through dictation.

Revision of syllabus contents which had already been taught was yet another frequently observed phenomenon. In observers’ presence many teachers engaged students in revision some time by giving them test or by asking them to read the subject matter quietly without much comprehension.

An emphasis on maintaining certain level and kind of discipline is revealed in the data analysis. An evidence of teachers’ such effort is present in the observation excerpts above and below. To discipline student the teacher shouted and hit male students. In other example, the teachers verbally reminded the students to keep quiet. Minimum talk by the students or teacher directed talk was dominant feature of the classroom activity across the different schools. It was reported that the teachers spent more than 50 percent of their classroom time in making students quiet. Students were generally observed following teacher directed conversation or activity. An analysis of students’ participation in the teaching and learning reveals that there was a general sense of compliance to teachers’ directives which included physical movements, answering teachers’ questions, reading from the textbook, telling the meaning of a word, copying from the board, changing sentences from affirmative to negative in a language class, and problem solving on the board. In private schools, students were also observed making oral presentation and sharing their point of view on some topics. Students asking a question was rarely observed phenomenon. In one of the classes, the observer noted the kind of questions asked by the students during an observation of a Sindhi lesson, “Mostly the students’ queries were related to where to write, color of pencil, physical neatness and few spelling and reading problems”.

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Similarly, teacher guided students’ interaction with other fellow students was also observed in few classes. For instance, the chemistry teacher divided students in the groups and gave them some group task. Few more examples of teachers encouraging student-student interaction are available. However, students’ own attempts to interact with other students were not encouraged and were dealt as discipline issue by the majority of teachers.

Correction of students’ work on the homework notebooks, slates/takhti and in the classwork notebooks consumed plenty of teachers’ classroom teaching time. While correction was done in the classroom the feedback or assessment was not communicated to the students during the teaching and learning.

English language teaching was observed across the schools with a dominant use of grammar translation method. The teacher in the observation excerpt below demonstrates conventional way of teaching English. Unnecessary hassle using Urdu before the target language is also obvious in the observation notes below. Teaching of different languages including Sindhi and Urdu are also dealt with same method which included meanings of difficult words, dictation, and textbook reading.

Textbooks, chalk, and board were generally used resources by the teachers across the school systems. With an extensive use of revision, the use of chalk and board was seen minimum. Few examples of teachers using other teaching materials and knowledge resources (other than textbooks) were also observed. One such example is noted below by the observer in the primary section of Rahber Private School. The teacher, while teaching science, used different resources to help students understand the solar system. General practice of revision also seems to be defied by the way the science teacher approached it as a reinforcement practice. Observation of a science class in another school also highlights teacher’s somewhat different approach to revise already taught scientific concept. The students were asked to draw and label the diagram of human respiratory system and the flower of brassica.

Student teacher relation was an important dimension of the teaching and learning processes. The data analysis highlights the position of the learners’ vis-à-vis teachers. The learners are expected to listen to the content taught by the teacher, memorize and reproduce the same. The teachers, on the other hand, are expected to direct the classroom proceedings, use the textbook content to teach, assess learning by asking short questions, written tests, problem solving on the board. Maintaining discipline with a focus on keeping student silent while they are busy in teacher directed classroom teaching activities surfaced as an import task of the teacher.

**Students’ Experience**

The analysis of parental perceptions about school quality has highlighted a unanimous agreement among parents about the high value of students’ learning outcomes. This emphasis further necessitates developing insights into students’ experiences on a given school day. Two students from each school unit (primary and secondary) were shadowed by a member of the research team on a school day. After a discussion on the criteria, the schools proposed name of
some students who were then observed by the member of the research team. Here, a narration of two students’ (one male student from public sector high school and one female student from the primary section of a private high school) experiences is given to critically view their day long accounts with a school quality angle.

The school assembly is a ritual that all the students experience regardless their rural or urban setting or public and private school. The recitation from Holy Quran, poetry in praise of Allah Almighty and Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) and the national anthem are the routine practices for a morning assembly. A detail analysis of students’ morning assembly experience would certainly be helpful to delineate learning from this morning exercise. A cursory analysis of the morning assemblies in these schools only showed some different activities which were carried out along with routines in some schools. For instance, school prayer (in the RPSS below), special day proceedings and some physical exercises are generally some additions to the morning assembly.

Zubair experienced unexpected shorter day which was probably a decision made by the head teacher at the spur of moment. First half of the day has been all but revision in English and science. However, the data analysis shows that Zubair was least bothered for revision during these two subjects. He was constantly busy with either reading a book on Life Skills or writing (copying) a sick leave application or writing on the desk. A lecture on ethics by a teacher in Urdu period was yet a classic example of coercive discourse of ethics and integrity which these students including Zubair have little chance to see demonstrated by their teachers in reality. The science teacher comes 15 minutes late and the identification of important questions is the only important work he made students to do. Zubair apparently is busy writing something on his desk instead of writing in his notebooks. Interestingly, his attitude showed little compliance to his teachers’ dictum. One explanation of this non-compliance could be Zubair’s ability to recognize the dichotomous nature of his experience of teaching and learning. He is also experiencing a transition from a period of childhood to a life of adolescence. His ability and desire to make sense of the world around him could be one explanation of his noncompliance to teachers’ dictations. The observation data shows that more than half of the total registered students in class nine were absent. There could be various explanations for this trend of absenteeism (e.g. children supporting their families, distance from home, lack of time for studying and poor infrastructure). However, poor quality education, irrelevant curricula, lack of teacher preparation, and ineffective pedagogies can be regarded major factors for students for large scale regular absenteeism. The school teachers reported that all students, regardless their absenteeism, are allowed to appear in exam which could be yet another significant reason for low attendance of students. Regular low attendance, nevertheless, has implications for the motivation of students who attend the school somewhat regularly.

A typical school day of Shania, a student of a private primary school, illuminates her quality of experience.

Shania studies in the primary section of RPS school which was established immediately after country’s independence from British rule in 1947. Provision of quality and affordable education is the goal of this school. Her school day sounds quite an experience. While teaching and learning here also revolved around revision of already completed syllabus,
Shania experienced that the teachers approached this phenomenon of revision for exams differently. While many used conventional test writing to make students revise, others used different resources to reinforce students’ learning. Interestingly, students were observed discussing their experience with a different teaching approach during the break as well.

In a coeducation setting, Shania also experiences the differences in how girls and boys relate to their teachers and classroom environment. Importantly, she also witnesses teachers’ different approach to discipline boys and girls. Considering the formative period of their age, it is significant to note that Shania and her classmates, through these classroom based experiences, develop a sense of gender relationship around them. Earlier during the morning assembly, boys and girls from the same class stood in separate lines and they even used different points to enter their classrooms. This is what Thorne (1993) has considered as gender segregation within the coeducation setting of schools. According to her, schools and the teachers teach young girls and boys how they are different from each other and hence learn a great deal about their gender identity while being in the primary school.

Overall classroom environment and the school milieu for Zubair and Shania are remarkably different in terms of how these two could contribute to these youth’s quality school experience. The purpose built grand building of Zubair’s school reveals its grandeur in past. The present reality is a school building which requires serious maintenance for long and classrooms with barren walls. Zubair’s classroom has only one chart displayed which still contributes to students’ learning who copy the leave application from this chart. Shania’s school also enjoys a grand past but the attempts to maintain that quality today is a lived experience of students and teachers. Well maintained classrooms and the playground are quite engaging. This contributes to the motivation level of the teachers and students alike. Class size has recently been given critical consideration by Shania’s school where despite high demand for admission the management decided to restrict the number of students to 35. Contrary to this change in RPSS school, the class size in public sector schools is never defined. In fact, through various interventions by the Government of Sindh with support from international community “Net primary enrollment in Sindh increased by 25 percent between 2002 and 2007 — from 40 to 50 percent. Gender parity got a big boost with girls’ enrollment increasing by more than 45 percent; the transition of rural girls from primary to secondary school jumped from 42 percent in 2006 to 51 percent in 2008” (IDA- The World Bank, Sep, 2009). This increase in enrolment has, nevertheless, created a challenge of making learning a possibility for all those who were inducted in the school. Similar situation of large class has been also reported by the stakeholders of Girls High School in Matiari. Parents and teachers reported that lack of space to accommodate large classes has resulted in frequent absentee among girls.

A cursory analysis of the students shadowing data reveals teachers’ varying level of preparation. Though majority teachers had engaged students in revision work, a sense of the teaching ability of some teachers was obvious. Except few none came with any kind of teaching aids. Very few schools had any displays on the walls. The classroom teaching and learning
processes with some exceptions followed the traditional pattern across the study schools. Chalk and talk and lecture method were mostly observed in the classrooms. The routine tasks (the set pattern in majority of the government and private schools in Sindh) of reading lesson, dictation of difficult words, word meaning and question answer were followed during teaching the students. Memorization was practiced widely which cannot help understand if the cognitive development was happening. While the demographic data indicates availability of facilities such as science laboratories and libraries, no students visits to these facilities were documented during the observations and shadowing. Similarly, during the research team’s school visits one or two instances of students’ participation in co-curricular activities were observed. Students, in general, remain seated throughout the school day with some exception of morning assembly and recess period.

Key Issues

The ethnographic component of the study has highlighted some pertinent issues confronting the schools that participated in this study. A brief description of these issues is given here.

Political Influence and Patronage

All participating schools were studied in order to develop insights into school profiles and to determine factors affecting the quality of these schools. It has been shared earlier that the vision of the organizations running the private schools had positive influence on the development and quality of these schools. A study of the profiles of public sector schools has also identified steady decline in the overall quality. Particularly, the schools with well recognized reputation in past have lost the credibility over the years. The analysis of the profiles of these schools shows a unanimous agreement among the stakeholders about the detrimental impact of ever increasing political influence on education in general and on schooling in particular. One of the public schools seems to have historical experienced the continuous presence of political influence of varying degree in its affairs which, as reported by the stakeholders has a detrimental effect on its quality.

The most common manifestation of political intrusion is the appointment and transfers of the teachers refuting all the merit based criteria which are developed to induct the teachers on merit. The particular needs of these schools are also ignored while making these politically guided appointments as explained by one of the head teachers, “political interference in appointment and transfers [is an issue]…many times a good teacher is transferred and sometimes a school suppose already has 10 teachers, the 11th is also sent there without understanding the need. The school practically needs only 8 teachers.” As explained earlier, the teachers with political backing generally refuse to comply with the school rules and policies as a result their conduct as teachers is not liable for the scrutiny of the management. A particular number of teachers in all these schools will be absent on any given school day. This is done by the teachers through internal negotiations and cannot be questioned. The political patronage is also key
defining factor for the conduct of senior management in education. During one of the field visits, the research team met with a senior education official who was not allowed to enter the limits of his jurisdiction because of the opposition of a political leader.

The study also revealed positive impact of political patronage on schools. The Sher Government Boys Primary School in the rural setting particularly seems to be benefitting from its political benefactors. The school building was being renovated and the school has also been promoted through participation in different regional activities. The total enrolment of this school is above 600 as compare to the girls primary school in the vicinity with mere enrolment of 220. A total of 92 students of this number are enrolled in the early childhood and Education group which has been initiated with the complete support (includes resources, teacher salary) by an NGO. National F. Higher Secondary School is yet another example of political patronage in a positive sense. Here the principal with his own political groundedness not only makes an attempt to defy the political influence on school matters but also uses his political prowess to promote the status of this historical school as an alma mater of important national and regional leaders. This principal has been there for some period and has established his authority inside and outside the school. He uses his insights into the socio-political situation for the promotion of school. With a recognition that much has changed in school, he makes an attempt to present a reflection of the past glory of this institution today. The school prospectus is upgraded every year with regular scholarly work/publications by the principal to highlight school’s significance in national scene.

The primary section of the Sindh Public Higher Secondary School also offers an example of head teacher using his political prowess for improving the school quality. Worried by ever decreasing enrolment, the head teacher used his contacts to get official permission to switch the medium of instruction from Sindhi to English. This change has attracted many parents who are convinced that the qualified teachers here are better prepared to teach their children. He also reported to have successfully generated resources through his contacts. In sum, the study schools provide examples of how the political patronage or interference can hinder or in some cases, may also improve the school quality.

Accountability and Monitoring

Accountability and monitoring are considered to carry fundamental importance in smooth functioning of the school. The study reveals that private school, big or small, all has certain mechanisms of accountability and monitoring which generally lead to the regular attendance of teachers and students. A study of the educational management in the public sector explains the presence of well-thought structures in place. The secretory education district education officers, and the supervisors are all there in every administrative zone to support the quality schooling processes. However, these systems do not function according to the terms of reference and the schools hardly experience any support from the officials in this system. A head teacher explains her view on this matter, “officers do not visit us. The teachers are also not happy with this. If they visit us in the morning, they would get to know what time the teachers and the head come to school or whether they come at all”. She further extended her point, “one year has passed and
nobody has visited us. The supervisor comes only if she has her own personal agenda. Otherwise she would not come. A teacher comes at 10:00 while the other arrives at 9:30 am. I cannot do much about it if they give you a family reason. The school is far, which is the reason few teachers actually [despite their officially approved appointments] come here.” Another head teacher explained the engagement of teachers in all other activities (e.g. elections, polio drives, flood/disaster relief work, census) but their genuine engagement in teaching and learning is not monitored. Each public school has enough human resources but not used effectively. The lack of proper monitoring and accountability seems to be severely lacking in public schools system which reflects in the poor school performance despite the presence of well qualified teachers. The private schools, on the other hand, had strict monitoring mechanisms. A detail study on private school management may reveal the challenges and good practices in this regard.

Lack of Developmental Stance in Public Schools

A developmental stance with a focus on quality growth was obvious in the two out of three private schools. However, the public schools generally lack a developmental stance and the energies are focused on maintaining status quo, good or bad. Each stakeholder recognizes the core issues but the collective thinking and reflections even at the level of the school community do not take place and hence the schools are not able to disengage themselves from the discourse of deficit and loss. While complexity of the issues require a complete systemic overhaul, school level developmental initiative will surly lead to initial but significant change.

Value and Sustainability of Reforms

Certain interventions in the province have introduced some reforms in the public school system which includes introduction of School Management Committees. Since the establishment of this structure, proper monitoring in terms of viability and effective sustainability has not been done. The SMCs of majority schools are not functioning according to the approved Terms of Reference. Similarly, enrolment in the public schools have increased since the government decided to offer free education, textbooks and some incentives for girls such as monthly scholarship. However, the impact of this increased enrolment has not been studied. The teachers and head teachers have complained about absenteeism among students. According to these stakeholders, parents and students do not value attending school because they [parents] do not make even a minimal contribution to their children’s schooling. Furthermore, the province has been instructed not to fail any student. All those who are enrolled are promoted to the next grade if they have appeared in exams regardless their poor abilities and low academic performance. This practice while has enhanced the enrolment data, it has apparently also contributed to the deficit image of these public schools. Students, their parents, teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders all have accepted these public schools as “sinking schools”.
Unpacking the School Quality

The findings of the parental perceptions survey and the ethnographic component of the study suggest that school quality has to be taken up as serious discourse by the all stakeholders who are involved in the provision of education in the province of Sindh. Parents considered student learning outcome, their academic performance and their personality development are the most important indicators of school quality. The school environment and physical conditions/facilities as highlighted by Tooley and Dixon (2007), Farah (1996) and Marzano (2003) were seen as the second most important indicators of school quality. Teachers, governance and leadership and curriculum, teaching and learning are the other most significant factors contributing to school quality. The ethnographic component of the study identifies key factors affecting the school quality and students’ quality learning experience in a school setting. While the study practically confirms some of the assertions made by the scholars earlier in the school quality debate, it has also extended this debate by adding some other contextual references.

Punctuality and regularity of teachers (Andrabi, 2008; Shamim, 2008; CQE, 2007; Farah, 1996), Teacher’s competence (Farah, 1996), Teacher accountability and their motivation (to teach) (Tooley & Dixon, 2007), and the personal character of teacher/head/school administration (Farah, 1996) have also emerged as the key quality indicators in the context of schooling in Sindh Pakistan. The critical role of leadership (Andrabi, 2008; Shamim, 2008; CQE, 2007, Farah, 1996; Marzano, 2003) elsewhere has limited focus on the head teachers. The present study has highlighted the breadth of the leadership and management which influences school quality. None of the schools in this study were solely managed by the head teachers. The SMCs, the supervisors, education officers, department/section heads are integral part of school governance and hence play important role in establishing school quality. Parents and community ownership/involvement (Farah, 1996; Marzano, 2003) remains an issue of school quality which needs to be further discussed for developing a consensus which should be equally applicable in the private schools too.

Achievement of students (Orazem, 2000; Andrabi, 2008; Alderman et al., 2001; Tooley & Dixon, 2007; Kingdon, 1996; Farah, 1996), positive student-teacher interaction and [Student teachers] time spent in classes (Farah, 1996) as the manifestation of school quality have emerged as a major finding of the study. Quality learning opportunities inside the classroom also emerged as an important quality concern. Appropriate pupil-teacher ratio (Tooley & Dixon, 2007; Farah, 1996) appears in the study as another problematic of students’ quality learning. The notion of appropriate discipline (Farah, 1996) was also highlighted by the parents but the teachers’ emphasis on a particular type of discipline makes this quality indicator problematic. A consensus needs to be developed among different stakeholders about the definition and its approved manifestation at the levels of school and classroom.

The importance of schools’ boundary walls is highlighted elsewhere with a specific reference to girls’ schooling and their retention in schools. The, present study, however, has specifically identified safety and security as a major indicator of school quality. There was a
unanimous agreement among parents that security (and safety) is always a major consideration while they enroll their children in the schools. This could be explained as a reflection of global, national and local level security threats and concerns.

The present study while confirms school quality indicators as highlighted by earlier researches, it also does significant additions in the discourse of school quality. The arguments developed in the study are significant as they are rooted in parents’ voices, views and perceptions about school quality. It is important that the discourse on school quality with an angle of parental perceptions is furthered to make the argument comprehensive and representative by engaging parents from other regions of Pakistan.

Conclusion, Recommendations, Way forward

The findings of the parental perception survey, the school profiles and the ethnographic component of the study have indicated a relationship of dichotomy between the perceptions of parents about the school quality, the quality offered by the schools and the quality that students experience. The reality of the quality on the ground, particularly for the public schools is far less than satisfactory despite the presence of important human and material resources. The broad and hierarchical management system and the lack of commitment to deliver the required quality by all the stakeholders require serious deliberations so that a consensus on the school quality can be developed. Importantly, integration of parents’ voices in the discussions on the policy forum will be fundamentally important to develop a consensus on the definition and the standards of the school quality. Ensuring that the schools (public and private) meet the required standards of quality would require stringent mechanism and processes in place with effective monitoring system. Furthermore, de-politicization of the schools and education would be vital to improve the school quality.

Present study has made important contribution to the body of literature around the school quality in general and parental perceptions about school quality in particular. With its unique design and focus, the study adds to the debate around school quality by identifying a dichotomous relationship between parental perceptions of school quality, the quality offered by schools and the quality as offered by the students. Furthermore, the instrument of the survey is available for use and adaptation by the researchers who wish to conduct a study with a similar focus in the context like Sindh.

The study has made an attempt to examine the school quality as it is perceived by the parents and as it is demonstrated by the schools and as it is experienced by the students. Policy dialogue is proposed for the education stakeholders including the decision makers to discuss and debate the findings of the study for the changes in policy and practice around the school quality. It is equally important to draw the attention of the academicians and researchers about highlighting the value of school quality discourse with a reference to the local nuances. Dissemination of the research findings in national and international conference is, therefore, important way forward.
To draw implications for national level policy debate on school quality, the extension of this study in the other provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan would be important. While the public schools in the study may be somewhat representative of the characteristics of a majority of these public schools, the same is particularly difficult to determine for three private schools. Currently, no database for the private school is available despite the mushroom growth of such schools across the country. A nationwide study on private schools needs to be carried out to develop the database and also to establish the range of characteristics of these private schools.

School Quality – Conversion of three Components

- The study has highlighted the fact that regardless the presence and absence of school quality, schools do recognize it as a major concern.
- Importantly, as school quality remains a fluid term, determination of responsibility for it is another undecided matter.
- Analysis in all three components also presented situations where stakeholders either colluded for improving school quality and at times offered resistance against it.
- Dichotomous relationship between the ideals and the realities of the school quality remains a challenge for parents.

Way Forward

- Drawing policy implications - 18th constitutional amendment has made education a provincial subject. This now allows proper implementation of National Education Policy 2009. As committed in the policy, improving quality of teachers, curriculum, assessment will certainly improve the quality experience of students in schools.
- The study has emphasized on serious engagement of stakeholders around the ‘quality’ question. This engagement while will bring policy makers for improving school quality it would also make an attempt to bring parents’ voice in the discourse of improving school quality.
- Developing a consensus on the quality indicators is the most important step which would help necessary steps towards ensuring quality in schools. A standard approach needs to be used to allow schools perform at the continuum of performance indicators of quality. No schools will be allowed to perform below the minimum standards. Monitoring of implementation of such indicators will reinforce intentions and commitments of the state around providing quality education to all.

References


This study was conducted with the generous support from Campaign for Quality Education (CQE).

I acknowledge contribution of Roshni Kumari, Jabbarul Haq, Umar Daraz, Marina Begum, Hina Hussain, Baslia, Sajjad Ali, and Sohail Bawani who worked closely with me at the various phases of this study. I also appreciate Rukhsana Ahmed’s valuable contribution in writing this chapter.
Introduction

Education is necessary condition for removing the deficiencies such as low self-esteem and sense of powerlessness, which are obstacles for development. Therefore education is indispensable for development and progress of the national economy for the eradication of poverty and ignorance. Leadership is an important criterion for maintenance and improvement of the quality of staff and the organization. As it is the crucial factor for allocating and targeting roles and facilities in order to achieve the goals (Shouriamma, 2008). It is the opinion of many educators today that the leadership of the school head is the key component in school success. Earth (1990) said that the head is the key to a good school and even went further by stating, show me a good school and I will show you a good head.

The job of principal is too complex. A summary of all of the challenges of principals is concisely stated by Campbell and Williamson (1991), Principals are responsible for coordinating all school programs; providing a sound educational program; maintaining high teacher morale, discipline, high student achievement, and a positive learning environment; evaluating teachers; providing staff leadership; and establishing effective school/community relations. In addition, they face a constant stream of conflicts and confrontations. Today’s high school principals must cope with far more change, intensity of conflict, and increasing pressures from parents, teachers, students, and the community than did their predecessors. They are also held more accountable than ever before. With this increased accountability and the national concern about declining educational achievement levels as compared with other nations, today’s principals are literally “under the gun” to produce educational results. If the principals are to provide the educational climate that will result in student achievement, specific task behaviors [or practices] of principals should be examined” (p.115).

Bacal (1996) is of the view that in an organization where there is faith in the abilities of formal leaders, employees will look towards the leaders for a number of things. Leader effectiveness is occasionally measured in stipulations of the leader’s input to the excellence of faction processes, as perceived by followers or by outside observers. Does the leader enhance group cohesiveness, member cooperation, member motivation, problem solving, decision-making and resolution of conflict among members? Does the leader contribute to the efficiency of role specialization, the organization of activities the accumulation of resources and the readiness of the group to deal with change and crises? Does the leader improve the quality of work life, build the self-confidence of followers, increase their skills and contribute to their psychological growth and development? It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of a leader when there are so many alternative measures of effectiveness and it is not clear which measure is most relevant. In this research the researcher attempted to combine several measures into three main roles of school’s leader.

Study Aims

1. To investigate the leadership roles strengths and weaknesses of principals.
2. To compare and contrast the views of leadership roles performance between two levels of principals and teachers.
3. To explore the reasons behind their conflicting opinions, if any.

Research Questions

1. Do secondary schools principals performed their leadership roles effectively?
2. Do secondary school principals and their subordinates view leadership roles in the same way?
3. If not, then why they do they view it differently?

Literature Review

Leaders manage the organizational structures that support continuous learning, collect and disseminate information about the school's performance. Continuous learning in the school must be supported for the students and the faculty. Therefore, the principal as leader has to break down the barriers to collaboration and, by example, model collaborative practices and make decisions democratically (Joyce & Calhoun, 1995).

Leadership Theories and Approaches

In the beginning the researchers were interested to study leadership in the context of personal traits like personality, physical, and mental characteristics of leader. Trait theorist Stogdill (1948, 1974) focused on analyzing leaders to determine whether they possesses distinct charter traits, given the assumption that superior qualities separated leaders from followers. In a later study (Stogdill, 1974); he also identified six categories of personal factors that are associated with leadership: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, status and situation. The insufficiency of trait studies the researchers moved towards behavioural approach in the early 1950s. The four main types of behaviours found amongst leaders are as follows: Concern for tasks, Concern for people, Directive leadership, Participative leadership (McGregor, 1960). Hoy and Miskel (1987) listed four areas of situational leadership: structural properties of the organization, organizational climate, role characteristics, and subordinate characteristics. Guest, Hersey and Blanchard’s (1977) situational leadership theory claims that leadership behaviors fall into two dimensions: (a) leaders concern with the task (structuring or task orientation), and (b) leaders’ concern with the relationship (socio-emotional support or relationship orientation). As an employee becomes mature (i.e. grows in capacity, ability, education, experience, motivation, self-esteem, confidence), the need for socio-emotional support increases, while the need for structure declines. Beyond a certain level of maturity, the need for both types of orientation decreases.

A "contingency theory" describes some aspect of leadership that applies to some situations but not to others. Contingency theories can also be either descriptive or prescriptive. One such theory considered two variables in defining leader effectiveness: (a) leadership style and (b) the degree to which the leader’s situation is favorable for influence (Fiedler, 1967).

Leadership Roles

Another way to gain an understanding of leadership is to examine the various roles carried out by leaders. A role in this context is an expected set of activities or behaviors stemming from one’s
job. Leadership roles are a sub set of managerial roles studied by Mintzberg (1987) and others. These different leadership roles are; figurehead, spokesperson, negotiator, coach, team builder, team player, technical problem solver, entrepreneur. The researcher merged these roles into three main roles, as discussed below in detail.

Administrative role of principals include well defined policies and programs for better teaching learning environment, appropriate use of available sources and resources, running the programs and activities for the achievement of goals, assurance of growth and development of children and adults, maximum use of economical and human sources for the maximum benefits, conservation of resources and ultimately achievement of the maximum benefit for the overall personality development of the students and to provide them an environment which is conducive for teaching learning process.

Some important tasks of school’s head are as to guide the teachers for the selection of contents, teaching aids and methods for teaching learning process to attain the goals and to ensure the maximum learning of the students. They also try to make aware of the teachers about the individual differences, different learning activities, maintaining school discipline and to attract the social agencies for the welfare of the students to provide them guidance and counseling services in the field of financial aspects, health or adjustment problems. In supervisory role the heads orients new teachers to become a successful one, their efficient contributions, promotes recreational and social activities, encourages action research, shares leadership roles and respects teacher’s individual personalities. It is the duty of the supervisor to maintain good relations with community, organization of parents’ teachers association for exchange of information, various channels of communication, cooperation with welfare agencies for the better education of its children and favours the use of emerging technology in teaching learning strategies. The most important task of the supervisor is to use various techniques to determine the extent to which the school is achieving its purpose, strengths and limitations of school programms. The supervisor must arrange pre-service and in-service training programms in the form of workshops, seminars and refresh courses to update their knowledge and skills regarding teaching learning process.

Methodology

Population
The population of the study was constituted of all the principals and Senior English Teachers of Government high schools of Kohat Division.

Sampling
Sixty government high schools was selected using simple random technique from three selected districts equal in percentage from male, female, urban and rural schools to represent each group. Two Senior English Teachers and all the heads of the each sampled secondary schools were randomly selected.

Design and Procedure
The questionnaire was used as a research instrument. The final questionnaire comprised of four parts with 30 closed statements. Questionnaire was distributed to collect the views of the
participating principals and teachers. To examine whether there were any conflicting views between the two groups, they were each given the same questionnaire, and their responses were then compared. Part one consisting of five demographic variables whereas part two, three and four were designed to measure the administrative, supervisory and as an educator roles of heads respectively. Each consisted of 10 Likert type items, responded to a five point scale from always (5) to never (1). The value of Cronbach’s alpha (0.86) indicated the questionnaire had a high level of internal consistency.

Interviews

After the teachers and principals had completed the questionnaire, interviews were carried out to investigate the reasons for their answers with regard to different leadership roles performed by the secondary school heads. The interview questions, which were based on the questionnaire findings, were semi-structured in nature to uncover more details of the participants’ views about different leadership roles. For example they were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of principal roles, whether the principals performed these roles effectively or not and why the opinions are different.

Comparison of Views between Principals & Teachers Regarding Administrative Role, Supervisory and as an Educator Role Respectively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assign duties after consultation</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>4.430*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate activity</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.662</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>2.408*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute work on just basis</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.449</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>4.884*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign right job to a right person</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>6.380*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation of responsibility and authority</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.136</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>2.122*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate good suggestions</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.633</td>
<td>4.665*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge subordinate’s work</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>6.816*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage free expression of ideas to build consensus</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>4.811*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate subordinates for achievement of tasks</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>0.79</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>3.81</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring changes through action research</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.377</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>1.783**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 01 shows that assigning duties after consulting colleagues, initiation of activity, distribution of work on just basis, assign right job to a right person, delegation of responsibility and authority to subordinates, Invite and encourage suggestions from colleagues, acknowledgement subordinate’s work, encourage free expression of ideas to build consensus, distribute work on just basis, and motivate the members for achievement of tasks, were statistically significant at 0.05 level. Whereas bring changes through research and enquiry were found statistically non significant. A significant difference was found between the views of principals and teachers regarding administrative role of heads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
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<th>S.D</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>T</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarization with names and background of students</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.339</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>-2.78*</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide and appreciate staff to develop sense of humour</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>1.208</td>
<td>7.560*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe teachers in curricular and co-curricular activities</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>6.769*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.99</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour of curriculum which meet needs and demands of the society</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>3.583*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.04</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of teachers and students performance in curricular and co-curricular activities</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>3.421*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give instructional tips</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>4.334*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of high performance</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>3.040*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization of parent’s teachers association</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>8.103*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orient new teachers to become successful ones</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>6.969*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide teachers in maintaining school discipline</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>5.823*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 02 shows that familiar with the names and background of the students, Guide and appreciate the staff to develop sense of humour, observation of teachers in curricular and co-curricular activities, Favour of the curriculum which meet the needs and demands of the society, Aware of teachers and students performance in curricular and co-curricular activities, Give instructional tips to the teachers, Recognize high performance of the teachers and students,
Orient the new teachers to become successful ones, organizing parent’s teachers association for exchange of information between school and community and guiding teachers in maintaining school discipline were statistically significant at 0.05 levels. A significant difference was found between the views of principals and teachers regarding supervisory role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce new ideas about educational goals</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>0.608</td>
<td>3.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate in-service teachers training</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>4.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange educational workshops, seminars and conferences</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.117</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate with other agencies in arranging educational programs</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.536</td>
<td>0.566</td>
<td>3.055*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominate teachers to attend educational workshops, seminars and conferences</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>1.066</td>
<td>7.255*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite educational experts to visit school</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.403</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.924*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour inters school competition</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.316</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>2.376*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request higher authorities to make arrangement of refresher courses of teachers</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.779</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>2.617*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour the use of emerging technology in teaching learning strategies</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.352</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>2.790*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>120</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the overall personality development of the students</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.530</td>
<td>0.534</td>
<td>2.915*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>T</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 03 shows that introducing new ideas about educational goals, appreciation of in-service teachers training, cooperation with other agencies in arranging educational programmes, nomination of teachers to attend programmes, favours inters school competition, requesting higher authorities to make arrangement of refresher courses of teachers, favours the use of emerging technology in teaching learning strategies and focus on the overall personality development of the students were found statistically significant at 0.05 levels. A significant difference was found between principals and teachers regarding educator role. Where as arranging educational workshops, seminars and conferences in school and inviting of educational experts to visit school were found non significant.

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

This study investigates the leadership roles strengths and weaknesses of Principals and compares and contrasts the leadership roles in the secondary schools of Kohat Division, and examines whether educators effectively perform leadership roles or not. The study adopts the quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine whether principals and teachers interpret leadership roles
differently. Both principals and teachers see leadership roles of schools’ principal as an important contributing factor for a successful school, but principals fail to perform these roles affectively and efficiently. The main reasons for this discrepancy are mistrust, distribution of work load, no recognition of their contributions, no group harmony and no criticism between principals and teachers. In our schools leadership roles are centralized on principals and school leaders. De Clercq (2008) sees authentic and trusting relationships as fundamental to the exercise of leadership, which is not technical, but rather artful and creative. It is suggested that leadership roles be de-centralized and delegated to different parties involved in the school. Both principals and teachers do not choose to keep quiet but criticize positively to one another regarding different matters. A leadership programme for both teachers and principals may be an option that would help the two to build a mutually trusting relationship (Louw & Zuber-Skeritt, 2009). The principal’s role is to coordinate and plan strategically, not to mandate actions and plans. Conflicting opinion was also found regarding delegation of authority and responsibilities between principals and teachers. Wallace (2008) also pointed out the creation of a climate that raises levels of motivation and self-esteem is crucial to empowerment. Principals should also provide channels for teachers to learn to become effective leaders. Cooperation between teachers and principals will lead to an effective school.

References


THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Venesser Fernandes (Nee Pate), Monash University, Australia.

Introduction

A customer-driven concept of quality defines it, as meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Heyns (Heyns, 2001, p.6) describes a Quality Management System as, “the sum of activities and information an organisation uses to enable it to be better and meet and exceed the needs and expectations of its customers more cost effectively and cost efficiently.” Jeffries, Evans & Reynolds (Jeffries, Evans, & Reynolds, 1996, p.1) have defined Total Quality Management (TQM) as “a comprehensive and integrated way of managing an organisation in order to meet the needs of the customers consistently and achieve continuous improvement in every aspect of the organisation’s activities.” In translating this concept into an educational context, Cheng (Cheng, 2003, p. 207) states that, “Educational quality is the set of elements in the input, process, and output sections of educational institutions that provide services which completely satisfy internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations.” In other words, the achievement of educational quality involves considering all stages of the quality loop as a whole. It involves looking at the ‘totality of education’ in order for it to be sustainable in its processes and meaningful in its outcomes.

Literature Review

A wide body of literature favours adopting quality models and programs within educational organisations. Quality models and programs have focused on educational concerns such as: curriculum reforms (Setiasih & Tjahjono, 2004), student learning (Kovacs, 2009), quality of teaching (Mertova, 2008; Taşar & Çelik, 2011;), leadership (Berry, 1997; Ngware et al., 2006), strategic management (Leach, 2010; Magutu et al., 2010; Venkatraman, 2007) and continuous improvement elements (Koral, 2003; Svensson & Klefsjö, 2006).

The continuous improvement of education is a major strategic imperative of federal and state governments within Australia. At the federal government level, three core areas for real changes in education identified include (COA, 2008):

1. Raising the quality of teaching.
2. Building strategies based on high expectations of student attainment, engagement and transitions.
3. Improving transparency and accountability of schools and school systems at all levels.

At the state level, the Victorian Government has developed a transparency strategy based on a firm belief that everyone responsible for a young person’s education needs a shared understanding of how children are progressing in their learning and how a school is performing (DEECD, 2009). Responsibilities are devolved to individual schools leading to increased accountability demands. Most school leaders are required to work with staff and community to develop strategic plans with clear outcome targets and improvement strategies (McKenzie, Mulford, & Anderson, 2007). As such, the implementation of quality programs and models
such as TQM provide possible solutions for improving efficiency and effectiveness within schools and school systems (Cunningham, 2007; Kovacs, 2009) within Australia. Key concepts of Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement were used in analysing critical aspects leading to the synthesis of a Strategically-Oriented Learning Organisation. Quality Assurance is a cultural transformation within an educational organisation which incorporates goals with related processes for: the development of a shared vision, a proactive leadership, an effective professional development program, provision of services that satisfy customer needs, and a continuous improvement process of review and evaluation (Berry, 1997). It is an educational culture of customer satisfaction through active participation of all stakeholders in continuous improvement (Ngware et al., 2006). Quality Enhancement refers to the improvement of educational quality through cycles of continuous improvement and innovation (Hodgkinson & Kelly, 2007). Through Quality Enhancement, services provided are more responsive to stakeholder needs being established through processes of continual improvement based on the understanding and improving of systems (DiPietro, 1993), in this case, primary school educational systems. Holness (Holness, 2001) identifies significant organisational improvements when a continuous improvement program is used with a meaningful quality assurance program; with positive results felt over time as a culture for quality is developed accomplished through stages of planning, executing and evaluating going on in continuous cycles. This concept of implementing quality assurance mechanisms through strategic planning grounded in continuous improvement has been termed as Strategic TQM (Combe & Bostchen, 2004; Mehra, Hoffman, & Siras, 2001; Sousa, 2003). While Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement provide an educational organisation with leadership and strategic-planning methods, the role of Strategic TQM helps to recognise the environmental forces that influence the organisation. Strategic TQM makes an organisation dynamically responsive to changing societal trends (Leonard & McAdam, 2003; McAdam, Leonard, Henderson, & Hazlett, 2006). The Strategic TQM approach allows organisations to cope with complex and dynamic phenomena associated with rapidly changing internal and external environments (McAdam et al., 2006). Finally, educational institutions using a Strategic TQM approach develop a learning organisation culture within themselves. Peter Senge (Senge, 1990) suggests that in learning organisations people, processes, and systems are all dedicated to continuous learning and improvement.

**Purpose**

In describing the benefits of TQM for schools, Gore (Gore, 1993) maintains that: "The central concept of TQM, continuous improvement, is fundamental to educational institutions whose purpose is to support improvement and individual growth." (p. 335)

This belief that the TQM philosophy has a logical application to school organisations has been supported by Murgatroyd and Morgan (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993, p. 245), who maintain that quality improvement is ‘culturally located’ which means that "improving quality becomes an over-riding mission for the school."

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the contribution that TQM programs have made in the provision of quality education within schools in Victoria, Australia. Through case-study analysis, two state primary schools that have made use of TQM programs within their school improvement processes were studied.
**Design/Methodology/Approach**

A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate the case-study schools. Barton and Lazarsfeld (Barton & Lazarsfeld, 1955) suggest that one can use qualitative research for developing hypotheses and for the exploration of the phenomenon under study, which then is quantitatively tested. This study followed Hesse-Biber’s (2010, pp. 71-72) *sequential exploratory mixed-method design* where the qualitative component was the primary research method used to generate theory or specific theoretical constructs (see Figure 1). The relatively minor quantitative component was used only to test out the ideas generated from the major qualitative component.

**Figure 1** Integrating Methods in a Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Design
(This is the continual, iterative theory-generation and testing over time model)

- **Research Question**
- **Mixed-methods Design**
- **Wave 1**
  - QUAL
  - QUAN
- **Wave 2**
  - QUAL
  - QUAN
- **Wave 3**
  - QUAL
  - QUAN


The current study adapted Hesse-Biber’s (2010) model and used a mixed-methodologies design given by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 41) which began with exploratory qualitative in-depth interviews and semi-structured observational records; followed by a quantitative questionnaire audit – the *Self-Assessment Quality Checklist* as an intermediate step.
Results from both steps were deepened and assessed in a second round of qualitative in-depth interviews and document analysis (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2** Mixed-method Research Design Used in This Study

EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE COMPONENT
Using First Phase of In-Depth Interviews and Observational Records

↓

QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT
Using Self-Assessment Quality Checklist Audit

↓

QUALITATIVE COMPONENT
Using Second Phase of Depth Interviews and Document Analysis (for deepening and assessing results)


This study was designed as a retrospective, instrumental, organisational case-study using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, content analysis, document analysis and semi-structured observations as well as one quantitative method that involved using a Self-Assessment Quality Checklist. Grounded theory methods were used for data-coding and the Australian Business Excellence Framework was used as the main data analysis tool. Open coding was restricted to manifest content analysis and latent meaning analysis was carried out at the axial and selective coding stages for interpretative analysis. The higher level codes and categories were used as a basis to identify key concepts. These key concepts provided new understanding of the data and constituted the foundation for the theory and general conclusions that emerged from this study. A multi-level organisational data-collection approach was used in selecting participants signifying a totality of their perspectives in the research findings as well as substantiating the reliability of the research study.
Findings

Through this study, it was found that within Australian state primary schools TQM programs have a definite impact on:

1. the organisational culture;
2. the mechanisms of continuous improvement; and,
3. the leadership system of these primary schools.

The organisational culture of these schools was dependent on their Quality Assurance systems maintained through their targeted goal-setting, policies, processes and actions. The quality of these processes was monitored through their quality policy intimating their organisational intentions and directions.
Both schools had their own self-chartered *Quality Enhancement* systems which focused on the improvement of educational quality through strong cultural cycles of continuous improvements and innovations.

These schools demonstrated *Strategic TQM* within the leadership systems of their schools (see Figures 3 and 4), through *Quality Assurance* mechanisms grounded in *Quality Enhancement* programs. Overtime, results of Strategic TQM was seen their quality culture developed through stages of planning, executing and evaluating going on in continuous cycles. They had become
*Strategically-oriented Learning Organisations* where people, processes, and systems were all dedicated to continuous learning and improvement.

It was found that in any Strategically-oriented Learning Organisation four factors play a pivotal role in its Leadership system:

1. Leadership,
2. Teamwork,
3. Bundling Strategies and

Marks, Louis and Printy (Marks, Louis & Printy, 2000) have identified six dimensions of a school’s capacity for organisational learning: leadership, school structure, participative decision-making grounded in teacher empowerment, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, and, feedback and accountability. Leadership being the critical factor in a successful learning organisation. In an impact study (Kovacs, 2009) on the *Quality in Schools* program conducted in (N=138) state schools across Victoria, Australia a key aspect in the program’s success was the concept of teamwork. Modell (Modell, 2009) refers to the ‘bundling phenomenon’ as a process where organisations go through a process of diffusing a number of innovations, as they set goals leading to the development of comprehensive management systems. Effective implementation of *Strategic TQM* requires being able to discern what would be the best initiative for a particular organisation (Temtime, 2003). While knowledge and understanding of *Strategic TQM* must be high for successful implementation, each organisation develops its own subset of *Strategic TQM* characteristics and activities unique to its own cultural context (Jones & Seraphim, 2008).

**Originality/Value**

An important contribution of this study is the development of a model for school improvement that focuses on schools as strategically-oriented learning organisations through an effective leadership system.

**Keywords**

Total Quality Management, School Improvement Processes, Strategic TQM, Learning Organisations, Leadership, Organisational Culture, Continuous Improvement

**References**


ASSESSMENT FOR / AS LEARNING
Abstract
Assessment is inevitably linked with the processes of teaching and learning. Assessment for learning (AFL), the focus of this paper, is germane to students’ learning in that the purpose of AFL is to help students improve their learning in light of the feedback they receive on the quality of their work. Educational research indicates that AFL is a viable alternative to traditional examination system at school level, and in case of high stake public examinations, it helps students perform better at summative examinations, especially when both formative and summative assessments are used in tandem (Assessment Reform Group, various papers; The State of Queensland, Department of Education, (n.d, online); Klenowski, 2002; Elwood and Klenowski (2000).

The Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) has introduced AFL in its Middle School Assessment Framework (MSAF, grades VI to VIII through two modes of assessment: Progress tests and project portfolio. Being formative, these are offered as diagnostic tools to support students in their educational processes so that they are better prepared for their current and future learning. The focus of this paper is on project portfolios and their assessment. Adopting a multi-disciplinary inquiry approach, students are engaged in collaborative as well as independent learning and reflection. Assessment, therefore, is built in as a continuous process. The emphasis is on the process of learning leading to a final product and reported in the form of competencies achieved in a ‘personal achievement record’, based on a number of assessment processes.

The paper presents a critique of conventional school assessment based on marks and grades and suggests that portfolio assessment is a viable alternative to be used in schools in Pakistan at least up to Middle school level, based on descriptive remarks, feedback, and peer and self-assessment.

7 The author works with Aga Khan University Examination Board. The author would like to thank Dr. Thomas Christie, the director of AKU-EB for his critical comments. The author acknowledges the contribution made by his colleague Ms. Raana Jillani in designing portfolio tasks.
in developing critical competencies in students. Since the framework has only been introduced last year, its results are not yet available to gauge its impact on learning.

**Introduction**

It is an established fact that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning processes in not only judging student performance at the end but also to gauge how their learning improves as they go through various processes of learning actively in and outside the classrooms. Assessment, therefore, is not only of learning but for learning (AFL) (See Black and Wiliam, 1998). The focus of this paper is to make an argument for AFL at Middle School level in schools in Pakistan mainly through introducing portfolio assessment of project work. It is to integrate assessment with teaching with a view to first diagnose where students stand in terms of their learning, what are their learning difficulties and then suggest ways to address and improve their learning through teachers’ constructive feedback (Gardner et al., 2008). The paper discusses contextual realities with regard to assessment practices in schools at this level and argues for innovation and change in assessment practice that is geared towards AFL. It presents the case of AKU-EB’s initiative of introducing change in assessment practice at Middle School level and possible challenges in its implementation.

**Issues in Current Assessment Practices in Pakistan**

Assessment in Pakistan has been a thorny issue that has been debated in educational circles over the last many decades (e.g. Bhatti, 1987; Warwick and Reimers, 1995; Greaney and Hasan 1998; Mirza, 1999; Naqvi, 2002; Rehmani, 2003 and 2011). A wide range of research suggests that assessment is a crucial determinant in driving teaching and learning in the classrooms (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Mirza, 1999; Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001; Rehmani, 2003; Lamprianou and Christie, 2009). Teaching to test is generally believed to be a norm in many schools in Pakistan. A sample of 16 students of grades 6 to 10 from four different schools of Karachi (Rehmani, 2011) in their focus group interviews suggested that teachers mostly encourage rote learning because they teach to test. Eight teachers and four head teachers from these schools also confirmed that assessment is mostly of learning rather than for learning and that the frequency of taking tests is quite high. The situation is worst at grades IX to XII where high stake examinations conducted by the public examination boards across Pakistan where
cheating is rampant (Geo Television, ‘Kamran Khan ke sath’, video clippings dated April 10, 2012 and April 9, 2013; Baloch, 2009; 2009b). The students in the above study (Rehmani, 2011) pointed out malpractices in the examination, particularly cheating. One of them said: ‘60 percent children cheat, very few children are hardworking’. Like teaching for teachers, learning seems to appear as a job for students too and they are doing what Loughran and Northfield (1996) called the ‘busy work’ of learning by heart without much understanding. Some of the reasons, the research participants in the above study pointed out were, rushing through the mandatory requirement of completing the syllabus on time; frontal teaching with little emphasis on students’ learning and their active participation in the process of learning. Learning through rote memorization and reproduction with little understanding and without much assimilation of ideas and concepts is generally prevalent in schools in Pakistan (Rehmani, 2011; see also Siddiqui, 2007, 2010). Siddiqui depicts a typical classroom situation as:

“A good student or learner in this paradigm is the one who sits in the class quietly, behaves nicely, never disagrees with the teacher, hardly asks any question and has a sharp memory to repeat what the teacher has taught” (2007 p.62).

With such a teaching and learning culture, assessment gets reduced to testing lower order thinking. Students hardly get any feedback on their learning. When I asked approximately 390 teachers across Pakistan in a number of workshops, organised by the Aga Khan University Examination Board in 2012, while discussing teacher feedback, most of them said that they hardly give any qualitative feedback to their students with a view to improving their learning. All they give are words and phrases such as ‘good’, needs improvement, check your spellings, improve hand writing, fair, or even negative words such as ‘bad’, without suggesting how they can improve their learning.

In this scenario, the Aga Khan University Examination Board planned to introduce an assessment framework at Middle School level with a view to providing a broad-based education with integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, focusing on active learning, both individual and collaborative, through social interaction. It aims to better prepare students for their secondary and higher secondary education.
Is Portfolio Assessment a Viable Alternative to School-Based Examinations?

In the last two decades, forms of assessment have been revisited from a more quantitative to a more qualitative approach as approaches to teaching are changing from transmission models to more constructivist and co-constructivist approaches (Klenowski, 2002, Klensowski et al, 2006), and from assessment of learning to assessment for learning (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Gipps, 1996). Various terms came to the forefront in the 1990s such as “authentic assessment”, “alternate Assessment”, “performance assessment” and “direct assessment” (Goolsby, 1995). He opines that amongst them the alternative assessment is more generic and best describes those methods of assessment that greatly differ from the traditional standardized tests. He argues that through alternative assessment, students are examined through tasks that are related to real life issues outside the schools and are of more value than the standardized tests (see. p. 39).

Portfolio assessment is considered as an alternate model to paper and pencil time limited examinations and celebrates more the process rather than the product of learning as it involves projects that are linked to real life situations. It contains self-assessment and self-reflection; it motivates students to learn, increases their self-efficacy, enhances intrinsic motivation, addresses reading and writing difficulties and enhances computer skills (Gearhart and Osmundson, 2009; Alkharusi, 2008). Portfolio project assessment encourages students’ input in the process of learning, enhances cooperative learning; demonstrates mastery of skills and links theory to practice (Klenowski, 2002; Arter and Spandel, 1992; Dickinson and Mensinga, 2012). It has a set of rubrics which informs how to assess, and helps teachers enhance their knowledge and practice of assessment. It is based on teachers’ remarks and feedback rather than on marks and grades to suggest pedagogical intervention and help students improve their learning. (Ovando, 1994; Rowe, 2005; Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

Research in various countries especially in Australia has shown that portfolio assessment is a workable alternate assessment model called authentic assessment, compared to ‘outcome based education’ which is regarded as ‘a generally dreaded mastery learning interpretation’ (Brady, 2001:25); and paper-based assessment tool considered to be inadequate to evaluate student learning (Dickinson and Mensinga, 2012), including structured format tests (Arter and Spandel,
1992). Based on educational research and contextual realities, AKU-EB decided to introduce portfolio assessment keeping in view its merits as enumerated above as well as to initiate change in assessment practice prevailing in the country as discussed earlier.

**AKU-EB’s Middle School Assessment Framework**

AKU-EB’s Middle School Assessment Framework for Grades VI-VIII is aimed at providing coherent education to students aged 11-13. It encourages them to have a broad based subject study to think beyond the immediate confines of a subject, as it requires multidisciplinary approach. The emphasis in the framework is on developing certain basic competencies needed to succeed in life, enabling them to apply their knowledge in real world situations. The framework not only desires to enhance intellectual development of adolescents but also believes in harnessing the power of cooperative peer group learning, creativity and reflective thinking.

**Major Components of the Framework**

There are three major components of the framework

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**Schemes of Work**

Beginning from 2010, AKU-EB laid down the groundwork for middle school by developing schemes of work from year VI to VIII in five core subjects, English, Urdu, Social Studies, General Science and Mathematics. These schemes are designed to prepare students for an
appropriate and gradual transition to secondary school level and beyond. Each scheme of work elaborates and enriches the core themes and topics of the National Curriculum of Pakistan focusing on providing knowledge, skills and understanding that each student should develop at each year of the middle school level. The schemes contain at a level broader than syllabus outcomes, the nature (key concepts and content) and scope (breadth, depth and rigour) of learning in Years 6-8. The schemes of work place emphasis on the fundamental skills needed to succeed at and beyond school level, including literacy, numeracy, scientific investigation and cultural diversity. These schemes will enable students to develop logical reasoning skills, meaning making and learning cooperatively as well as individually.

These schemes were developed with a strong input from school teachers both from the public & private sectors to determine key learning outcomes for teaching and assessment purposes in the middle years. In developing the middle school assessment framework teachers were given the opportunity to recognize not only the product of learning but also the importance of assessing the process of learning with an aim to integrate and support both. During the two years of the Project, 43 teacher professional development workshops were organized in Karachi and Lahore with the participation of 704 teachers from 87 public and 94 private sector schools.

**Assessment Modes**

As noted above, the framework offers two modes of assessment: one through tailor made progress tests as requested by the registered schools and the other through the project portfolio assessment. This paper is focusing only on the project portfolio assessment.

A **Project portfolio assessment**

Encouraging students to develop and demonstrate their latent potentials through skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, decision making and inquiry, the project portfolio assessment is aligned with the active learning approach that AKU-EB seeks to promote in schools. For this end, the Board designs tasks at each of the three grades. A driving or core question is central to each task supplemented with learning goals and content based objectives based on the schemes of work. The tasks are designed to elicit personal qualities and competencies of students to promote interdisciplinary learning and understanding. These competences include social and problem solving skills; critical and innovative skills; ethical awareness as well as self-confidence and independent learning amongst others, aimed at providing evidence of personal growth.
B  Execution of tasks

The tasks are individual as well as group tasks. Schools select any six tasks out of the eight provided by the AKU-EB for each grade. The tasks provide details of their execution, inside as well as outside the classroom, highlight the role of teachers as facilitators, emphasise their constructive and effective feedback to be given to the students for improvement; and observing them in groups. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively and constructively and take responsibility for their tasks or projects. They are advised to collect their information from multiple sources, duly acknowledge them and save all the rough work they do and include that in their portfolios. The process of learning is emphasised (See Arter and Spandel, 1992; Klenowski, 2002; Klenowski et al, 2006; Dickinson and Mensinga, 2012).

C How would the portfolio assessment take place?

It is a classroom based assessment of students’ work which they will showcase in form of a portfolio as Arter and Spandel (1992) suggest that portfolio is “a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student’s efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s)” (p.36). Their progress is assessed through teacher assessment using a set of rubrics for each task provided by the Board. Students are asked to self-assess. Each student in the group is also assessed by his or her peers. The checklists for both self and peer assessment are also provided. There are no marks but remarks and feedback with a view to diagnose learning difficulties and supporting students to improve their learning. Students are asked to reflect what they learnt during the project work, how they contributed to the group work and the overall role each played in the group. Each student is required also to write a reflective note on the learning processes s/he went through. The rubrics and checklists have been revised in light of the feedback received during the pilot phase assessment meetings with the teachers. Having completed the tasks and school based assessment, schools’ representatives were asked to come in a cluster of four to six schools for a midterm assessment called ‘Agreement Trial Meetings’ organized and moderated by AKU-EB. The idea here is to provide an opportunity for a trial assessment to elucidate standards appropriate to the Pakistani schools. This additional engagement with the school representatives provided insight into their needs and understanding of the process and procedures which will inform the final design, assessment and show casing of the portfolio (See Tracey and Mensinga, 2012). The final showcasing and assessment of the selected portfolios based on the
criteria provided by the Board at the end of an academic year will be brought in by the MSAF school coordinator or its nominated person/s in similar meetings. They will defend the school based assessment and reach an agreement with the representatives of other schools in that cluster. If their counter parts agree with the school’s interpretation of EB’s rubrics, it will issue a personal achievement record (PAR). In case of any disagreement, AKU-EB’s decision will be final. EB will give the agreed upon assessment band to all the students of that group and class in their PARs. The agreement trials covertly provide continuing professional development for the participating teachers as they share ideas and develop communities of practice.

\[ D \quad \text{Expected Outcomes} \]

The AKU Examination Board envisages that through these learning processes students will have better opportunities to develop their potential, be able to understand and apply their subject content knowledge and even go beyond the boundaries of individual subject and be able to integrate their learning with other disciplines. Students have the ownership of their work that may boost their self-efficacy and motivational level for learning; they would develop confidence as individuals as well as group learners, be able to develop critical thinking and essential skills needed to succeed in life in knowledge society.

\[ \text{Taking Teachers into Partnership} \]

AKU-EB builds a relationship of partnership with its registered schools. Implementation of MSAF would be a daunting task without teacher preparation. To address this issue, AKU-EB provides a one day orientation to all its newly registered schools. It also offers teacher professional development workshops in the following areas to further build their capacities: social and emotional development of children at this stage of schooling; the management and assessment of working in groups; assessment for formative purposes; Inquiry and problem based learning; Integrating information technology with research and reporting, designing, assessing and showcasing project portfolios.

\[ \text{Issues and Challenges} \]

Since the framework was launched last year, it has been an evolving learning experience for both the Board as well as the schools with regard to its implementation. A series of meetings held
between schools’ administration and EB as well as with the teachers as part of orientation helped in fine tuning processes and procedures. As mentioned above the midterm agreement trial meetings held in various clusters across the country reveal that teachers need to distinguish between accomplishments of individual task and showcasing tasks in a portfolio. Following rubrics and assessing students accordingly would require more internalization and hands on practice. Through this midterm trial meetings it was observed that the teachers or coordinators of the schools were still emphasizing on the product rather than on the process of learning. The proper understanding and implementation would take some time. Feedback was given to them with suggestions as to how to follow the processes and the procedures and how to further assist students to improve their work. The final agreement trial meetings will reveal how the final portfolios have been prepared with evidence of students’ work and learning. An empirical study could shed more light on it.

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PERFORMANCE OF KYRGYZ STUDENTS IN INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION QUALITY

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Introduction

This paper examines quality of education in Kyrgyzstan, especially according to the international student assessments. The paper also explores the impact of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 and 2009 on the quality of secondary education in Kyrgyzstan. The results in both PISA competitions demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan’s 15-year old students performed extremely poorly, with Kyrgyzstan placing last among all participating countries. However, to date, there are no in-depth studies examining the results and the impact of the PISA test on the quality of secondary education in Kyrgyzstan. Employing a series of semi-structured interviews and document analysis conducted in 2009 and 2010, this paper describes what lessons were learned from the PISA experience, and whether the process had any significant impact on the quality of education in Kyrgyzstan.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international standardized test for comparative assessment of 15-year-old students’ skills. It is the product of collaboration between participating countries and economies through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and draws on leading international expertise to develop valid comparisons across different countries. In PISA 2006, 30 OECD member countries participated, as well as 27 partner countries and economies. In total, around 400,000 students were randomly selected to participate in PISA survey, representing about 20 million 15-year-old students from 57 participating countries.

Since the break-up of the USSR, the Kyrgyz public and education community raised the issue of the dramatic decline of education quality in the country. Overall funding of education declined, and teachers’ salaries lagged far behind any economic developments. There was a common feeling that education quality was deteriorating.

Students of Kyrgyzstan participated in PISA for the first time in 2006. The decision for Kyrgyzstan to participate in PISA was taken in 2005 by the Minister of Education and Science (MoES) of Kyrgyzstan with encouragement and financial support of the Rural Education Project.

8 According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2009–2010, there were 2,134 public schools in Kyrgyzstan, out of which 1,379 Kyrgyz-medium schools, 162 Russian-medium schools, 137 Uzbek-medium schools, and seven Tajik-medium schools, as well as 449 schools that had two or more languages of instruction. There were also 73 private schools.

9 The Rural Education Project (REP) of the World Bank aimed to improve learning and learning conditions in primary and secondary education in Kyrgyzstan. Apart from financially supporting Kyrgyzstan to participate in the comparative assessment of PISA, REP is also implementing a pilot project to introduce Formative and Summative Assessment in selected oblasts of Kyrgyzstan (Talas and Yssyk Kol). Under REP, teachers and school administrations are assessed based on their performance. This promotes the establishment of merit pay based on
of World Bank. According to a specialist in the MoES of Kyrgyzstan, “Everyone was excited to participate and see the results of PISA. It could be a tool to demonstrate the state of education in our country, which area of the education system is not performing well, and how bad or good the system is in comparison with other countries.” (April 10, 2010). The REP consultant added, “It was important to know not only where Kyrgyzstan stood, but why we stood where we stood, and what should be done so that we could move forward.”(Interview, April 3, 2010) The following objectives for Kyrgyzstan’s participation in PISA 2006 were identified by the MoES:

a) To assess the educational achievement of Kyrgyzstan’s students with a modern and international assessment tool;

b) To define what place Kyrgyzstan occupies in the world among the other countries on level of preparedness of 15 year old schoolchildren for adult life; and

c) To analyze the results of research and propose recommendations and ways of school development and improvement.

The PISA 2006 in Kyrgyzstan was conducted with financial support from the World Bank REP. Around 6000 students from 201 schools were randomly selected throughout the country. The test was conducted in Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek languages. In addition to the test, a survey was conducted with school children and school administrations.

**PISA 2006 Results in Kyrgyzstan**

The PISA 2006 results were announced in February of 2008 and they showed that 15-years old students of Kyrgyzstan performed extremely poorly. Among the 57 participating countries and economies, Kyrgyzstan took the last place. Among the participating countries and economies, Finland performed highest in science (563 points); while Chinese Taipei (549 points), Finland (548 points), Hong Kong-China (547 points), and Korea (547 points) performed highest in mathematics; and Korea performed highest in reading (556 points). Students of Kyrgyzstan achieved a mean score of 322 points in science, 311 points in mathematics and 285 points in reading. These are the lowest scores among the participating countries and economies. Only 13.6 % of Kyrgyzstan 15-year-old students were able to carry out a basic level of tasks in science, 11.7 % - in reading and 11.8 % in math. Over 85% could not score even the basic level of the PISA scale, meaning that a great majority of students could not demonstrate the science competencies that would enable them to participate actively in life situations related to science and technology (Report on PISA assessment results, 2007).

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10 The PISA 2006 assessment included 108 different questions at varying levels of difficulty. Usually several questions were posed about a single scientific problem described in a text or diagram. In many cases, students were required to construct a response in their own words to questions based on the text given. Sometimes, they had to explain their results or to show their thought processes. Each student was awarded a score based on the difficulty of questions that he or she could reliably perform. Scores were reported for each of the three science competencies, and for overall performance in science. The science performance scales have been constructed so that the average student score in OECD countries is 500 points. In PISA 2006, about two-thirds of students scored between 400 and 600 points (i.e., a standard deviation equal to 100 points). A score can be used to describe both the performance of a student and the difficulty of a question. Thus, for example, a student with a score of 650 can usually be expected to complete a question with a difficulty rating of 650, as well as questions with lower difficulty ratings.
Impact of the PISA 2006 Results in Kyrgyzstan

The PISA 2006 results impacted efforts to improve education quality and in some cases, the results catalyzed new action, in others they strengthened already existing efforts. Below are some examples of how the PISA results had a direct impact. Some of them were clearly illuminated by PISA and are being changed in response to PISA, while others are examples of government responses using PISA to lobby for more funds from international donors.

Curriculum Reform

The REP assessment specialist of the World Bank stated: “Our educational programmes do not meet the requirements or educational goals identified in the Education Development Strategy for 2011-2020. Our teachers mostly teach to develop rote memorization and retelling. But the PISA asks questions like ‘Why? How do you use this formula? How does this formula work in real life?’” (Interview, April 3, 2010). A specialist from CEATM added, “Our children cannot apply their knowledge in real life situations. For example, there was a question in the PISA test asking where you should put a torch in order to get maximum lighting in the room, which requires knowledge of physics. Most students from Kyrgyzstan could not answer the question correctly.”

The PISA 2006 report recommended reforms to align curriculum with international standards and focus on modern skills and competencies at higher proficiency levels (Briller, 2009). “Curriculum is at the heart of everything, and all other reform initiatives are linked to curriculum reform. So, we are trying to change our curriculum according to international standards” (REP Country Coordinator, Interview, April 3, 2010). Curricular reforms actually pre-dated PISA 2006. A new national curriculum framework had been spearheaded by the Soros Foundation, Kyrgyzstan prior to the PISA 2006.

At the same time, the Asian Development Bank’s the Second Education Project (SEP) had been developing subject-based curricula. This curricular reform also pre-dates PISA 2006. Subject based curricula for primary grades 1-4 have already been developed and approved, and subject curricula for grades 5-9 are yet to be approved. These curricula aim to develop students’ competencies and include innovative teaching methods to achieve their objectives (SEP Specialist, Interview, April 3, 2010).

While the PISA did not initiate these curriculum reforms, the results provided clarity on where Kyrgyzstan stood internationally, and curriculum developers use the lessons and recommendations of PISA reports in their work. After the PISA 2006 results were announced, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan strongly supported the curricular reforms,

11 Both curriculum reform initiatives by the Soros Foundation and SEP of ADB attempt to shift from content-based to outcome- or competency-based curriculum. Competency is defined as the integrated ability of a person to apply different elements of knowledge, skills, and abilities in certain situations of life. The main goal of this approach is for children to be able to use their school knowledge in real or close to real-life situations.

12 There is unfortunately disconnection between those who are developing new curricula and those who will ultimately implement it. It is, therefore, unclear how subject curricula developed by an international development agency will be accepted, approved, and implemented by the local education institution responsible for the education standards and content. Currently, there are no clear agreements between SEP and the Kyrgyz Academy of Education, a body under the Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for educational standards, content, and textbooks.
and pushed to expedite the process of curriculum development, which is just one step in a long process towards improving standards and quality in education.

**Shortage and Poor Quality of Textbooks**

Shortage and poor quality of textbooks was another reason most respondents agreed on for the poor PISA 2006 results. Insufficient quantities of textbooks and teaching materials, especially in Kyrgyz language, and the poor quality of available textbooks and teaching materials were commonly reported to lead to poor quality education. According to the National Statistics Committee (2008), only 17% of Kyrgyz-medium schools are supplied with about 50% of their textbooks, and only 18% with more than 80% of their textbooks. Over 30% of Russian-medium schools are supplied with less than 50% of their textbooks, and only 24% of Russian-medium schools are supplied with more than 80% of their textbooks.

Poor quality of textbooks is attributed to the textbook development and publication procedure. Currently, one institution, the Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE), is responsible for developing requirements for writing and approving textbooks. As a result, there is a conflict of interest, which has led to low quality of textbooks as a result of the monopolization of the textbook development. Textbooks are often developed by authors who also work at KAE and textbooks are approved by the specialists of KAE. Thus, according to the education official from Jalal-Abad, the textbooks these authors develop are usually overly theoretical and difficult for both teachers and students to use. Teachers-practitioners are mostly left out of curriculum development and textbook development procedures. Piloting of textbooks, necessary in principle, often does not exist nowadays and more importantly, the feedback needs to be sought from teachers practitioners about the quality of new textbooks and their relevance and suitability for their classrooms.

**Equity Issues**

The PISA 2006 results also highlighted existing issues related to equity and access to quality education. Students at private and elite urban schools of Kyrgyzstan showed significantly better performances in PISA 2006 than their rural counterparts. However, almost 70 percent of Kyrgyzstan’s population live in rural areas and 83 percent of schools are in rural settings (UNDP report, 2003). PISA 2006 confirmed the huge gap between quality of education offered at urban and rural schools. Unfortunately, this gap is increasing; some urban schools are becoming stronger, while the majority of rural and mountain schools are deteriorating. The large majority of rural, semi-rural and mountain schools still teach facts and memorization, but the PISA test assesses higher-order thinking and application of knowledge in real practical life. The following

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13 Since the break-up of the USSR, which (at least in theory) aspired egalitarian principles, the issues of equity have become less pronounced. Though Soviet education espoused equality and uniformity, many scholars argue that Soviet schooling was never really monolithic or egalitarian, contrary to official doctrine. Besides clear disparities between Russian- and non-Russian-medium schools, obvious status differences existed between urban and rural schools as well as between schools with an emphasis on English or Mathematics (Niyozov, 2001; also see Sutherland, 1999). Korth and Schulter (2003) observe that the Russian-medium schools continue offering better education than schools in Kyrgyz and other local languages. The Russian schools continue to enjoy high prestige and are attended by children of different linguistic backgrounds, while the Kyrgyz schools are attended exclusively by Kyrgyz children (Korth & Schulter, 2003).
table shows the difference students’ PISA 2006 performance in science according to the school location (urban and rural) in several selected countries.

**Figure 17**  Mean science performance by school location, PISA 2006


The table shows that students of Kyrgyzstan from rural schools scored 300 only, while Bishkek students scored 430, and the difference between them is 130, showing the huge disparity in the quality of education in them.

**Results of PISA 2009**

In 2009, Kyrgyzstan’s students participated in PISA for the second time. This time, 4986 fifteen year old students from 173 educational institutions took part in the test, and they proportionally represented urban and rural settings. The students of Kyrgyzstan once again took the last place among all the participating countries and economies. In Kyrgyzstan, 83.2% percent of students fell below the minimal standard (Level 2) in reading, 86.6% in mathematics and 82% in science. Although, there have been some improvements in the results of students from Kyrgyzstan from PISA 2006 to PISA 2009. Thus, in reading the mean score improved from 285 to 313, while in mathematics it changed from 311 to 330 and in science from 322 to 330. Also, if 11.8% of the students reached minimal standard in reading in 2006, then 16.6% reached in 2009, in mathematics, 10.6% reached minimal standard in 2006 and 13.1% in 2009, and in science 13.6% reached minimal standard in 2006 and 18.3% in 2009. However, these improvements are often overshadowed by the last places in PISA 2006 and PISA 2009. Thus, Kyrgyzstan made a decision not to participate in PISA 2012.
Analysis and Discussion

Reforms and set-backs following the PISA 2006 are impacted by the broader context. There is also a lack of strong local capacity of education experts and policy makers. Reforms are implemented sporadically and ad hoc with different planning agencies and implementing bodies that do not communicate. Most reform initiatives and documents are conceptualized and designed primarily by international agencies. “Education system reforms have been driven primarily by the agendas and procedures of the funding and technical assistance agencies” with the result that reforms are imposed externally rather than initiated internally (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009, p. 10). Since independence, Kyrgyzstan has been subject to a myriad of international education assistance projects including international agencies, private foundations and philanthropists and international non-governmental organizations. These international organizations are now assisting the Ministry of Education to conduct major education reform, using the results and lessons learned from the PISA 2006. Reform has been initiated in a range of areas including curricular reforms, introduction of standards and or outcome-based education, student-centered learning, decentralization of education finance and governance, and standardization of student assessment.

While the contributions of the donor agencies are praiseworthy and much needed, often there is dissonance between the discourse of donors and the local needs. It is still unclear whether the initiatives of donor agencies truly reflect local needs and bring about sustainable improvements.

Besides, different components of education, such as curriculum framework, subject curriculum, assessment, teacher development, textbook development are being worked on by different agencies who work often with little or no communication. There is no effective coordination between all the international and national institutions working on educational sector.

There is often lack of systematic, well-coordinated effort (REP Assessment Specialist, April 3, 2010). On the contrary, there is often overlap and duplication. Most reform initiatives are not institutionalized, indicating a lack of sustainability (Steiner-Khamsi et al, 2007). Systemic change on education system is only possible when all stakeholders and international organizations coordinate their activities with each other and when the initiatives focus on strengthening institutionalization and sustainability.

Reference


14 Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2009, p.60) observe that education reforms are often imposed from outside or voluntarily borrowed out of fear of falling behind internationally. Thus, from early 1990s, different international agencies (UN, World Bank, IMF, EBRD, ADB, OSCE), foreign agencies (USAID, JICA, CIDA, TOCA, GTZ, DANIDA), private foundations and philanthropists (OSI, Soros Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation) and international non-governmental organizations (Save the children, Mercy Corps, Academy of Educational Development, CARE) have been working actively in the field of education.

15 It is puzzling for us why the term “pilot” is used and often misused in donor’s involvement, because most “pilot projects” finish as their term ends, and nothing is normally left behind.
CEATM, “The Programme for International Student Assessment”,


AN EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LEARNERS' READING PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The paper addresses the effectiveness of on-going instruction and the manner in which reading was taught to Grade 10 EFL learners in selected secondary schools in Pakistan. Secondly, it also reports how reading assessment practices were employed by secondary school teachers. Finally, investigated the extent to which the current reading instruction prepares Grade 10 EFL learners for the Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT). Keeping in view the aforesaid issues, multiple case study approach was employed. To do so, three private non-elitist secondary schools from one city in Pakistan were selected. The total number of student respondents was one hundred and sixteen (N=116). There were thirty-five male (n=35) and eighty-one female (n=81) students’ respondents who participated in this study. In addition, two male and one female teacher respondent had also participated. In this study, eight reading instruction classes in each school were observed. The total number of observations was twenty-four in three selected secondary schools. From the results it was found that teachers explained and paraphrased the text to the learners and did not use reading instruction strategies to assist learners in developing their reading and higher-order skills. Besides, teachers never assessed learners on the domains of main idea retrieval, fact and opinion, scanning information, compare and contrast and topic sentence identification reading competency tasks. The quantitative findings yielded from Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT) revealed that Grade 10 EFL learners were less proficient on the domains of ‘literal’, ‘inferential’ and ‘critical comprehension’.

Key words: reading instruction, assessment practices, DCAT, reading performance, EFL learners

Introduction

The key contributory factor in the national development of any country is the quality of its education. Ministry of Education (henceforth, MoE) (2005) in a report states that by monitoring learners’ achievements and their evaluation may improve the quality as well as the national development of the country that suffers both on the account of quality and quantity. Raphael and Au (2005) observe that “Promoting high levels literacy for all children is a core responsibility for today’s teachers” (p.206) and “Learning to read is one of the greatest accomplishments in childhood because it is the foundation for learning and academic achievement” (Paris, 2005, p.184). The low quality of education, poor assessment techniques, emphasis on traditional learning, and teacher-directed instruction is the usual practice in most schools. Thus, the conditions under which English is taught are not conducive to teaching and learning the language in Pakistan (Arif, 1995; Warsi, 2004; Christie & Afzaal, 2005).
Statement of the Problem

As discussed among researchers and educationists in Pakistan the content-centred approach of teaching of reading with emphasis on rote learning in Pakistan’s English language classroom impedes learning. It is argued among educationists and researchers such as (Warsi, 2004; Dilshad, 2006; Ahmed-Khurram, 2007; Shamim, 2008; Iqbal, Azam & Abiodullah, 2009; Shah & Saleem, 2010) that learners’ comprehension capability is not developed due to poor assessment and teaching in classrooms. To date, the correlation between reading instruction in Pakistani secondary schools and students’ reading performance has not been empirically investigated. Having discussed reading instruction and assessment practices in past and current scenario this study primarily intends to investigate the extent to which the current reading instruction prepares Grade 10 EFL learners for the standardized Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT); secondly, to formatively evaluate the current reading instruction and to measure Grade 10 EFL learners’ reading performance in selected schools. Keeping these variables and based on the aforementioned discourse, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the current reading instruction prepare Grade 10 EFL learners for the Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT)?

2. How is reading taught to Grade 10 EFL learners in selected secondary schools in Pakistan?

3. What reading assessment practices do secondary school teachers employ to assess Grade 10 EFL learners’ reading comprehension?

The Current Study

Since, this study required an in-depth, careful and systematic search to seek the answers of the aforementioned research questions. Consequently, a qualitative method i.e. case study was found to be the most appropriate and systematic approach in order to determine the objectives of the present study. This case study utilized multiple sources i.e. both qualitative and quantitative means such as, observation of ongoing reading instruction sessions, test-data, and interviews.

Method

Population and Sample of the Study

In this study three private non elitist schools were selected. School one had four sections of grade ten; however as a case, only one section (class) of grade ten was investigated wherein there were total forty-five students, n = 45 enrolled. Amongst, twenty-four were male and twenty-one were female students. The second school also had four sections of grade ten and there were total twenty-eight students, n = 28 enrolled in this class. Amongst, eleven were male and seventeen were female students. Finally, the third school had nine sections of grade ten; and similar to school 1 and school 2, in this school only one section as a case was investigated. In this section there were total forty-three students, n = 43 enrolled. All forty-three students were female. The rationale of selecting three schools was kept into consideration as a triangulation method of the
test data. Besides, Three teachers have also participated in this study among two were male and one was a female teacher.

Table 1.1: Demographic Factors of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Years</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ L1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindhi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Habit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 Hours/week</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 Hours/week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 Hours/week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Khan, 2011, p. 133)

Research Instruments

In this study both quantitative and qualitative instruments were employed, for instance, Teachers’ Reading Comprehension Test (TRCT) prepared by teachers and Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT) prepared by a researcher, verbatim transcriptions of reading instructions, semi-structured, and focus group interviews. The purpose of the study and its objectives were discussed among teachers of the three selected schools prior to commencement of the new academic session of Grade 10. Teachers were asked to prepare their reading comprehension tests. The foremost objective of the study was to ascertain the existing reading instruction’s effectiveness to ascertain learners’ reading performance (research question 1). Consequently, in order to know the on-going reading instruction in three selected schools observation protocol was employed. In order to determine current reading instruction practices, and assessment methods, interview technique was employed to further cross-validate the data. In this study, another method of interviewing called focus group was also carried out.

Data Analysis and Findings

In order to analyze the quantitative data SPSS version 16.0 was used to carry out comprehensive analysis of the collected data. To do so, means, central tendency and standard deviations of the variables were computed, whereas, frequencies of the variables in terms of numbers and percentages were also analysed. Primarily, descriptive statistics was carried out to ascertain frequencies, mean, standard deviation and correlation of the two sets of test data i.e. TRCT and DCAT. The test data yielded from TRCT and DCAT was to ascertain students’ reading
performance the entire raw test data was keyed and later converted into percentages for its uniformity and standardization. The rationale for conversion was due to disparity among teachers’ and researcher’s total marks for each independent test. After conversion into percentages this test data then analyzed using correlation, simple regression and descriptive statistics. A correlation analysis was performed to see if there is a linear relationship between total scores (in %) of the N = 116 Grade 10 EFL learners in the two tests i.e. TRCT and DCAT. In addition, frequency analysis of reading competency tasks was performed such as; main idea retrieval, scanning information, fact and opinion recognition, topic sentence retrieval, and compare and contrast given in DCAT. Since the present study used a mix paradigm of data collection, consequently, macro analysis of qualitative data was employed. The procedures for analyzing qualitative data such as, interviews and observations were based on the guidelines suggested by Babbie (2005) wherein the collected data was first recorded, sorted out as segments, integrated and finally analysed. In the process of classroom observation, ongoing reading instruction was observed (research question 1). For this reason the whole session of about 30-35 minutes was recorded and later transcribed with a help of transcription software namely, Express Scribe version 4.23 for thematic analysis of each school. In the existing English course textbook there were total 13 chapters/lessons of prose section from which eight lessons were chosen randomly for observation which was followed in three selected schools.

To conclude how reading instruction is employed in School 1, School 2, and School 3 it is revealed that reading is taught through the lecture method by explaining the entire text to learners. No strategies have been taught to the learners to help them become independent readers. Secondly, the findings show that in the reading class teachers explained and paraphrased the text which makes learners barely use their own understanding and stimulate their critical thinking skills. This gives learners no choice but to accept whatever the teacher says without applying high order thinking skills. From the qualitative data it was also revealed that the teachers never taught learners how to interpret a text by applying critical thinking. Also, they did not train learners about how to extract salient points for summarizing a text nor did they give any extended reading material, (e.g. handouts) for their reading comprehension.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The foremost objective of the study was to investigate how far does the current reading instruction prepare Grade 10 EFL learners to answer questions in Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool. It is evident from the findings that significantly very few Grade 10 EFL learners performed well in main idea retrieval, topic sentence identification, scanning information, compare and contrast and fact and opinion identification reading competency tasks. It is also clear that very few Grade 10 EFL learners performed well in literal, inferential and critical comprehension questions. In this lieu, Harris and Sipay (1980) state that “One of the most valuable comprehension skills is the ability to find the main idea or central thought in what one reads” (p.73). These results suggest that the existing reading instruction does not affect significantly on learners’ aforesaid reading competency tasks. In order to improve comprehension skills, Lubliner (2004) observes that, “… instructional intervention based on self-generated, main-ideas questioning offers practical and effective support for students” (p.437). Engstrom (2005) also emphasizes that, “Student’s reading skills and capabilities significantly affect what they can accomplish when faced with the complex demands of academic reading” (p.39).
The current findings revealed that assessment techniques employed by secondary school teachers for measuring students’ reading performance were not diverse in reading comprehension contexts. However, there are various methods to check comprehension such as, multiple-choice, multiple true-false, short-answer, open-ended, cloze, gap-filling, c-test, cloze-else, free-recall, summary, gapped summary, information-transfer, editing test technique and so on (Alderson, 1996; 2000). There are various methods for testing reading comprehension, whereby different skill can be tested. However, Alderson (1996; 2000) argues that there is no best method for testing reading and no single method can measure all skills in one particular test. In view of Weir (1990; 1993), Cohen (1998), Ur (1996) and Hughes (2003) multiple-choice question is a common device used in testing text comprehension. The findings of the current study lead to a number of pedagogical implications and suggestions in terms of reading and assessment, so as to develop EFL/ESL learners’ reading performance. In Pakistani secondary schools’ matriculation context for instance, discrete point approach of testing is not being practiced to examine learners’ reading performance. Consequently, it is hoped that with the findings of this study, stakeholders such as teachers, curriculum designers, material developers, test constructors, and school principals can gain insights to improve teaching and learning. The following are several implications and recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

Notwithstanding this vision, it is evident from the study’s findings that when these learners were tested on high order skills in DCAT they did not outperform. In conclusion, it is suggested that in order to develop learners’ reading comprehension, secondary school teachers of EFL or ESL must foster and augment their reading instruction through constructivist approach. Schools which are the learning foundation for learners should adopt collaborative strategic reading approach and equip learners with essential reading skills. If EFL/ESL learners at the age of 14-15 are prepared according to the aforesaid perspective they will not only expect to become proficient and skilled readers at the secondary level but will be skillful and capable to cope up with their pre-university academic reading materials.

References


ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE B.ED. (HONORS) AND ADE PROGRAMS IN THE PUNJAB

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Abstract

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the gaps by examining the assessment instruments used in the universities as well as their affiliated colleges in the Punjab province. Specifically it seeks to examine the alignment between the proposed curriculum objectives and the content and cognitive traits being assessed by formal assessment. Bloom’s taxonomy will be taken as standard for comparison in evaluation of assessment tools. It will also document teacher educators’ rationale for the preferences they make in development of various assessment tools. Their choices are examined against the backdrop of existing institutional procedures/mechanisms related to formal assessments of the prospective teachers. The study explored the ways in which the conflicting requirements shape the assessment practices of the teacher educators. Therefore, the policy makers are often frustrated when the pre-service programs fail at achieving the desired transformation in the perspectives of the prospective teachers from the more traditional to the learner-centered. The population of the study included universities in the Punjab. There are four universities: FJWU, PU, BZU and UOE. BZU is offering only B.Ed Programs, and is not offering ADE so it is not included in the sample. FJWU is also not included in the sample as there are no affiliated colleges with FJWU and also to avoid biasness on the part of researchers. Therefore the study focused only on the two Universities i.e., PU and UOE and their affiliated colleges. For the purpose of data collection, all the cities where the institutions (Universities and affiliated colleges) are located were visited. The interview data revealed dissatisfaction of the teacher educators with the present assessment system. The document analysis presented a lack of alignment between the proposed curriculum objectives and the content and cognitive traits being assessed through formal assessment practices.

Key words: Assessment Practices, Blooms Taxonomy, Teacher Educators, B.Ed (Hons), Associate Degree in Education (ADE). Semi-structured Interviews (SSIs)

Introduction

Assessments are an essential component of instructional process. The learner centered, dynamic, and activity based learning approaches have led to an alternative set of assessment practices, which are different from traditional paper and pencil approaches for assessing student outcomes (Anderson, 1998; Shepard, 2000; Wiggins, 1989).

Typically the studies of assessment practices have been conducted to determine the extent to which the assessment practices are aligned with the approaches toward learning and teaching embedded in the curriculum and instruction (Biggs, 1996; Brownstein, Allan, Ezrailson, Hagevik, Shane, & Veal., 2009; Martone & Sireci, 2009). While a literature research reveals some studies done on instructional practices in Pakistani schools (Naeemullah, 2010; UNESCO,
Background and Purpose of the Study
The National Education Policy of 2009 states, that in order to improve the overall quality of education in Pakistan, the standard of teacher education must be raised. Amongst its various proposals, the policy calls for reforms in pre-service training and standardization of professional qualifications.

A Bachelors Degree, with a B.Ed., shall be the minimum requirement for teaching at the elementary level. A Masters level for the secondary and higher secondary, with a B.Ed., shall be ensured by 2018. PTC and CT shall be phased out” – (National Educational Policy 2009)

The degree is designed to be offered in eight semesters (four semesters for the ADE). The assessment system has been changed somewhat to respond to the requirements of the new programs. For example, the Punjab University has reduced the weight of final summative examination from 100% to 40 %. Out of the remaining 60%, 35% weight is given to the midterm examination, and only 25 % remain with the course instructors. This distribution changes arbitrarily to 80% for a summative end-of-the-term examination and 20% at the discretion of course instructor in the affiliated colleges in Punjab. While we are making changes in the curricula and instruction of the new teacher education programs, we do not know if the assessment instruments support such changes. The purpose of this study was to fill this gap by examining the assessment instruments used in the universities as well as their affiliated colleges in the Punjab.

Research Questions
On the basis of review of related literature, two main questions along with some sub questions formulated as follows:

1. What is the degree of alignment between the content and cognitive traits embedded in the course objectives and those being assessed by the formal assessment activities in B.Ed (Honors) and ADE Programs in the Punjab?
   a. What content and cognitive traits are embedded in the course objectives of the pre-service teacher preparation courses?
   b. What content and cognitive traits are assessed in various assessment instruments administered in a typical course in B. ED (Honors) and ADE teachers’ training courses in the Punjab?

2. How do teacher educators prepare the assessment instruments? This question aimed to develop deep insights about the methods, materials, and other supports that teacher educators use to prepare the assessment instruments.

Methodology
This study used a qualitative approach.
Data Collection Procedure

The revised version of Bloom’s taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) was used as rubric to evaluate the alignment of assessment tools with the learning outcomes.

The study was conducted in four stages.

Stage-1

The first stage involved the following steps:

1. Documentation and review of the institutional policies of all the institutions offering B.Ed. (Honors) and ADE programs in the Province of Punjab.
2. Selection of two courses offered in both B.Ed. (Honors) and ADE programs, namely “Child Development” and “General Methods of Teaching” whose content and cognitive traits have been fully specified through the development of syllabi as well as accompanied course guides.
3. Development of an inventory of content and cognitive traits embedded in the documents of selected courses. This inventory was used to develop a description of aligned assessment practices.

Stage-2

The work in this stage consisted of collection and analysis of data regarding formal assessment practices.

Stage-3

Finally, to develop an in-depth understanding of the processes involved in the development of the instruments we conducted SSI with a sample of teacher educators (N=18) drawn from the population of teacher educators teaching the selected courses.

The ongoing semester 2012 was the focus of this study. The universities and affiliated colleges in Punjab following the B.Ed. (Honors) program were selected as the sample. They were approached for collecting assignments, mid-term and final-term exam papers following the ethical considerations of permission and support letters. They were approached again for SSI at a later stage.

The Analytic Procedure

In response to the two different but closely related questions, the analytic procedure is described in two parts as follows:

Document Analysis of Assessment Instruments and Content Outlines (Child Development and General Methods of Teaching)

The basic unit of analysis in response to the first question of the research was the assessment instruments. The scheme of analysis consists of developing structured codes based on the inventory of content and cognitive expectations embedded in the course documents of the
selected courses. A comparative analysis was finally rendered to estimate the degree of alignment between the curriculum and assessment practices of the selected courses with that of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

The analysis of the course outline (Child Development)
The document analysis of the course outline of “Child Development” revealed that the intended learning outcomes of the said course are constructed in accordance with all levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. There were six units in the course document and each unit has separately mentioned intended learning outcomes. The six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy have given proper weight in all units of the course.

The analysis of the assessment instruments (Child Development)
The mid-term and final papers that were collected from all sample institutions of the course “Child Development” were analyzed for the study purpose. The document analysis revealed that 80% items of the instruments were constructed in accordance with the first three levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The remaining 20% items were also confined mainly to analysis level.

The Degree of Alignment between the Curriculum and Assessment Practices (Child Development)
The analysis presented a weak alignment between the course objectives and assessment practices. While formulating course objectives, all levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy were given proper weight, whereas in the construction of assessment practices, only first three levels were approached. This resulted in poor assessment of higher order thinking of the students.

The analysis of the course outline (General Methods of Teaching)
The document analysis of the course outline of “General Methods of Teaching” exposed that all six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy were given proper weight while formulating the intended learning outcomes of the said course. The course of “General Methods of Teaching” was consisted of seven units. The intended learning outcomes revealed that Bloom’s Taxonomy was used as guideline while planning course objectives.

The analysis of the assessment instruments (General Methods of Teaching)
The mid-term and final papers of the course “General Methods of Teaching” were analyzed to see their degree of alignment with course objectives and Bloom’s Taxonomy. The document analysis revealed that the instruments were not aligned with the course objectives. The comparison of the documents showed that 85% items of the instruments were constructed in accordance with the first three levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The remaining 15% items were approached to higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
The Degree of Alignment between the Curriculum and Assessment Practices (General Methods of Teaching)

The analysis of the assessment instruments and course outline revealed that while constructing assessments, the course objectives are not given proper weight. As the objectives were formulated to measure students’ abilities related to all six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, but the document analysis of assessment instruments showed that Bloom’s Taxonomy was not considered as rubric during their construction process.

The Analysis of Interview Transcripts of Teacher Educators

Several themes emerged from the interviews of teacher educators. These themes were then grouped together into larger perspectives that provide answer to the qualitative research question (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The main perspectives that came out as a result of analysis are as follows:

Graded Activities

The participants were asked about the graded activities in their ADE programs. Following are the activities which have been used to assess students.

- Mid Term paper
- Final Paper
- School based task
- Home Assignments
- Presentation
- Projects
- Portfolio
- Class Participation
- Class quiz
- Reflective journal

Criteria for marks Allocation for Formative & Summative Assessments

Participants belonged to university 1 expressed that they assigned different percentage for the activities for instance there is total marks of 100% out of this 20% allotted to mid-term and 80% is for final term so there is different division of 20%.

Written test =10%
Assignment =5%
Presentation=3%
Attendance=2%

Whereas the participants belonged to university 2 revealed that they have different criteria for marks allocation for formative and summative assessments as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid Term</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Portfolio 10%
Class Participation 10%

**Concept of Rubrics**

Concept of Rubrics was clear to most of the participants. Misconception in usage of rubrics was also there i.e. they perceived marks division for different parts of questions as rubrics. Division of rubrics was done in term of content, handwriting, relevant material & references.

Most of the instructors expressed that they share rubrics with students. However, this sharing was only for portfolio.

At the same time, some participants revealed that the activities or assignments are not designed in the line of rubrics nor are shared with the students in written form but in verbal form.

**Measurement of Student Ability**

The participants expressed that through role play they try to analyze the students. They evaluate self-expression, problem solving skills, communication. Through presentations they judge students’ exploration of innovative ideas. Through daily routine activities they analyze and evaluate the students such as reading to them, talking with them singing songs, they take attention weather the students participate in daily routine activities.

Similarly the participant teachers revealed that they mainly focus their instruction upon the exam point of view because the available time, they have to complete the syllabus is very short and, the university give them only 20% of the total marks for mid-term exam, projects, assignments and class participation . So, their intention is only that their students pass the final exam and they always worried about how to prepare the students for the exam.

**Freedom of Academic Sharing**

Participants told that they have the freedom of sharing their experiences with colleagues and this interaction between instructors is mainly for the development of assessments tools. Participants further expressed that their discussions with faculty members are focused on the development of assessment techniques and arranging resource material.

**Satisfaction level**

Most of the participants were not satisfied with marks criteria. Some were expressed their dissatisfaction in term of teacher workload and student-teacher ratio.

Participants complained that they are not provided any training and workshop regarding their subjects. They do not avail any conveyance allowance when coming during summer vacations. Participants further expressed that there is no any special incentive, there is no any proper plan of exam and no any schedule for final exam.

The teacher Ms R.C was also complained that:

> We have no any advance material to teach the students in practical way so that’s why I am not satisfied with the current system of ADE program.

300
Problems encountered during instructional process

Participants encountered a number of problems such as

- Pattern has not been given by the university about the percentage of marks in objective as well as subjective.
- Unavailability of allied material
- No reference books available /allied material if available on web links was outdated.
- Lack of guidance of parents
- Lack of clear policy of University

Suggestions for Improvement

Participants proposed that the instructors should be given an opportunity of:

- Academics sharing
- Classroom problems
- Queries to be shared concerned with student progress
- Meeting at the end of the semester to set the criteria of rubrics for assessments practices.
- Frequent meetings
- For final assessment paper development senior faculty members should be consulted.
- At least 50% marks to be allocated for the program to the affiliated colleges.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study is an exploration of the formal assessment practices followed by the teacher educators in the revised pre-service programs. The qualitative analysis was being done with all data and the cumulative findings consisted of the integrated findings of both parts of the study.

The document analysis presented a lack of alignment between the proposed curriculum objectives and the content and cognitive traits being assessed through formal assessment practices. The assessment practices do not properly aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the sample courses. The analysis also revealed that the assessment practices of B.Ed (Hons) and ADE programs were not in accordance with the Bloom’s Taxonomy and main part of these assessments were consisted of its first three levels.

The analysis of the interview data revealed dissatisfaction of the teacher educators with the practicing assessment system of B.Ed (Hons) and ADE programs. Participants were of the view that the new system is not clearly defined. They need more and more improvement specially in assessment practices and interaction with the teachers through different workshops and conducting training, so that they can be able to improve the assessment practice through workshops and share their experiences of assessment practices through group activities.

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FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT - AN APPROACH TO OPTIMIZE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Saima Abedi, ESL Teacher

Abstract
In recent years, formative assessment has received extensive focus of researchers and educators as an approach to dynamic teaching and learning. Formative Assessment empowers students and teachers by engaging them into a lifelong learning process.

Introduction
This paper focuses on the effectiveness of formative assessment in teaching-learning process. It underpins how formative assessment serves as a tool to enhance learning skills and how the application of formative assessment directly results in noticeable changes in instructional outcomes and improved pedagogical practices.

The paper also discusses the essential elements of the formative assessment practice that facilitate the mentors to increase their capacity to learn and develop high quality formative assessment for their students. As these key factors foster learning atmosphere, strengthen teacher-learner bond and boost students’ participation in classroom therefore, they ensure improvement in students’ achievement.

The paper then proceeds to suggest practical learner-centred assessment strategies, which help pupils to achieve success through their own efforts. These techniques will motivate students; develop them as independent learners and assist teachers in analyzing students’ understanding.

Research
A survey was conducted to study the inclination of teachers towards the use of formative assessment as a tool of learning. In this regard, twenty mentors of various institutes, teaching different subjects participated by filling a questionnaire (Appendix 1). These teachers asserted to know the importance of formative assessment. They use a variety of teaching methodologies, assess students’ understanding and respond to students’ performance.

The analysis of data attained from questionnaire revealed that 75% teachers grade or mark students’ work once a week, whereas 25% do it once in a month. 60% instructors provide timely feedback to the students on every task. However, 35% give it once a week and after a few days. It is also noticed that the major reason for not providing regular feedback or untimely feedback to the students is time constraint.

As far as the type of language for the feedback is concerned, 35% teachers use professional language while 30% keep it either informal or critical. Only 5% instructors prefer user friendly language. Many teachers (45%) start their comments by identification of strengths whereas the others directly commence by presenting facts. 40% mentors think mentioning of clear expectation as the foremost characteristics of the feedback whereas, rest of the mentors are inclined towards description of student’s specific behaviour.
For majority of the teachers (80%), ‘encouragement to try’ is the most significant advantage of effective feedback while only 20% consider shaping behaviour an important benefit. Lastly, 40% mentors find that unclear criticism and impractical suggestions mar the effectiveness of feedback greatly and for the remaining 20% extensive praise negatively influences the efficacy of feedback.

When the students were interviewed (Appendix 2) about the impact of feedback on their performance, following responses were given:

Maleeha said, “I used to have examination fear and could not do well; however, when my teacher started taking quiz in the class; I felt relieved and performed better. Her constant assistance and recommendation helped me to get rid of my fright and now I have become confident.”

Javeria said, “I never knew that I was good at arts until I assisted my teacher in making a banner for a class competition. She told me that I have that flair. By taking her advices, I have improved my fine arts skills, which really means a lot to me.”

Faiza said, “Once I submitted my biology project and I was not sure if I had displayed it properly. When I showed it to my teacher, she gave a very positive response and praised me for my efforts. Then she gave me some tips to make it better. I was very happy and gained self confidence. By following teacher’s tips, I did well and my project was liked by everyone.”

**Discussion**

The survey revealed that most of the teachers affirm to understand the value of formative assessment therefore; they mark or grade students’ work once a week only and prefer to provide feedback more frequently and immediately. In this connection, the mathematics and language teachers are found more concerned to support and correct students at every step to minimize mistakes. However, the improvement in the students is slow and desired results have not been achieved due to limited awareness of teachers about formative assessments and its benefits.

With great concern, it was noticed that inappropriate language is used by most of the teachers that may reduce the efficacy of feedback. The teachers either use specialized language (use of jargons e.g syntax error) that is very difficult to understand or informal language that may not be taken seriously by the students. In the same way, use of disrespectful or threatening language too fails to serve the purpose. The teachers should adopt user friendly or plain language through which the message is conveyed to the students so that they can follow teachers’ recommendations promptly.

As far as beginning of the feedback is concerned, teachers practice the right method of identification of positive in students’ work. However, they should more focus on encouragement of a change in pupils’ behaviour through their feedback.

Through the results of questionnaire, it can be concluded that teachers use formative assessment to some extent only. To maximize the impact of formative assessment and students’ achievements, the role of students and mentors should be clearly identified and practised.

The interviews of students noticeably exhibit that formative assessment has a powerful impact on students’ learning. The students are quite comfortable when assessed formatively as it boosts confidence, reduces stress and reveals their hidden abilities.
However, involvement of students, right from the planning of lesson till the track of progress, is of pivotal importance. Besides using variety of teaching methodologies to provide feedback, teachers should also consider other elements of formative assessment to promote learning and attain desired results.

**What is Formative Assessment?**

Black and Wiliam (1998) define formative assessment as “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged”.

Popham (2008) identifies formative assessment as a planned process during which the teacher or students use assessment-based evidence to adjust ongoing learning and instruction.

Cowie and Bell (1999) reinforces the idea of formative assessment as ‘The process used by teachers to recognise, and respond to, student learning in order to enhance that learning, during learning’.

According to Black (1995) Formative assessment must be pursued for its main purpose of feedback into the learning processes; it can also produce information, which can be used to meet summative purposes.

**Benefits of Formative Assessment**

Formative Assessment is beneficial for both the instructor and students. They promote learning and provide valuable information to be used as feedback, by teachers and learners that increase students’ achievement. Teachers are able to determine learner’s knowledge and can modify their instructional goals to meet the needs of learners. Furthermore, the flexibility of formative assessment allows the instructors to tailor lesson plan and assessment according to the interest of learners.

Formative Assessments are easy to conduct and can be generalized or specific. The results of the assessments can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of students’ comprehension and evaluate teachers’ performance. Teachers can inform learners about their progress to aid them in goal setting for further improvement.

Not only teachers but students’ are equally benefitted as formative assessments curtail down the stress of tests or examination fear, promote learners’ anatomy and underpin confidence plus hope for improvement. Being independent learners, pupils are equipped with precious lifetime skills such as self reliance, self-assessment and self-reflection.

**Elements of Formative Assessment**

**Development of Clear Learning Goals and Monitoring Students Progress**

Teachers should be clear about the learning goals and focus more on learning than activities to be conducted. Involvement of students in setting goals can maximise learning, as learners can predict their apprehensions and share their weak areas. Teachers, in this way, can anticipate problems and suggest solutions.
In addition, teachers should design progress indicators of learning objectives and communicate them to the students. In such a way, both teachers and students can easily monitor the progress during the lesson. With clear goal and progress indicators, teachers can successfully collect learning evidences. In this regard, teachers should be very observant to note down any signs of progress that is evident during the lesson.

Teachers should assess and evaluate students’ progress individually than comparison of learners’ abilities with classmates as research supports the idea that tracking a student’s progress toward objective learning goals is more effective than is comparison with peers’ progress (Cameron and Pierce, 1994; Kluger and DeNisi, 1996; Heckhausen, 1989; and Rheinberg and Krug, 1999).

**Establishment of Conducive Classroom Climate**

For Formative Assessment, it is inevitable to have a positive class environment, a student centred class, in which there are ample opportunities for the students to work collaboratively. According to Kagan (1999), “Cooperative learning is associated with enhanced internal sense of control; students feel more like origins than pawns. They take more initiative and feel more responsible for the outcomes they receive.”

There should also be a culture of mutual respect and understanding in the classroom and students should share power and responsibility with the teacher. Furthermore, it should cultivate a safe environment for the learners to own up their problems and seek for help.

**Use of Diverse Instruction Methods**

The teacher should capture students’ attention right from the beginning of lesson through inducement or warm up in order to activate learners’ prior knowledge and consolidate their skills. As Bruner (1996) and Bransford et al. (1999) recognised that the knowledge and experiences children bring to school shape their learning experiences.

Moreover, there should be a multitude of engaging yet relevant and productive activities adjusted in the lesson plan to meet learners’ need and achieve instructional goal successfully. This diversity of instruction methods can provide multiple of chances to the students to heighten confidence and monitor their own learning. Likewise, teacher will also get numerous options to analyse students’ performances at different stages of the lesson.

**Feedback**

Formative Assessment is a tool that aids the teachers to monitor students’ performance in a safe environment, using an effective feedback, which reflects their progress, and suggests ways of improvement. Feedback is an essential part of formative assessment and Sadler (1989) was perhaps the first to emphasize the necessity of feedback.

Not only the teachers but peers should also provide constructive feedback so that the learner can develop their skills further. The feedback should be goal referenced and given timely to the students. Moreover, feedback should identify the positive, present the facts and suggest ways for students’ further development. Teachers and peers need to know that extensive praise, unclear criticism and impractical suggestions mar the effectiveness of feedback.
The following feedback sandwich has been used in class and proved to be effective in providing a balanced teacher and peer feedback to the learners.

The Feedback Sandwich

Adoption of Different Ways to Evaluate Learners’ Progress

Use of variety of formative assessment techniques facilitates the instructors and learners alike. Students, who cannot excel in one task, may perform well in other mode of assessment. In such a way, equal opportunity will be given to pupils, possessing different learning style, to exhibit their skills and comprehension.

Black and Wiliam (1998b) encourage teachers to use questioning and classroom discussion as an opportunity to increase their students' knowledge and improve understanding. They caution, however, that teachers need to make sure to ask thoughtful, reflective questions rather than simple, factual ones and then give students adequate time to respond. Black and Wiliam (1998b) make the following recommendations:

- Frequent short tests are better than infrequent long ones.
- New learning should be tested within about a week of first exposure.
- Be mindful of the quality of test items and work with other teachers and outside sources to collect good ones.

The teacher of various subjects can assess students’ knowledge and skills through non-graded quiz (multiple choice, True/False, Matching), projects, debates, written assignments, concept maps, one minute essay, exit card, surveys, reports, dramatization, dialogue, conversation, commentary, interviews, role plays, Think-Pair-Share, K/W/L Chart, one word summary, one sentence summary, Generic 3-2-1 Chart, idea spinner, learning logs, case studies, debriefing, journal entry, 3 minute pause, portfolio check, lab activities, symposium, seminars, chart or model making. All these activities can serve as a tool to evaluate students’ progress and ability to transfer learning to new situations. In addition, students’ poll, smiles, thump up/thump down are helpful feedback indicators for prompt evaluation of teachers’ performance.
Conclusion

Formative Assessment is an approach that promotes learning, boost confidence and minimize test stress. It not only evaluates students’ understanding but also serves as a reflective tool for teachers who in collaboration with students, can set learning goals, diversify learning strategies and optimize learning process.

References


Boston, Carol (2002). The concept of formative assessment. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 8(9).


Appendix 1

Questionnaire about Formative Assessment

1. How often do you GRADE OR MARK students’ work?
   a) every time b) once a week
   c) once a month d) once a semester

2. How often do you provide REMARKS to the students about their work?
   a) every time b) once a week
   c) once a month d) once a semester

3. How sooner your students get your feedback?
   a) immediately b) after few hours
   c) after a few days d) after examination

4. Which type of information do you give to the students through your feedback?
   a) advice b) praise
   c) evaluation d) goal-referenced

5. What in your view is the most important characteristic of feedback?
   a) delivered respectfully b) describe specific behaviors
   c) encourage a change in behavior d) has clear expectations

6. What type of language do you use to present feedback to your students?
   a) professional b) informal
   c) user friendly d) critical

7. How do you start your feedback?
   a) identification of positive b) present the facts
   c) encouragement d) ways for improvement

8. What would you consider as the major reason for not providing regular feedback to the students?
   a) time constraint b) school policy
   c) uncertainty about students’ problem d) no expectation from students

9. What in your view is the most important benefit of effective feedback?
   a) promotes curiosity b) shapes behaviour
   c) encourages to try d) expresses appreciation

10. What in your view can mar the effectiveness of a feedback greatly?
    a) extensive praise b) unclear criticism
     c) untimely d) impractical suggestions
Appendix 2

Student’s Reflection on Feedback

Think of a time when you received a positive feedback from your teacher.

- How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What difference did it make on your performance?
AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: AN APPROACH TO ENHANCE AND ASSESS STUDENTS’ LEARNING

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Abstract
This paper underscores the process of using Authentic Assessment (AA) not only as a tool to assess learning but also as an approach to enhance learning in a school in the context of Pakistan. Data was collected through classroom observations, conducting interviews, analyzing relevant documents and maintaining person reflective diary. Findings indicate that AA helped in enhancing students’ learning such as knowledge about the noise pollution, planning, developing interview questions, interviewing people, preparing posters, giving presentation and responding to audience question. The study also revealed that in AA the student’s role changed from a passive test taker to an active participant in the process of assessment. For example, they identified issue, found out solution, presented it to the community and also took part in the assessment of their own performance through self-assessment. The teacher’s role during AA changed as a facilitator.

Moreover, the study indicates that developing of observation checklists, criteria rubric and sharing it with students beforehand helps the student to improve their work and get desirable results.

Key Words: Authentic Assessment, Assessment for Learning, Innovative Assessment, Authentic-task

Introduction
In Pakistan, in most cases, the assessment has been viewed just as a means for evaluation rather as an instructional and learning tool. As a result, the classroom instructions are mostly driven through paper-and pencil tests (Halai, 2002). In these tests students’ learning outcomes are measured in terms of what they have memorized at the expense of their conceptual understanding. This has narrowed down the teaching and learning processes and opportunities of science. This is consistent with Black (1993) arguments of the back wash effects of this narrow external testing on teaching and states that:

- Science is reduced to learning of isolated facts and skills;
- The cognitive level of classroom work is lowered;
- Pupils have to work at too great a pace for effective learning;
- In particular, ground is ‘covered’ by a race through a textbook;
- Much teaching time is devoted to direct test preparation;
- Pupils’ questioning is inhibited;
- Learning follows testing in focusing on aspects that are easy to test;
- Laboratory work stops unless tests include laboratory tests;
- Creative, innovative methods and topical content are dropped. (p. 52)
In order to improve this situation, it is generally argued that schools should move from traditional forms of assessment to authentic forms of assessment. Authentic Assessment (AA) is a process that involves students in real-word tasks which are worthwhile, significant and meaningful or in other words ‘authentic’ (Baron & Boschee, 1995). And in such kind of tasks the students are required to use knowledge, skills and attitudes in the same way as the professionals do in real-life task (Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner, 2004). AA is a contextualized approach, which is not only used for assessing students’ learning, but also serves to enhance students’ knowledge, their understanding construction of scientific concepts, student exploration and application skills in real-life situation a value beyond the assessment task. Hence, this paper explores the opportunities of using AA as an approach to enhance and assess students’ learning in a Pakistani context.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the research was to study the process of implementation of AA as tool to enhance students’ learning in science-classroom in a Pakistani school. In this study, within the qualitative paradigm, I used Kemmis, McTaggart & Retallick (2004) model of action research in order to get in-depth understanding of the AA. Using this cyclic model the following steps were taken:

1. *Developing Plan:* In the light of findings of the reconnaissance a general plan is developed to implement the AA based on the five dimensions of AA suggested by Gulikers et al. (2004):
   i. **The authentic-task:** A real-world task (table 1.1) was developed for AA which involved the students in the processes such as identifying an issue from their community, planning to solve the issue, exploration and demonstration of their understanding to the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHENTIC-TASK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select an issue from your context/community and find out an appropriate solution for that. And, communicate the solution that to your community. You can use the following guidelines to complete your task:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify an important issue (which must be related to any science topic from your textbook) from your context,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a plan; how to go about and solve the issue,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore and collect information from different sources to get in-depth understanding of the issue, ways to solve it, and the science concept,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Design a solution (s) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicate it to your community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Table 1.1: Authentic-task

   ii. **Physical context:** The AA task was carried out by the students both in and outside the classroom (e.g. issue identification and planning was done inside the classroom while the exploration and demonstration of their learning through presentation was done in real context).

   iii. **Social context:** During the process of AA Students’ worked in groups where they were sharing information and collaborating with each other. Moreover, they also interacted with different people in the real-context while collecting information and giving presentation to the community.
iv. **Assessment results:** The students explored the issue (noise-pollution), got in-depth understanding of it and found out ways of decreasing it. Then, they communicated their understanding through poster-presentation to their community in the real-context which was assessed against the criteria (table 1.2).

v. **Criteria and standards:** In order to assess students’ performance, criteria for assessment and standards for expected competencies are developed and shared with students beforehand. Then it was used to assess students’ learning (knowledge, other high-order cognitive skills and performance in the context) in each step of the authentic-task (table 1.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent (E)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (S)</th>
<th>Not satisfactory (NS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation Analysis and Issue identification</td>
<td>Identified relevant issue and gave at least four reasons/causes</td>
<td>Identified relevant issue and gave two to three reasons/causes</td>
<td>Identified irrelevant issue with less then three reasons/causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and developing tools</td>
<td>Feasible plan. Organized step by step and steps are properly explained</td>
<td>Feasible plan. Organized step by step but not explained appropriately</td>
<td>Plan is not feasible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriately time framed. Appropriate and focused tools</td>
<td>Time-frame is inadequate. Tools are general.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Data collected from different sources e.g. teaching, interviewing people, internet, books Analyzed properly</td>
<td>Data collected from only two sources Poor analysis of the data</td>
<td>Data collected from less than two sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality End product &amp; content knowledge</td>
<td>The end product communicated through innovative ways, like, poster presentation, brochures or writing letters to Newspapers, Content knowledge is relevant and enough Massage or idea communicated clearly Questions were responded to well</td>
<td>The end product communicated through innovative ways Content knowledge is relevant but not enough. Massage or idea wasn’t coming out clearly Questions were not responded well</td>
<td>The end product presentation ambiguous Content knowledge is not relevant Massage or idea Wasn’t coming out clearly Questions were not responded well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Group work</td>
<td>Shares information Shows willingness to listen Questions appropriately Shows respect for others Accepts differing opinions</td>
<td>Any three of the SSQSA given in the Excellent column.</td>
<td>Less than three of any SSQSA given in the Excellent column</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: Assessment Rubric

2. **Implementation and Observation Stage**

In this stage, the authentic-task was given to the students in order to enhance students’ learning, and also to assess students’ learning through AA. During this stage, the observation remained continuous to get necessary information on students’ learning in order to get feed-back of the teaching and learning process. Questioning and on the spot feedback were used throughout the process to enhance students learning. Students
were also provided opportunities for discussions and questioning with each other and the teacher.

3. **Reflection Stage**

   Although reflection was an ongoing part of this study but at this stage it was far more crucial as it was the stage to reflect on the whole practices/processes carried out during the implementation stage. While reflecting, the focus was on questions such as:
   - Did I do what I planned to do?
   - What changes need to be made in my plan to implement in future?
   - What was my role during the implementation?
   - What was the role of students?
   - What supported or hindered in implementation?
   - What students’ learning was I assessing?
   - How did my implementation enhance students’ learning?
   - What strategies were used to enhance students’ learning?

   This reflection not only remained helpful in assessing the effectiveness of the action, but also in finding out the effects of the course of action.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

During the study in different stages data were obtained through observations, interviews, field notes, document (e.g. lesson-plans, syllabus, students’ notebooks, test-records, test-papers, report-cards, student-work etc.) analysis, informal talks and group interview. I also used my own reflective diary, assessment-tasks and plans as data collection tools in the study.

Data analysis was an ongoing process, which started before the data collection and remained continue during and after it (Creswell, 1994). The data collected through the above mentioned sources were regularly analyzed to inform the action steps and to identify and categorize the frequently emerging themes. The results emerging from the final analysis of the data are discussed below.

**Findings and Discussion**

**AA Enhances Students’ learning**

The analysis of the data indicates that students’ participation in AA developed their understanding of the scientific concepts. “They [students] explored ‘sound and noise’ and developed their understanding, especially about their effects and ways to control it” (teacher interview, April 4, 2006). However, the knowledge presented by students on the subject was not mere reproduction of scientific knowledge. They were engaged in an inquiry process of assembling and interpreting information, formulating ideas and then integrating and presenting them in the form of posters and drawings. All these are high order skills which the students used. For example, one student said that they analyzed their environment and identified the issue of noise pollution to work on. Another student was of the view, “to understand the issue, we interviewed different people and searched internet” (Interview, April 4, 2006).

In short, the achievements of students during the implementation of AA were not of that level what one could expect from a scientific inquiry. However, noticeable improvement was seen in
students regarding developing questions, interviewing, collecting data analyzing the information, preparing poster presentations and communicating their understanding to their community (like, a researcher in the real-world). In addition, an amazing change was noticed, as they reproduced the knowledge about the scientific concept ‘noise pollution’ but not through rote learning. First they monitored sound levels, understood it and then communicated their understanding to other people and they themselves were aware of this change. As one student pointed out:

…the paper-pencil test we were memorizing and then writing [reproducing] it in the given test. But in AA we did not memorize anything. We ourselves searched out the answer from different sources working collectively.

Teacher’s and Students’ Role Changed in AA

During the observations of and interviews with teachers and students, it was found that in AA the role of teacher and learners has changed. There were more opportunities for active participation of learners in the process of AA as compared to traditional-testing. During the process of AA, the students themselves were exploring the scientific concept/issue which shows the students taking responsibility of their own learning. They also made decisions about the issues to be explored, processes and products of assessment, hence, played the role of decision maker. While talking about their role, one student said that in tests they were just writing the answers to the questions but in AA they performed variety of roles which helped them to learn more (Students’ interview, 2006).

The class teacher mentioned in her observation note that “The teacher was facilitating students through posing and answering questioning” (Field notes, March 8, 2006). One student was of the view that “During AA, we found our teacher as a helper and got the chance to improve ourselves during the activity through getting timely feedback” (Students interview, April 4, 2006). It proves that in AA the role of a teacher was no longer as an invigilator as in traditional-testing. Instead, it was, “… two folded; as a teacher and as an assessor. I was playing both these roles simultaneously, in order to help the students to accomplish the assigned real-world task (Personal reflection, March 22, 2006)

AA as a Strategy to Assess Students’ learning

To assess students’ learning in different steps during AA, criteria rubric, observation checklists and self-assessment checklists were developed and shared with students beforehand. It provided the students with a scaffolding of how they will be evaluated and thus helped them to improve the quality of their work accordingly. As one student shared that they performed well because they were aware of their teacher’s expectations (Interview, April 4, 2006). Moreover, the use of these tools was found useful for many reasons, for instance, the use of these tools kept us (me & my critical friend) focused to observe what was supposed to be observed and what the students were supposed to learn.

Data analysis also reveals that self-assessment (an integral part of AA) provided the students with an opportunity to critically reflect on their performance. While sharing the experience of the self-assessment one student said:
“In self-assessment while responding to the questions, we were thinking that what new we learnt about the noise and sound. And it also provided us an opportunity to think about our own performance during group work”. (Interview, April 4, 2006)

Generally, in self-assessment, it is likely that students grade themselves the highest one but this time surprisingly most of the students had assessed their performances in the group very critically. For example, one student has graded himself “not satisfactory” for sharing information. While another student graded herself “satisfactory” for sharing information and showing willingness to listen to others ideas. This means that during self-assessment, the students reflected on their practices and assessed their performance critically against the criteria.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, it could be stated that though AA is a complex and demanding process but the evidences presented in this paper also highlight that it serves as a better alternative to traditional assessment practices. It is a new notion and presents assessment as a process which is intertwined with teaching and learning rather than something to be done after teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the study realvels that through AA teachers can not only assess students’ performance in the real-context, but also enhance their knowledge, skills and attitude which are the important goals of the curriculum.

In concluding the implementation of the AA with a targeted group of students in eight class of a community-based school in Pakistan, it can be said that the use of AA methods were strongly appreciated by students. The payback(s) of AA methods are extremely beneficial for students. More students are able to excel with the use of the AA and learning. AA strongly emphasizes meta-cognition and processing of information which is the key to learning.

**References**


EDUCATION FOR PROMOTING RESILIENCE OF SOCIAL COHESIONS
EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF STUDENTS’ GENDER IDENTITY IN EARLY YEARS’ CLASSROOM OF TWO GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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Introduction

The study examined the contribution made by teaching and learning processes to the development of students’ gender identity in single sex early years classrooms of two government-run primary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. These two schools included Roshni Girls Primary School (RGPS) and Rehnuma Boys Primary School (RBPS)16.

The study design was guided by the qualitative method and Case study approach was used to explore the phenomenon within the boundaries of two classrooms. To understand the construction of boys’ and girls’ gender identity, research focused on teacher-student interactions, and student-student interactions with gender as a major unit of analysis within the single sex classroom environment. Two teachers from two focused schools (one each) participated in the study. Mariam (pseudonym) female teacher from RGPS and Asad Ali (pseudonym), male teacher from RBPS were the participants. Furthermore, a group of five students from both the schools were selected from both the schools for focus group discussion.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and focused group discussion with children in addition, text books were also reviewed.

Gender socialization is probably one of the most basic aspects of the general socialization process. It is generally believed that children, under normal circumstances, acquire their gender identities and recognize gender constancy before the age of seven, which is the end of key stage one education (Gorard, 2002; Measor & Sikes, 1992). Different theoretical perspectives have been used to conceptualize and describe gender. Essentialist constructs believe gender as a natural, biological characteristics manifested by an individual. The view that sexes are ‘just naturally different’ can be found across disciplines, including within feminism (Skelton, Francis & Smulyn, 2006). According to relational (Feminist and poststructuralist) theory, gender is considered as a socially constructed behavior. Instead, gender is a complex and dynamic set of ideas, actions and feelings about what it means to be a boy or a girl in a specific place, culture and time (MacNaughton, 2001). The social learning theory suggests that “children develop sex-typed behaviors because other people reinforce behaviors that conform to expectations for their sex group and do not reinforce nonconforming behaviors (Bank, 2007). This approach suggests that within the family, parents, as agents of socialization, interact with boys and girls in ways that reinforce sex-typed (Hetherington & Parke, 1999). As social places, home and school provide young children spaces to imitate the behaviors they are observing, and this helps the young children practice them.

16 Pseudonym
Gender and Classroom Interactions

In classrooms, children create and recreate meanings about gender through their talks and actions (Blaise, 2005). Many researchers have noted that teachers and peers play an important role in a student’s gender socialization. One of the most powerful and subtle ways in which teachers shape students’ gender identity is through teacher-student interactions within the classroom culture (Liu, 2006). The interactions (both student-student and teacher-student) taking place within the classroom are the mirror reflection of the societal gender stereotypes. Literature on gender and the classroom reveals that teachers go to their classrooms with some stereotypical assumptions and expectations which have a great influence on the children in construction of gender characteristics (Myhill & Jones, 2006). Gender messages received through communications and classroom environment mold and construct children gender identities.

Young learners stereotypically are open and in the process of making meaning to many possibilities for who they might become and often are trying ways of defining themselves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Teachers are the primary orchestrators of the classroom environment because they play a pivotal role in the construction of the learning atmosphere and the conditions for student input and interaction (Thomas, 2007).

Researchers such as Pardhan (2011), Taj (2008); and Zainulabidin (2007) have explored the role of classroom environment in constructing the gender identities of the students. However, I was unable to find out a study which would have explored gender identity construction of the students in the single sex setting. Thus, this study is expected to be a significant contribution to the literature in filling the gap regarding identity construction of the children in a single sex classroom setting. Keeping in view the context of Pakistan and looking at different debates regarding gender theories, as discussed earlier, I have used the social theory of learning paradigm for doing the analysis of teaching and learning processes in a Pakistani classroom. Social learning theory helped me to see how reinforcement of social norms takes place through verbal and non-verbal interactions within the classroom.

Findings and Analysis

Case A

The findings from the Roshni Girls Primary School are presented under the major theme “classrooms as dynamic sites in reinforcing gender stereotypes”.

Classrooms as Dynamic Sites in Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes

The study has highlighted the importance of verbal and non-verbal interactions of the single sex classrooms in constructing the gender identity of the students. According to the study, the way teachers and students perceive their identities have an impact in gender identity construction of the children. These perceptions become obvious in what the teachers and students do and say in the classroom. Furthermore, the study also explains how children (focus group students) perceive their responsibilities and identities as two different “binary dichotomies” as girls’ and boys”. Based on their experience of practices, they are involved in at home and school as sites of socialization.
Gender Division of Labor

The data analysis shows that Mariam’s and students’ perception about what children in her class should do was situated within the division of labor as approved by the wider society. The social basis of gender roles is considered as a gender belief system, ideas regarding masculinity and femininity that are held to be valid in society (Lorber, 1994). For Mariam, boys being the providers of the family, was very much part of the masculine image of male offsprings in the society. Not having a son was, therefore, a great concern for her. She sees the continuation of her family through a son.

I feel a lot that I should have a boy. I have three daughters and three daughters are enough. A son is a supporter for his parents in old age. Girls will get marry, they cannot stay with parents, so a son should be there to bring a daughter in law and set the home again. (Interview, 18th, February)

This reaction of the teacher was apparently an act of reminding these girls and confirming the familial responsibilities approved by society. The role approved for girls by the society at large is that of care giving. The data further reveals that Mariam felt that boys need to explore the world and can go for higher studies because they are to ultimately play the role of the family’s provider.

Ashraf (2004) also points out that teachers usually transferred their own gender perceptions to the students through a variety of ways. This is quite in line with teachers’ conduct in the present study, as they communicate these gendered messages through their talk and actions. These acts and talks by the teacher seem to reinforce gender-related views held by students, hence, contributed to the construction of their gender identity.

Teacher’s verbal and non-verbal interactions

One of the most powerful and subtle ways in which teachers shape students’ gender identity is through teacher-student interactions within the classroom culture (Liu, 2006). Mariam used to address the students not by their names but by their gender. She would generally call a student ‘O larki’ [you girl]. This conscious or unconscious act of teacher was a constant act of making students conscious of their specific gender responsibilities acceptable and expected by the wider society.

Teachers’ perception of gender differences can affect the way they interact and communicate with pupils (Francis, 2000). The teacher was observed reminding students of the responsibilities of girls in the larger society. Mariam pointed out to a student and said: “Your trousers are torn, can’t you take a needle and thread to sew it? How would you go home through the road? You are not ashamed of this?” (Observation, 21st February 2012). Davies (1989) has argued that the language we use perpetuates certain order [means gender relationships here] which entrap the students the way we want them to behave. Aligned with literature, the teacher’s comment was to make the student realize that she should learn her responsibilities as a girl. The teacher’s emphasis on students to learn certain skills was a kind of entrapment in gender roles, as approved by the larger society.

This was an interesting phenomenon as the teacher, communicated to these girls through these kinds of discussion the societal perceptions about girls’ physical appearance, which the girls overheard and it was a stark reminder for them regarding their place and position in the society.
Case B

Case B is about boys’ school, named as ‘Rehnuma Boys Primary School’. In this section, findings from the boys’ school are presented under the specific themes which emerged from the data. The main focus was verbal and non-verbal interactions happening in the classroom.

Gender Division of Labor

While exploring the perceptions and practices regarding gender identity construction within single sex classroom, an interesting vignette was explored about gender division of labor. Data shows that participants feel that boys are important members in the family, as they can do the work females cannot perform with ease. Asad (pseudonym), the male teacher, shared his experience of being the only son in his family and overburden with the responsibilities, as his sisters are unable to do the tasks which can be done by their brother. He said:

Girls are blessings of Almighty but we cannot deny about importance of son, there are lots of household chores which girls cannot do, only boys can do that. Take my own example, as I am the only son in my family, I have to run around the whole day to manage the work, as my sister cannot do those works that I as a male can do. I always feel the need of a brother to help me out. (Interview; 25th February, 2012)

Asad further shared that girls are studying just for the sake of studying as their interest but boys have to take care of their families and earn a living. According to him, earning a living is the sole responsibility of the male member of the family. The data showed that the perceptions of the participants about what a boy and girl can do was aligned with division of labor approved by the wider society.

Teacher’s Verbal and Non-verbal Interactions

Gender messages received through interactions and classroom environment mold and construct children’s gender identities. Asad used language in the classroom which conformed to the masculine tone, as approved in the patriarchal society. For instance, he would say: “oyah larkay” [O boy], “O bhaijan” [O brother] when he wanted to draw students’ attention towards himself. He generally clicked his fingers when he wanted to call out to his students. Once he reacted to a student, who was hesitant in coming to him, in the following way, “abby dartay ho muj say, larkay ho k dartay ho kuch nhe karoga ajao [O you, how come you are a boy and yet you are scared of me. Come I will do nothing!]. Asad’s verbal interaction and the body language he used demonstrated to his students the male character which had potentials to remind these young boys of their own gender identities, which are aligned with the notion of masculinity as approved and acceptable by the wider society. At times, he also explained to the students their roles as future providers, which reflects the advice he offered to a boy, “You have to take the responsibility of your family in the future, so work hard (14th Feb)”.

Cross Case Analysis

The analysis in the study reveals a unanimous consensus among the participants about socially approved gender norms of the wider society. In both the cases, girls and boys were being called upon by the teachers through their gender identity instead of being called out by their names. This conscious or unconscious act of the teachers surely made students conscious about their gender. This observation is in line with Liu’s (2006) view that one of the most powerful and
subtle ways in which teachers shape students’ gender identity is through teacher-student interactions within the classroom culture. Teachers’ perceptions regarding responsibilities of girls and boys in assigning different roles and responsibilities was aligned with the perceptions of the wider society about the approved roles and responsibilities. Participants believe that girls have a passive role in the society as caregivers and are confined to domestic chores. The teacher was found encouraging girls to take interest in feminine tasks like beautification, decoration and other things related to the aesthetic sense.

In both the schools, gender differentiation was perceived by teachers and students as socially inherited practice. Apparently, the way they perceive gender was how they were being socialized. Consciously and unconsciously, teachers and students practiced and passed on the same messages which were approved by the wider society.

In both cases, teachers’ expectations of girls and boys seemed to be guided by their own experiences and the way they have been socialized into gender roles and responsibilities. Their behavior with the students reflected their beliefs around what girls were ought to do and how boys should carry themselves in the society. Their conscious or unconscious uneven treatment in both the cases was an action in the constant reminder for girls and boys as two distinct dichotomies of society, with different energies, compatibilities and responsibilities.

**Conclusion**

In single sex classrooms, the boys and girls are receiving unequal and different treatment. Aligned with literature, Leach (2003) says,” Many schools are gender-unaware places, where neither teacher nor pupils perceive gender as being an issue that needs to be addressed” (p.22). The analysis reveals the difference in expectation of teachers from girls and boys. These expectations are guided by their experience of socialization as male and females. The analyses lead to the conclusion that teachers’ need awareness about gender, in order to create an environment which can provide different experiences of gender discourse to the students. So that students look at multiple opportunities to express themselves and guide their actions according to their capabilities, rather than perceiving their roles as defined by the larger societal belief. The preset beliefs which are being practiced and are passed on to the students are limiting the students’ abilities to express themselves. Children receive gendered messages through the interactions taking place in both the cases (girls’ and boys’ school). They strengthened gender stereotypes by giving gender discriminative explanations.

**References**


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Kruse, A.M. (1992). We have learned not just to sit back twiddle our thumbs and let them take over. *Gender and Education, 4*(1/2), 81-103.


UNDERSTANDING WAYS AND THE IMPACT OF STUDENTS MAKING PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM IN PAKISTANI RE CONTEXT

Azmeena Amin, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction

Education is generally defined as the process of transferring of knowledge in learner’s mind (Rizvi, 2009). During my teaching experience, I observed that during this process students are not able to connect themselves with the learning and thus lose interest (Prashing, 2006). Watkins et al, (2007) stated that students feel interested when they are engaged in learning and their skills are developed through connecting the content with their lives.

Hence, this study examined the following questions:

- How Pakistani REC\textsuperscript{17} students make personal connection with the content of the curriculum?
- What are the impacts of making personal linkages with the classroom learning?

This research study was undertaken as part of the Master of Teaching (MTeach) Practice-Based Enquiry module as part of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) Secondary Teacher Education Program (STEP)\textsuperscript{18}. This research was conducted in one of the REC in Karachi, Pakistan. The 14 research participants with eight boys and seven girls were the students of grade eight with the age bracket of 12 to 14 years. Majority of the students belong to a middle class background and they all were studying in English medium schools. During this four week of research I taught the new secondary curriculum literature module, “On the wings of words”, which led students to examine the changing period from Prophet’s age to modern time. Thus, my aim of the research was that students should feel personally connected with the learning that will remain in their minds forever.

Literature Review

The literature review discusses the theories and studies related to the research of making personal connection with the learning. There are so many studies undertaken but only few has been discussed here. Watkins et al, (2007) identified three models of learning that are ‘reception, construction and co-construction’. This research was based on the construction model of learning that is related to learner’s own construction of making meaning by using different classroom activities.

\textsuperscript{17} The REC is a Religious Education Centre where the Ismaili Muslim students are taught Religious and Cultural education.

\textsuperscript{18} The STEP is a course of study for practicing and prospective teachers. The aim is to train, sustain and provide the appropriate resource base for teachers who will teach the Institute of Ismaili Studies’ Secondary Curriculum to Ismaili students worldwide
Moreover, students also feel motivated towards learning when they are able to answer the simple question of ‘why we are learning this? Hence, students when learn about their own learning, it brings: increase engagement with positive feelings, a better sense of ownership and responsibility with a preparation for a future (Thomas, 2003), (Rudduck et al, 1995). Thus, literature review acquainted me with the knowledge, which the researchers have contributed towards the meaning making process of students with the learning.

**Methodology**

This reflective process of making personal connections with the content was carried out with qualitative research methods that were recorded in the form of words and narratives (Robson, 1993, 2002), (Denscombe, 2007). In this action research, I as a teacher researcher tried to examine and improve my own educational practice systematically and carefully by using the techniques of research (Watts, 1985). This research also used different data collection methods to have triangulation in findings by having different perspectives (Jakob, 2001) that helped to achieve the reliability, validity and objectivity.

**Data Collection Methods**

Following methods were used for analysis.

**My own reflections of classroom observation**

The classroom observation technique was used where the critical moment which challenge and critique the current situation (Tripp, 1993) was captured in my daily reflective journals.

**Students’ journals – daily reflections**

Students’ reflective journals used to know students’ written representation of learning from their own experience (Moon, 2006) that helped them understand the concepts in their mind by their own ways.

**Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group discussion was aimed to have an open discussion that helped to capture the insight that I might not be able to get through straightforward interview (Cohen et al, 2007). This forum provided student the opportunity to discuss and summarize what they have learned.

**Findings and Analysis**

The findings and analysis of the learning can be understood through the two broad categories that is; the ways of student making personal connections to the content and the impact of that personal meaning making process of learning on students.

**Ways of students making personal connections**

The findings of the research helped me explore the ways that how and when students relate themselves with the learnings. As for example,
The findings revealed that initially students were confused and finding it difficult to connect themselves with the learning but later on the different class activities like in debates, student dialogue and in debrief sessions students where shared their experiences, they were able to make personal connections to the content by reflecting their own existing understanding that helps them to prepare for the future (Moore, 2000). Thus, the findings prove that if students get a platform to share and reflect their personal experiences they felt that they are learning something from and within their own selves.

**Impact of making personal connection / meaning making**

The following section will look in to the impacts of this reflective meaning making process with few examples.

**Students’ motivation towards learning**

The findings of the research study showed that students started feeling ownership of the learning and thus the learner with the sense of ownership of learning feels motivated and encouraged to participate with more passion (Gipps & Murphy, 1994). For example,

> “When you connect something to your own life, it really becomes interesting, I like it and I am enjoying it. I think this is for me” – (Fatima)

(Student Reflective Journals – 6th May 2010)

Students’ comments revealed that this learning for own selves can be considered as an intrinsic motivation where the thirst of learning comes from within an individual (Walker et al, 2006). In addition, intrinsic motivation never gets them bored. As for example in focus group discussion students shared that

> “I really liked the activities which never let me get bored, the long duration of the class began to seem short because of busyness in creative activities and because we are connecting each and every thing to our lives and this makes me realize that I am learning something from and for myself by reflecting to my own past experience” (Ali)

(Focus Group, 27th May 2010)

Thus, the findings show examples of students’ intrinsic motivation towards learning which comes through personalizing the key messages of the content.

**Students’ construction of knowledge**

“During the activity of Hadith explanation and its application in my life, our group was working on the Hadith of taking care of ill people, I recalled that I often visit my friend who is not feeling well and my friend feels good. Teaching in Hadith is linked to my life. Group activities also gave us a chance to interact with colleagues and listen to their ideas. I am enjoying and learning a lot”

(Ali, Student Reflective Journal, 12th May 2010)
The findings also revealed that students were able to understand the key messages along with the difficult terms with ease through reflecting and constructing knowledge on the basis of their prior experience, instead of just receiving it and learning it without understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). As for example in one class when,

To personalize the relationship between Prophet Muhammad and Hazrat Ali, students imagined a situation where they got an opportunity to study abroad and in that situation if they had to leave behind all their belongings, who would they ‘entrust’ all their belongings to? Students had written the characteristics of that trusted person...students then in groups presented Hazrat Ali’s characteristics. During presentation, Saima shared that, “Although we had heard so many stories about Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s) and Hazrat Ali, only today were we finding the characteristics to understand the relationship I realized that their relation was just like our relations in our lives where we really respect and care for our loved ones and make those relations stronger”

Students’ annotations clearly show that this research provided students a platform to construct new knowledge instead of just collect it (Moore, 2000). Thus, the findings prove that students understood the knowledge construction process by reflecting to their own lives which personally speak to them.

**Students Understanding the Application of Learning**

Comprehension only is not enough; students must be engaged in the class and become capable of understanding the application of that knowledge as well (Bruner, 1960). Research findings prove that students when share their experiences and involve in the process of enquiry rather than recall, students were able to understand the application of the learning for future development. For instance,

To teach the topic of Qadi Nauman’s 10th century book Daimul Islam and the Ahd document... one volunteer teacher... played the role of Qadi Nauman. The entrance of Qadi Nauman in the class was full of excitement. After a brief introduction of Qadi Nauman, students in groups were given some problematic scenarios; and they discuss the solution to those problems. Students then enacted the situation in the form of a role play. In the end, when students gave the solution to that particular situation, the Qadi also gave the guidance from the ‘Ahd document. Students then compared their solutions with the guiding principles of the ‘Ahd document.

During the discussion Saima shared that “I never thought that a book written in 10th century would contain the solutions of problems which are applicable in today’s life as well”.

Findings from class observation illustrate that students realized that the teachings given in the 10th century is still applicable in today’s life, by comparing the solutions from the 10th century book made students comprehend that the content of the curriculum is for our development. The teachings are related to us, the books and the ethical principles and teachings which were valuable for the people in 10th century are as valuable for today’s people. Students understood
the importance of content and the new curriculum which is designed for students’ personal and professional growth.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

“We don’t just learn it; we live it”. This research enabled the students’ to not only understand the key messages presented in the curriculum but they also got quite eager to construct the new knowledge and understand the application of that knowledge by personalizing the content.

This research was the first step for me as a teacher researcher to learn the ways that creates an impact of making personal meaning to the content of the new secondary curriculum in Pakistani Religious context. The findings helped me to answer my research questions that showed that students when make personal connections with the curriculum, they feel motivated and engaged. On the other hand, I also felt that the students in Pakistani RE context were not in a habit of reflections and to personalize the learning, students need to reflect and share past experience to make an action and formulate the future (Watkins et al, 2002). However, students then started reflecting their lives but few students were also shy in sharing their experiences, but the trustworthy and conducive environment made them feel at ease to share their thoughts, opinions, ideas and experiences.

In addition, students were more comfortable in sharing their experiences during class discussions instead of writing in reflective journals. Thus, the class observations and the focus group discussion were more helpful in exploring the ways and the impact of making personal connection with learning. Moreover, this reflective process also helped me as a teacher to reflect on the class happenings in order to come up with personal evaluation to make the next class more meaningful (Watkins, 2003). Thus, my recommendation for teachers is to provide students a platform where they can make personal connections with the learning as this research helped me to do so where the learning community shared and learned from their experience that will be with them forever.

I believe the short time span of the research limited to see the actual application of the learning in students’ life but I hope that the continuous thinking of that connection will automatically solidify the application in daily acts. I also consider my “fuzzy” generalizations (Bassey, 1998) from my experience can provoke imitation and the compilation of collective accounts. However, these findings can also take a part to achieve the vision behind the Secondary Curriculum (2005) that is to prepare individuals who will be able to apply their acquired knowledge in their own lives along with the major contribution to the society in which they live.

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Introduction

A review of literature suggests that discourse on social cohesion centers around social inclusion, which fosters the empowerment of disadvantaged groups for their enhanced participation in society. Such grounding of social cohesion necessitates a critical appraisal of gender relationship in the society. As such, gender’s cross cutting nature makes it an important dimension of all equity and inclusion related discussions. On the basis of insights from our experience of prompting gender equality through ‘Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan’ project of the Institute for Educational Development of Aga Khan University, this paper presents a discussion on gender equality and social cohesion. In particular, by drawing on relevant literature, an attempt is made to problematize if gender equality is a precondition or can be regarded as a necessary outcomes of social cohesion.

Social Cohesion: Understanding the Concept in a Context

Social cohesion is widely used but rarely explicitly defined. For many social cohesion means a society with relative harmony possibly with no social exclusion. Battaini-Dragoni and Dominioni (2003) consider social cohesion as an indication of a society that is able to ensure the well-being of its members who form mutually supportive community of free individuals. These individual follow democratic means to pursue common goals. The later warrants high levels of civic co-operation and trust. Green (2006) considers tolerance and relative equality key characteristics of such society. Jensen (as cited in Green, 2006) considers that the term social cohesion is used to describe a process more than a condition or end state which according to her involves a sense of commitment and a desire or capacity of individual to live together in harmony. This may also be seen as possessing shared norms and values, shared identity and belongingness. Green (2006), however, refers to Jensen who thinks a socially cohesive society does not necessarily involve widely shared values, since too much ‘bonding’ and value conformity can lead to stagnation and closed communities. Furthermore, Jenson (as referred by Green, 2006) explains that cohesive societies do relay of democratic institutions and on effective institutional mechanisms to resolve the conflicts and hence ensures civic participation.

Literature search provides an evidence of huge engagement of scholars, policy makers and practitioners in exploring how diverse communities provide an evidence of social cohesion. For instance, diverse religious affiliation of the communities in Britain (e.g. King, 2010) has
been explored through investigating influence of faith-based schools on social cohesion. Maxwell (1996) and others (e.g. Jeannotte, 1997; McDaniel, 2003) have attempted to define and understand social cohesion and ethnic diversity in Canadian context. A review of literature also highlights scholarly work from developing countries such as Malaysia (e.g. Shamsul & Yusoff, 2011) and India (e.g. Mukherjee & Sarawati, year?) which explores social cohesion with reference to ethnic, religious and gender diversity.

**Relativity of the Definition**

Discourse on social cohesion explains its relative nature as there seems to be no agreement on how social cohesion should be defined. Beauvais and Jenson (2002) associate this fluidity of the concept of social cohesion to its situatedness within political realm. They consider SC as a quasi-concept, the definition of which is shaped and guided by political motives. Hence, its utility, according to Beauvais and Jenson (2002), will depend “on its contribution to framing conversations, to helping to make sense of complex relationships, and to setting goals” (p.44). A critical view of concept of social cohesion was also presented by Bernard (as reported by Fenger, 2008) who described it as a “quasi-concept” a concept based on analysis of a situation, but which maintains a vagueness “flexible enough to follow the meanderings and necessities of political action from day to day” (Bernard, 2000, p. 3). Important dimension of criticism is that such definitions of social cohesion propose compassion and promotion of certain values and do not necessarily warrant correction of social inequalities and how various institutions contribute to these challenges in a society.

Different definitions of social cohesion, nevertheless, lead to an argument that a high degree of social cohesion contributes measurably to economic growth and investment, to good governance, health and social security (Stanley, 2003; Maxwell, 1996 as quoted by Mukherjee & Sarawati, 2011). Operationalization of the concept “social cohesion” will depend on the definition employed which can also provide base for measuring its effects. There is no unanimous position on whether social cohesion is a cause or a consequence of other aspects of social, economic and political life. The review of research on social cohesion by Beauvais and Jenson (2002) also highlights discussions in literature about social cohesion as dependent variable or as independent variable, social cohesion as cause or as an outcome. When social cohesion is analyzed as an outcome, the factors affecting it can be grouped under the headings of economic restructuring, diversity, and the characteristics of some communities.

Beauvais and Jenson (2002) have indicated the increased attention to the capacity of well-designed strategic action to foster social cohesion as a dependent variable. They find that limited attention in literature, is given to actors in civil society. With some reference to employers, families, and to the citizens, huge attention is paid to the state and governance forms. Some literature, according to Beauvais and Jenson (2002), identifies cultural policy and education as important ingredients for fostering social cohesion. A need to make investments in children is
also highlighted. Following this line of argument, utility of social cohesion for setting goals towards a peaceful society is just desired in the context of education.

Table: The key components of social cohesion

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>belonging/isolation</td>
<td>common values and civic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>territorial belonging and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>participation/non-involvement</td>
<td>social networks and social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>inclusion/exclusion recognition/rejection</td>
<td>social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Order</td>
<td>legitimacy/illegitimacy</td>
<td>social order and social control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref. Reeskens, 2008

In her later attritions, Jenson (2008/9) has proposed a set of indicators to assess social cohesion as Social inclusion: access to financial resources; access to financial activity; access to education and human capital; access to health; and access to technology. Other indicators are to view social cohesion as cultural and ethnic homogeneity; as trust; and as participation and solidarity. These indicators when utilized effectively can change societal make up.

Silver’s (as quoted by Beauvais and Jenson, 2002) analysis of various European Union programs found that social cohesion policies focused social exclusion issues of isolation, passivity and powerlessness with a multidimensional and dynamic approach to foster empowerment, engagement and active participation of integration of the marginalized ethnic groups. However, the notion of quality remains problematic as the analysis reiterates the need to encourage active participation of those marginalized communities in their own empowerment.

Gender and Social Cohesion

An analysis of all the proposed definitions of social cohesion reveals a consensus on social inclusion and equity fundamental to the demonstration of social cohesion. With equity Delport (2009) suggests social justice as a key component for social cohesion. In her commentary on a report “Social Cohesion and Social Justice in South Africa”, Delport (2009) explains social justice as a key component for social cohesion which means that how individuals and groups are treated with fairness and equity in terms of access to and participation in different realms of a society. Considering gender equality as a cross cutting dimension of a cohesive society, Delport (2009) situates the social cohesion discussion within the discourse of social justice and human rights. Policy frameworks, legislations and political feel, she found, all supportive to social cohesion and gender equality. However, women in Africa, as Delport explains with a reference
to a UN study, face many blocks i.e. social, political economic. Hence, she concludes, social cohesion does not necessarily extend to women.

Similar argument has also been forward by McDaniel (2003) who identifies gender faultlines which needs to be addressed for ensuring the spirit of social cohesion. McDaniel (2003) argues that the knit of social fabric is dependent on relationality, on social caring and connectedness, on a sense of social cohesion. Questions about social cohesion, according to her, centre on a sense of growing inequalities compounded by increasing diversities. She identifies gender as an important dimension of social cohesion relationality and also regards it as an important question around inequalities and increasing diversity in society. Addressing gender faultlines, according to McDaniel, is an important first step to ensure social cohesion. She identifies an influence of globalizing market on gender fault-lines which warrants an examination of emerging tendencies and counter tendencies that reflect in issues around gender and age and gender gap in political attitude, changing patterns and nature of life and of a family. These issues ultimately arise as a concern in the promotion of social cohesion.

As far as gender equality is concerned situation of many high growth countries is not any different from African nations which face daunting struggle for human development have paid attention to social cohesion in the face of growing diversity. Barnes, Bouchama and Loiseau (2011) argue that despite all the progress made in addressing gender inequality in these countries during the past two decades, women continue to lose out in terms of their wealth and well-being in comparison to men across much of the world. They hold persistence of discriminatory social institutions’ inability to improve gender relationships responsible for women’s disadvantage. Barnes et al (2011) also postulate that these social norms, values and traditions constrain women’s access to resources and decision making power which result into less than ideal performance on human development indicators such as health, employment and political participation.

In their evaluation report around gender equality and social cohesion, Kelles-Viitanen and Shrestha (2011) have critically examined how women were excluded from the process and outcomes of sustained peace and inclusive development in Nepal. Their review has revealed that despite commitments to end gender discrimination, gender-responsive polices and legislations are yet to be translated into action. In their evaluation of steps taken to end gender based inequalities for better social inclusion Kelles-Viitanen and Shrestha (2011) found that deep seated cultural norms and practices continue to deter efforts towards gender equality as women are primarily viewed in their role as wives and mothers. They also raised an issue with the conceptualization and implementation of gender equality related initiatives. They found that gender was often equated with activities for girls and women rather than actions that address the relations between men and women. This understanding, hence, “leads to interpreting gender integration as means to focus on women as a target group, rather than to be a process of carrying out a gender analysis and identifying areas of gender inequalities, whether of men or of women,
that can be redressed through appropriate programming” (Kelles-Viitanen & Shrestha, 2011, p. vii).

Despite some signs of progress such as gender parity in primary education, women’s participation in economic activity and improvement in reproductive and maternal health, women continue to suffer in terms of wealth and well-being in comparison to men across much of the world. This, according to Barnes, Bouchama and Loiseau (2011) has “consequences not just for women and girls, but also for men, boys and society as a whole given as ongoing gender inequalities undermine the inclusion and participation of women, erode the trust and social capital that exists at the community and national level and compromises the social mobility of millions of women and their families” (p.3). Barnes et al. (2011) argue that the gender neutral structural changes during the past two decades in many countries have affected and shaped men and women’s interactions with the informal institutions, relationships and identities that underlie social cohesion. Women’s vulnerability, marginalization with compromised social mobility will continue if such discriminatory norms, structures and practices are not challenged.

Barnes et al (2011) used Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) to determine how countries within different categories of four-speed world classification i.e. affluent, converging, struggling, poor perform on gender discrimination at the hands of social cohesion. The data show that even with the high growth rate 13 converging countries scored high on SIGI which reflects poor performance on account of gender equality in health, education, labour force participation and political representation. One such country is Pakistan that is classified as converging country but has also scored higher on SIGI. With about 80% primary enrolment ratio, the country’s youth female (15-24 years) literacy rate is reported at 58% which is not only much lower for average rate (98%) for converging countries but is also lower than Nigeria and Sudan. Health and employment opportunities shows challenging situation with country performing above than average of converging countries around women’ parliamentarians.

Barnes et al (2011) invite a critical appraisal of discriminatory social institutions to establish the reasons for gender unequal outcomes of development in converging countries like Pakistan. Such an analysis, they believe, will also allow gender related policy interventions to transform communities.

World Economic Forum’s (2013)Global Gender Gap Index further confirming the analysis offered by Barnes et al (2011) captures the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities and tracks their progress. Pakistan’s position on various development indicators including education is captured in the tables below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over all ;</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Participation:</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>0.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment:</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>0.768</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Survival:</td>
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<td>Political Empowerment:</td>
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Reference: World economic Forum Gender Gap report 2013

<table>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reference: World economic Forum Gender Gap report 2013

There are four categories namely women’s health and survival, their educational attainment and equal economic participation and opportunity termed the “four pillars” of socio-economic gender inequalities that make up the Global Gender Gap Index. It has ranked Pakistan as 135 in 2013, a ranking which has dropped from 132 in 2006 to 135 in 2013. This makes it lowest in Asia and the Pacific region indicating that the state of gender-based biases in Pakistan is abominable and worse, stagnant. The country ranked 124 on women’s health and survival, 129 on their educational attainment and a staggering 135 again on equal economic participation and opportunity.

Pakistan’s strengths are the number of its women in Parliament and in ministerial positions, sex ratio at birth, and female enrolment in tertiary education. But this positive position is obscured by her weaknesses which include low positions in health life expectancy, enrolment in primary and secondary education, overall literacy rate, professional and technical workers, legislators, senior officials and managers, wage equality, labor force participation.

**Gender Equality Efforts a Potential Contribution to Social Cohesion**

In this section, we examine gender equality related situation in Pakistan. Later we situate the initiatives of STEP project to determine contribution of the same towards social cohesion.

Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) project investigated and made interventions for addressing prevalent gender related issues in education in its target areas. An important success of this project is the gathering of data about the current gender related challenges in the target area. This anecdotal data was collected during the AEDOs and Dos courses. This was a group work therefore all the personal from the district gave their input. This data is important as it gives us an overview of the current situation regarding gender issues in these districts from high level sources and therefore are helpful is the development of District profiles. These participants represented ten districts and were supervising 3877 schools for both male and female
students, out of which 3584 were Primary schools, 279 middle and 14 elementary and high schools. The participants were given a guiding question to focus on their presentation, which was “What gender related issues and challenges are present in your district and what if anything do you do to overcome it?”

The presentations by the district officials showed that the main problems in the area regarding gender were issues of female mobility which is restricted. Safety of female teachers from harassment during their travel to far flung areas could not be guaranteed. Their travel unaccompanied by male members of their family is frowned upon by the community therefore this is not possible even when individuals themselves have fewer concerns about it. Due to large geographical spread and prevailing law and order situation travelling is very expensive also.

Mobility and access to school is a problem for girls and women as teachers and students, female schools do not have teachers, therefore girls and their families feel comfortable if the girl child is accompanied by their brother to the school.

Lack of facilities like schools for females, female teachers, and when school is present it lacks essential components like boundary wall, lavatory and water which are very important if these are not there then girls do not come to schools.

Gender discrimination, patriarchal and male dominance in the society, results in some parents not being motivated to support girl education. Community mobilization and involvement in addressing the gender related issues is also a problem. It was shared that in this district male teachers cannot venture into female schools freely and vice versa. Any teacher seeking support of a male teacher or community member does so at the risk of having her character questioned.

Another issue is community awareness and conviction of importance of girl education. An incident was narrated that a brother of a girl attended school for 1 year with his sister only for supervision purpose to see if any undesirable activity was going on in schools. After a year he stopped coming because he was satisfied that nothing was wrong. Poverty is another factor compounding the issues of girl education there. Poor quality of education, many reported, was an important reason for dropouts.

This anecdotal data and account of the prevailing situation is confirmed by other empirical sources. World Economic Forum report has been mentioned above. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2013 reports on enrolment of children in schools and out of school children sub categorized by gender and socioeconomic status.
STEP and Commitment towards Gender Equality

Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) program is designed to improve the quality and delivery of elementary education services appropriate to the poor, particularly women and children, by strengthening professional development and performance of teachers, teacher educators and education managers. A key aspect of the program is its strategic approach to gender equality. STEP is aiming to improve gender equality for students, teachers and administrators in the Pakistan education sector with a particular reference to the project’s focused regions. This is done through ensuring gender integration into all STEP programmatic activities including curriculum and curriculum materials of the
professional development programs, induction of course participants and project staff, documentation and monitoring and evaluation processes. Another important focus has been improving women’s equal participation in STEP program. With an understanding of women’s unique circumstances a case to case approach has been used to address women’s challenges in order to retain them in the programs.

The project has two main programs for improving the performance of its teachers. These are Cluster Based Mentoring Program (CBMP) and Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP). By using a cascade approach, the CBMP has developed 139 teachers as mentors to work with teachers of the schools which together form a cluster. These Mentors work with selected teachers referred to as ‘mentee teachers” for their professional development in four subject areas i.e., math, Science, Social Studies and English and Gender Equality in Education. These professional development activities include conducting workshops for mentee teachers, follow-up visits to the mentee teachers’ classrooms to provide feedback and support. The mentors followed the same process and approach taken by the STEP gender equality team in training them for their own mentees. The initial focus of these workshops was on basic concepts in the areas of Gender e.g., Gender and sex, gender discrimination, gender division of labor, gender mainstreaming gender analysis etc. After this initial basic proficiency has been achieved the focus has been on developing the teachers to achieving equality in schools and classrooms by ensuring gender sensitive instruction in trainings/classrooms.

A total of 20 schools currently participation in STEP project’ Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP) Initiative which through a systematic and efforts makes an attempt to improve learning opportunities and conditions for all learners. It is envisaged that a gender equality lens will help these WSIP schools to put concentrated efforts in improving quality of a) teaching learning processes and environment, b) leadership and management practices, c) curriculum implementation, d) staff development, e) community participation, and students’ learning outcomes.

Gender equality in the schools is linked with gender equality (or inequalities) in the larger community. This perspective has warranted community engagement important strategic move of STEP. For effective involvement of the community in its goal of promoting gender equality in society, STEP has undertaken activities such as the celebration of International Women Day in each of its target districts. The programs of these events are focused on certain themes which highlight the prevailing gender issues. Topics like “healthy girls, healthy families, healthy communities” helped the communities to focus on issues like equal opportunities in getting nutrition, health care etc. for all including women and girls. The project has developed connections at grassroot levels with community and reaches children through WSIP and CBMP programs. Through its programs and efforts the project is reaching out to a large number of teachers, teacher educators, education managers and local community to help these stakeholders recognize and address gender issues in their context.

During the efforts to bring more women to the project programs in order to ensure some degree of parity in number of project beneficiaries, the team realized that each woman’s
circumstances were unique and that laying one policy for facilitating the program participants will not help achieve the goals. Therefore a ‘Case to case approach’ was taken. This approach emphasized that each individual has unique circumstances and they especially women face gender related problems which arise from the norms and traditions of the particular are which they belong to. Therefore the solutions to these problems also needed to be individualized. For example, in some rural areas of the project’s target districts mobility of women within the area as well as travel to Karachi (venue for trainings and other project professional development activities was restricted to a large extent more so when women needed to travel alone without any male family member). Addressing this restriction on women’s mobility meant that the project not only facilitated the female course participant to travel to program site, but also supported travel of their male chaperones. This allowed many women to take part in the programs which otherwise was not possible. Another case exemplifies the complexity of the prevalent situation. In this particular situation the female student being given scholarship for pursuing M.Ed. studies belonged to a religious minority community facing forced conversions and marriages to religious majority. The family of the girl feared not only losing their family member to this tendency but also were apprehensive that the girl might not receive any marriage proposals if it was known that she had been living away from her family un-chaperoned. The scholarship provisions included boarding facility, which in this case was not acceptable to the female student’s family. Therefore, to ensure her participation in the program her family arranged for her to live with one of her close relatives in the city while the project provided for transport. Making this adjustment allowed the project to retain one more female beneficiary.

Retrospective analysis of views and reflection of the participants of various courses highlights a deep sense of desired gender equality in education. Despite all the efforts, project could not induct the desired number of women participants in the programs offered in Sindh and Baluchistan. One of the most important explanations of this phenomenon was women’s subordinate position in the society which results into scrutiny of women’s conduct including mobility at the hands of male family members and the society. In one instance, project’s gender consultant made a telephone call to a prospective female participant of a course. The call was received by the husband who right away shared that his wife would not attend the course. When asked the reason for his wife not attending the course, he said, “She is not attending because I do not want her to do”. With this he disconnected the call. In another instance, a female participant of a course reported that her grown up (already married) had not spoken to her since she came to Karachi to attend the course. Such is the resistance facing women if they attempt to deviate from the societal norms around women’s conduct in the society.

**Fundamental Premise for Gender Equality Related Work with Mentors**

Gender equality at students’ level is linked with teachers’ ability to demonstrate gender equitable practices. With an aim to improve gender equality in teaching learning process, project’s gender equality strategy helps mentors to develop the required knowledge and skills. It is expected that mentors’ understanding of gender aware teaching and learning
strategies and curriculum materials would improve teachers’ and students’ understanding of equality which will go long way to create equal opportunities in education and other domains.

**Process**

The process of ascertaining possibilities of promoting gender equality in education begins with teacher mentors unpacking their views around gender relationships in society. The project team working on Gender issues designed many interactive exercises to push start and facilitate this process. The sessions with teacher mentors helped them develop understanding of gender concepts, gender equality and issues of gender inequities in education and in their immediate context. Mentors sharpened their skill of doing analysis of case studies which had been developed from real life examples from the classrooms, schools and the communities. Analysis of curriculum and curriculum materials was yet another important exercise regularly undertaken by the mentors. Importantly, reference to local researches on issues of gender inequalities in education was important strategy to help the mentors situate the challenge of gender inequalities in their local context. Project has taken an incremental approach to help these mentors develop understanding of key concepts of gender. This incremental approach takes a simpler to complex route with presenting and explaining the concepts. This approach has strengthened mentors’ ability to work with their mentee teachers to develop gender equitable teaching environment in their classroom.

During their professional activities, Mentors attempt to integrate gender perspective in teaching practice. Their constant engagement with the key concepts of gender and skills and knowledge of integrating gender perspective in teaching and learning has led to development of their own workshop plans which they have implemented for their mentee teachers.

**Evidence of Changing Practices**

Mentors and other project staff report that teachers now are able to recognize stereotypical gender beliefs about science and math teaching and learning processes. They also recognize that textbooks do not promote gender equality which requires alternate explanations/materials by the teachers.

Use of gender sensitive language in lesson planning and its delivery by the mentee teachers seems to be an evidence of change reported through project districts. Other important change in the mentee teachers’ classroom is that they ensure equal participation of girls and boys in classroom activities. Many would assign leadership roles to girls during group work which is one important aspect of girls’ active participation in teaching and learning processes. Importantly, mentors and mentee teachers are found integrating gender equality perspective in the teaching learning materials and displays. However, we understand that the process of awareness of mentees about gender equality and incorporation of this perspective in their classroom teaching and learning is slow and requires persistent efforts.
Journey of Change as Experienced by the Individuals

The relationship between gender equality and cohesion is a direct one as more equal society is a more cohesive society where respect for one another despite diversity is abundant. It is logical that this respect for each other may lead to acceptance of equal status of men and women. In view of this, the potential contribution of gender equality measures to social cohesion in the STEP project work is abundantly clear. However, the deep rootedness of gender beliefs – the process of equipping someone with willingness and skills and knowledge to recognize and to address gender issues begins with unpacking gender related beliefs. This complexity poses enormous challenge which if addressed can have long term impact on more cohesive society with better gender relationships and empowered women.

An example of the deep seated cultural norms and practices which view women and girls as mothers and wives only, not allowing them any other expression of their self is a story of a female teacher shared during one of the project’s professional development sessions. The facilitator noticed that this particular teacher had excellent language skills, her choice of words was apt and she was very eloquent. Upon some probes about her language ability by the facilitators, this teacher shared that she was a literary person having written many volumes of prose as well as poetry. She wanted to get these published in her name but her brother stopped her from doing so by telling her that it was not a woman’s domain to be a writer and to express openly about issues of society and her personal feelings. He said that if you want it published he can help her but only if she assumes a male pseudonym. This teacher shared that this was unacceptable to her as she wanted to be known as herself. As the brother saw that she was determined to go on to do her will, one day during her absence he destroyed all her volumes leaving her bereft of her life’s work. This poignant story explicates the lived experience of inequality facing women in the communities which are focused by STEP.

From very onset we realized that in order to address inequalities in society, we need to draw particular attention to how men and women participate in activities in society to the discourse. Kelles-Viitanen and Shrestha (2011) found that deep seated cultural norms and practices continue to deter efforts towards gender equality as women are primarily viewed in their role as wives and mothers. This view is mirrored in the way women and girls are represented in textbooks and the roles they are presented in during the process of teaching and learning. Hence a deliberate approach was used to draw men as well as women participants into the process of analysis of socially constructed masculine and feminine attributes norms and practices. These processes engaged the participants in identifying connections between the disparities in education and gender inequalities in society. Many recognized the dichotomies in their lived experiences. The initial discussions focused on unpacking their beliefs and seeking to juxtapose them with their practices regarding gender inequality issues. During these sessions, the deep rootedness of participants’ beliefs in patriarchal structures with amalgamation of ‘religious viewpoints’ became abundantly clear. Despite the fact that the group has women participants, many strongly associated themselves within the gendered division of labour and hence considered four walls of home as women’s space and fulfilling their domestic chores was recognized the prime responsibility. Of
particular interest is a story of a male participant of CBMP program. He was part of the program since the beginning and was never a prominent contributor to class discussions. After about two years into the project activities one day he voluntarily shared that he was a staunch believer of the traditional role divide among men and women, and went quite far with his practice of the same. He would expect his wife to take care of the household, his children and also his personal needs. He would expect her to offer him water as soon as he entered the house. After that he would sit in a chair and expected her to take off his shoes for him. He expected his children to be neat and clean well fed and ready for school every day without any contribution from his side. After sharing these practices he described the transformation in his personal belief and practices as a result of participation in the project. He told us how he takes care of his children’s morning cleaning and bathing rituals preparing them for school, while his wife prepares breakfast. After this they all sit together to eat and he takes the children to school. He attributed this three hundred and sixty degree turn about to the discussions in the sessions and the activities which were part of the educating process. The most significant aspect of this incident is that he had the strength of conviction to come out openly with his changed stance in front of his colleagues without fear of losing face and respect as his compatriots belonged to the same value and belief system.

In majority of the project’s target districts propagation of family and family values was thought to be a basic raison d’être for women. One project beneficiary recorded his understanding of women’s position in society by saying that in his view women are only there ‘to obey men’ and that houses were appropriate places for them. Inherent in this belief is their assumption that women’s needs and wants extend to only resources available within the household and to whatever men provide for them. This particular person also explained the change in his views towards the end of the project, where he recorded that he was so surprised when he realized that women may need and want more than what is provided for her in the house. So essentially his thinking about women took on a more humanized shape as his understanding of gender equality enhanced. He shared his commitment to working for gender equality in his work as a teacher educator in future. This kind of conversion in ideology can only strengthen the social fabric of society.

Another strong belief was the sanctity of women as a person. One participant shared that “we believe women to be very sacred and we give them all our respect. We think women’s sacredness is seven times more that the holy book (Quran)”. The dichotomy inherent between the expressed belief and practice of honor killing and making girls give up their right to be married in the name of religion was not apparent to the participants. McDaniel (2003) argues that the knit of social fabric being dependent on relationality, on social caring and connectedness, on a sense of social cohesion comes into play at this point. Women as holders of rights to life and of attaining their potential and self-actualization and the practice of denying them these rights without any remorse on the part of the society that subscribes to these values displays the lived dichotomy of the society. McDaniel’s identification of the growing inequalities among genders as important dimensions of social cohesion calls for addressing these gender fault-lines. The STEP projects interventions in its target districts as has been discussed were important first steps to ensure social cohesion.
Social cohesion cannot be achieved until the professional as well as personal lives of people does not show the gender equality features. The institution of family is the basic structure and building block of society. Gender equality within the family and more specifically among husband and wife is essential for a cohesive structure. However this ideal is well beyond the reach of many women. Many women cannot even imagine their husbands to be in a subordinate or a lower social position than them. One participants’ story exemplifies how this position changed as a result of the project interventions. This husband and wife were both part of the project. The husband expected that his wife would take care of his needs within the house when he himself took no responsibility of taking care of house chores and children, also maintaining this subordinate position in the professional life too. However the wife is a hard working individual and was able to enhance her professional expertise to the extent that she was in a leadership position in the project as lead and Mentor teacher. This resulted in her husband becoming her “mentee teacher” sitting in her professional development sessions as a learner and taking feedback from her on his teaching and professional activities. The acceptance of this position not only within their own family, but also in the professional circle is a testimony of the success of the project in addressing the gender faultlines.

Project documents many such example of shifting positions as reported by male and female participants.

The experience I am going through in the M.Ed. program is an eye opener for me, let alone developing awareness about wide spread gender inequities in the society. Having been raised in an environment replete with gender prejudices I offered women biased treatment as an accepted social norm; when started working as a teacher I did not pay much attention to the girls in my classroom. Now I find myself much more equipped to tackle gender based issues in my school when I return to teaching.

M.Ed. student (male) who attended ‘Gender and Education’ course

One important evidence and precondition of changing gender relationship is indeed women’s ability to recognize their agency. Many women felt that power within and realized their worth in the equation of gendered fabric of the society. A woman mentee teacher narrated her narrative of change proudly to the external reviewers who were to document project as a mid-term review exercise. She, as a member of a marginalized community which has little or no value for women’s education, has now taken up responsibility of changing life opportunities for young girls and women in her community. Her strategies include workshops/sessions for women and discussions with members of her community. Another such narrative is presented in the vignette below.

My brothers are foreign qualified but they forced me to wear a veil and insist on making decisions for me. I have showed them the material shared with us in the classm last time to make them realize their practices. I will further work on them as well as with my mentees. This is a challenging work for me.

Female participant of a gender workshop
Importantly, women’s sense of agency, we felt, was an important first step towards their personal and professional freedom. While many continue their struggle towards this end, some women have recognized their pathways leading to a gender equitable society.

**Gender Equality and Social Cohesion**

Emphasis on teaching and learning and the project’s work to enhance women’s participation in programs highlighted the groundedness of gender inequalities in the society. Retrospective analysis of views and reflection of the participants of various courses highlights a deep sense of desired gender equality in education. Gender equality attempts in education, to some extent, have affected immediate communities around schools where mentors are their mentee teachers are located. While a detail of this phenomenon as yet to be investigated, STEP’s gender equality related provides a premise for a discussion around its relationship with potentials of promoting social cohesion in the society.

Earlier discussions on gender equality and social cohesion can be now revisited on the context of STEP’s attempts of addressing, in the words of McDaniel (2003), gender faultlines which she thinks needs to be examined if cohesive society is the desired outcome. A consideration of social justice as key principle of social cohesion which, according to Delport (2009), requires equity based treatment to the individuals and groups to ensure an access to and participation in different realms of a society. Review of social cohesion related initiatives in different contexts by Delport (2009), Barnes et al, and Kelles-Viitanen and Shrestha (2011) suggest that many countries have developed comprehensive policy interventions towards prompting cohesiveness in their societies. However, such policy interventions have wither fell short and implementation or have not equally benefitted women who are excluded from the process of development due to the deep-rooted patriarchal cultural norms. Examples from STEP’s work on gender equality have also demonstrated such a challenge in the contexts of Sindh and Baluchistan. The norm of women’s restricted mobility and stringent measures of maintain gender division of labour are two visible constrains in women’s participation in educational development efforts which ultimately hinder gender equality- important attribute of a cohesive society.

**Recommendations**

On the basis of the discussion on social cohesion and gender equality across the globe, we recommend following:

Considering gender equality as a cross cutting dimension of a cohesive society, as suggested by Delpot (2009), we need to situate the social cohesion discussion within the discourse of social justice and human rights. Furthermore, gender as an important dimension of social cohesion warrants addressing inequalities around gender and increasing diversity in society which, according to McDaniel, is an important first step to ensure social cohesion.

Policy interventions and legislations needs to be mindful of deeply ingrained gender discriminatory cultural norms. As examples from STEP’s interventions have demonstrated,
critical engagement of individuals in examining their own position of gender equality is important precursor of all policy related interventions. Such an approach has potentials for successful policy implementation towards aspiration for a cohesive society.

**Policy Context for Pakistan**

Pakistan’s National Education Policy (2009) and National Youth Development Policy and Youth Development Policy of Punjab have promises of providing equal education and development opportunities to all and sundry. The context which is marred with political, ethnic, language and class differences has yet to go long way to discover what policy interventions will promote trust and respect for diversity. Aspirations to achieve shared goal around national good are yet to be developed. Till that time comes, education policy needs to be implemented with greater focus on gender equality in education and through education. By building on the lessons learnt from STEP, teacher education programs need to develop curricula which would facilitate teachers and other future education leaders to promote gender equitable teaching learning environment.

**Theorizing Gender Equality and Social Cohesion**

To prepare policy context, the academicians and researchers needs to engage in theorization of gender equality in the context of social cohesion. Gender equality initiatives have been regularly part of development discourse. Researching such undertakings will help see equality in the larger context of a desired cohesive society.

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The Global Gender Gap Report 2013: published by the World Economic Forum

Annual status of education report ASER-Pakistan 2013
THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Duishon Shamatov, University of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan

Education during the Soviet Era: The Soviets realised that the tempo of societal progress depended on the development of science and education, and Kyrgyzstan achieved considerable progress in education during the Soviet era. From its outset, education in the USSR was free. With massive campaigns, the literacy rate in what is now Kyrgyzstan jumped from 16.5 percent in 1926 to 99.8 percent in 1979 (Ibraimov, 2001). Schools were built in the most remote mountain villages and by 1978, there were 1,757 schools with 854,000 students enrolled and 50,000 teachers employed (Tabyshaliev, 1979).

At the same time, there were problems with Soviet education. All students were exposed to the same centrally designed curriculum, with minor local adaptations to accommodate each Soviet republic (De Young, 2001; Heyneman, 2000). The state controlled educational institutions, teaching appointments, syllabi and textbooks to ensure that all learners were exposed to the same outlook and official knowledge and attitudes (Apple, 1993; Heyneman, 2000). While Soviet education overtly promoted internationalism above nationalist and ethnic identities, many scholars argue that in practice it promoted Russian identity over other national identities within the USSR (Korth, 2001; Niyozov, 2001). A system of education with both Kyrgyz and Russian-language medium schools was introduced in Kyrgyzstan early in the Soviet era. After the late 1950s, parents ostensibly had a choice in the language of instruction for their children. However, socio-economic and ideological pressure to send children to Russian-speaking schools was strong (Korth & Schulter, 2003), and there were critical differences between Russian schooling and schooling in local languages. The reality was that Russian speakers occupied the higher positions in most Soviet institutions (Korth, 2004). As a result many people, including elite Kyrgyz families, preferred Russian school education.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan began experiencing serious problems in the field of education (DeYoung, 2004). Pre-school enrolment declined catastrophically; out of 1,604 pre-school institutions existing in 1991, only 416 remained by 2000 (DeYoung, 2004), and overall pre-school enrolment in Central Asia was only 14 percent in 1999 (Open Society Institute, 2002). About 83.6 percent of the population of Kyrgyzstan completed secondary education in 1993; this decreased to 76.4 percent in 1996, and further to 69 percent in 1999 (DeYoung, 2002).

The gap between the quality of education offered in urban and rural schools became evident. Under a reform effort called “diversification,” new, innovative private schools such as lyceums, gymnasiums, author schools, and schools for gifted children emerged (Holmes, Read & Voskresenskaya, 1995; Open Society Institute, 2002). Overall, there are 73 private schools in Kyrgyzstan (Interview, staff of Ministry of Education and Science, July, 2010). These are mostly located in urban areas with wealthy families who can afford to pay school fees (Open Society Institute, 2002). However, almost 70 percent of Kyrgyzstan’s population and 83 percent of schools are located in rural areas (UNDP report, 2003). Children from rural and mountain schools receive poor quality education. They are also frequently distracted by agricultural work and other family responsibilities (DeYoung et. al. 2006; Open Society Institute, 2002). According to official sources, over 2,500 school-age children dropped out of
school in 2001 and according to the National Statistics Committee, 1,542 children of ages between 7 and 17 did not attend school in 2008. However, unofficial reports suggest that the actual number far exceeds this figure (DeYoung & Santos, 2004). These dropout rates are a by-product of economic collapse and declining support for the social sector, with primary reasons including poverty, insufficient food, lack of adequate clothing, inability to afford learning materials, and the increasing cost of education. The declining prestige and perceived value of education has also contributed to drop-out rates (Open Society Institute, 2002).

To address the problems in the field of education, many reform initiatives have been introduced in Kyrgyzstan over the last two decades since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan has received substantial support from multilateral and bilateral donors targeting increased access and quality in the education sector. Despite positive inputs from donors, the education system is in precarious situations.

Since independence, Kyrgyzstan has been subject to a myriad of international education-assistance projects including international agencies, private foundations and philanthropists, and international nongovernmental organizations. The following is a list of international agencies and organizations working in Kyrgyzstan: (a) international agencies (UN, World Bank, IMF, EBRD, ADB, OSCE); (b) foreign agencies (USAID, JICA, CIDA, TICA, GTZ, DANIDA); private foundations and philanthropists (OSI, Soros Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation); and (c) international NGOs (Save the children, Mercy Corps, Academy of Educational Development, CARE, and others). These agencies and organizations have been assisting the Ministry of Education and Science to conduct many education reforms. The reforms covered a range of areas including curricular reforms, introduction of standards and/or outcome-based education, student-centered learning, decentralization of education finance and governance, and standardization of student assessment. The donors have been involved in the following education spheres new curriculum (OSI, ADB and USAID), textbook development (ADB, WB, USAID), student-centered/interactive teaching methods (USAID, WB, USAID), per capita financing (USAID and ADB), inclusive education (USAID, UNICEF, ADB, Save the Children), internal assessment (USAID, WB, ADB), external assessment (WB, USAID), and others.

The following are some examples of the educational projects funded by international donor agencies: WB 2005-2011 Rural education project with 15 mln USD, ABD in 2004-2010 on Early childhood development with 12 mln USD, ADB in 1998-2004 on Education sector development program with 37 mln USD, and ADB in 2006-2011 on Second Education Project with 15.5 mln USD.

While the contributions of the donor agencies are praiseworthy and much needed, often there is dissonance between the discourse of donors and the local needs. It is still unclear whether the initiatives of donor agencies truly reflect local needs and bring about sustainable improvements. Besides, different components of education, such as curriculum framework, subject curriculum, assessment, teacher development, textbook development, are being worked on by different agencies who work often with little or no communication. There is no effective coordination between all the international and national institutions working on educational sector. KAE specialist argued,

It is true that there are many international organizations working on education sectors, but the problem is that in most cases they choose education issues and problems for their project themselves without asking the MoES suggestions. Sometimes, they repeat already implemented projects. Unfortunately, the MoES also does not actively suggest educational issues. (Interview with KAE specialist, June 25, 2009).
Fullan and Miles (1992), analyzing the history of successful and unsuccessful reforms, asserted that most reforms fail because of the following reasons:

- They are top-down and ready solutions brought from outside to address complex contextual issues
- Fail to recognize that problems are complex, but instead adopt superficial solutions, emphasizing symbols over substance
- Pseudo involvement (imitation) of everyone in change process
- There’s misunderstanding of resistance and thinking that some people will never change and seeing them as problems
- No consideration for developing local capacity
- Wishful thinking and legislation have poor records as tools for social betterment

Moreover, failure to institutionalize an innovation underlies the disappearance of many reforms. Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2009) refer to some NGO-implemented projects ‘as opulent islands in otherwise empty seas’ and unfortunately the track record, as reviewed in the literature, gives similar impression of many projects initiated by the donor agencies.

There is no systematic, well-coordinated effort. On the contrary, there is often overlap and duplication. Most reform initiatives are not institutionalized, indicating a lack of sustainability (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2007). Systemic change on education system is only possible when all stakeholders and international organizations coordinate their activities with each other and when the initiatives focus on strengthening institutionalization and sustainability. In one of the more scathing indictments of donor coordination, Cassidy (2009) notes that despite the rhetoric and some efforts by donors and lenders, most groups working in programs and projects ‘seem content to do their own things with minimal meaningful sharing of results, materials, activities and plans and little real effort at coordination of their activities.’

Political instability in Kyrgyzstan, including two drastic government changes in the past five years, has led to discontinuity in the work of education authorities. A specialist from KAE noted, “There have been constant changes in the appointment of Ministers of Education. We had 10 ministers of education in for the last 15 years. How can we expect improvements? When one minister is just getting to conceptualize the education reforms, he or she is replaced’” (Interview, June 25, 2009). There is also a lack of strong local capacity of education experts and policymakers. Reforms are implemented sporadically and ad hoc with different planning agencies and implementing bodies that do not communicate. Most reform initiatives and documents are conceptualized and designed primarily by international agencies. “Education system reforms have been driven primarily by the agendas and procedures of the funding and technical assistance agencies, with the result that reforms are imposed externally rather than initiated internally” (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009, p. 10). Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2009) report that “They [government education officials] had to convey a graphic sense of educational crisis to attract external funding. ….After years of using ineffective strategies to attract international donors, the ministries of education finally learned to belittle their own accomplishments and instead emphasize how far their system lagged behind other countries” (p.14). These new tactics were contrary to what government education authorities had been accustomed to do for many years, that is, to glorify that their goals had been accomplished, and often ahead of time. Now, they have become keen to state how far the education away from “international standards” was (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009, p.15). To secure a grant or loan, ministry of education officials haves learned to speak the language of the international donors and have familiarized themselves with the current...
philosophy of aid that emphasizes needs rather than accomplishments. However, this strategy of stressing shortcomings can be misleading, because “In order to establish a need for external intervention or funding, the ministries of education sometimes tamper with statistics” (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009, p.16).

Thus, as mentioned above, there is no effective cooperation between all the international and national organizations and institutions working on educational sector. They often work on similar projects without much collaboration. Systemic change on education system is only possible when all stakeholders and international organizations coordinate their activities with each other (Steiner-Khamsi, 2007). There is also ineffective use of donor resources and politics of donor involvement as well as uneven geographical coverage by donors, and there are some schools, for example which participated in almost all projects while others did not participate in a single project so far. Thus, one could argue that there is saturation in some places and little/no involvement in other areas. Also, it is rarely euphemistic to call many of the international projects as “pilot projects”, because as a rule nothing happens once their term is completed. But, most NGO-implemented projects remained just pilot projects or simply become “opulent islands in otherwise empty seas” (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi, 2009). “Pilot” implies that there will be replication or sustainability of it one way or another, but many projects come and go, without leaving much imprint in our education system. It is understandable that international private firms and consultancy groups which operate on behalf of the international donor agencies by winning their tender bids, and they need to “demonstrate” their successes, because they are usually short term pilot projects. Thus, they often work with the schools and educators who can create an image of short-term success, rather than thinking of the long-term implications of the projects. Thus, some valid questions can be asked at the end: What will be left when the money runs out and when the project is over? Ideally, institutionalization projects in state education structures and replicated by government and other international donors. It is a great belief that in the future, new projects will have much more positive impact on the education and development in the country than the previous ones.

Reference


HOW CAN ART ACTIVITIES HELP STUDENTS EXPRESS THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ETHICS AND DEVELOPMENT MODULE?

Erum Aziz, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Abstract

Civilizations have used art as a mode of expression for recording and documenting human experiences and understanding about the world. However, using art as tool for the intellectual, social and personal development of the student was not practiced by teachers in general. In case of teaching practice in Religious Education classes in the context of Karachi, Pakistan, the teacher-centered approach dominates the learning milieu, where students are mere recipients of information. For this purpose, the research study was an attempt to explore how creative art activities as an innovative tool can assist in transferring teacher-centered learning to student-centered. The study investigates the ways in which drama and posters as art activities can create student-centered learning in the classroom that help them express their understanding of the Ethics module. Four different data sets were used during the research: student interviews, student reflections, student work and a teacher journal. The findings support the idea that creative art activities have the potential to foster student-centered learning by constructing an active learning environment in the classroom. The results show that such an active learning environment is built because of the new learning opportunities that drama and posters created such as visual learning and collaborative learning. Analysis of the findings also points out that engaging in visual and social learning activities enhances the thinking skills of the students. Overall, it was found that art activities provide students a space to think and learn in a dynamic way by creating variety of learning opportunities such as visual, kinesthetic and social. The research study shows that creative art activities particularly drama has a high potential to change teaching and learning environment as it create an active learning environment in the class by placing the responsibility of learning, on the learners. Thus, the study also shows drama as an effective tool for teaching of different ethical and social dilemmas because it can provide students a framework and supportive structure through which students can imagine inquire and discuss together.

Key words: Teacher-centered, student-centered, Ethics module, visual learning, collaborative learning

Introduction

Generally, students are found to be passive in religious education classrooms (RECs), meaning that they become mere receivers of information. As a result, students are usually unenthusiastic and inactive in the classroom. Therefore, when deciding the focus of my research, I wanted to explore a pedagogy that can bring change in the current teaching and learning practice of my home context. Hence, to achieve the above-mentioned aim, I chose the strategy of creative art to build an engaging learning environment in the classroom (Watkins 2005).

Hence, my research questions and subsidiary questions were

How can art activities help students express their understanding of the EDM?
Subsidiary Questions
- How can the integration of arts activities create opportunities for students to learn and express themselves in the classroom?

- How might these activities facilitate the development of creative skills beyond the Religious Education context?

- What are students' views about including art activities in the classroom?

Context of the Research
I carried out my research in a REC in Karachi, Pakistan. I taught grade seven students between ages of 12 to 13 years. I conducted the research over six weeks, one class per week of two hours each. The module that was taught to the students was titled “Ethical Pathways to Human Development (EDM)”. The content included socio-economic challenges, which today’s world faces.

Literature Review
Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (1896) defines art as an expression of human feeling or experience by means of certain external signs or symbols. Mockler (2002) reports that art strategies such as drama and visual art are influential modes of teaching that could facilitate to transform a lecture-based mode into an interactive and participative mode. Regardless of many benefits, opponents describe it as a leisure activity and confine art for wealthy and talented people (Simon and Hicks 2006). However, research studies have opposed the notion of arts as a non-cognitive exercise (Arnheim 1974, Perkins 1994), rather claims that art can develop the cognitive skills of the students because the creation of art and reflecting on it involves students in a rigorous thinking process (Sahasrabudhe, 2006).

Drama is a broad domain that covers many types of performances such as role-play, mime, puppetry and radio plays. For my research study, I use role-play as an expression of drama, which is defined as an action during which students assume the role of another person in a specific and simple situation (Ladousse 1987). Research studies have shown evidence that drama has proved to be a powerful tool in education as it involves a high degree of thinking, feeling and moving activities that can help in the experiential learning of the students (Sahasrabudhe 2006, Fleming 2010).

Furthermore, creative drawing has been used as a way to facilitate students to express a range of views, experiences and feelings related to the topics being discussed in the classroom (Bloomfield and Childs 2000). It covers a wide range of art expressions, from realistic to abstract forms. However, for this research I used a medium of creative drawing called posters, which is defined as a means by which students can express their understanding about a particular topic through images and text (IIS curriculum 2010). Hence, it is not mere drawing or painting, but requires students to describe their thoughts in the form of words as well. I used posters within drama as a teaching tool, therefore, the space provided by posters for both drawing and descriptions worked appropriately for the purpose of my research.

Methodology and Data Collection Methods
The study aimed to investigate how drama and posters as teaching tools can provide opportunities for learning and its expression for the students. It also aimed to improve the
teaching practice of the teacher-researcher; therefore, action research having qualitative approach was chosen as the research design. Action research is defined as the study of a social action, which is carried out to improve or bring a change in the current practices (Eliott 1991).

To analyze the effectiveness of arts as a teaching tool, group interview, student reflections, student work and my reflective journal were used as data collection tools. An hour-long group semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the intervention cycle to obtain students’ responses about drama and posters (Hopkins 2008). Secondly, students’ opinions about classroom teaching and setting were obtained through reflective journals that facilitated in assessing their learning. Besides, six detailed reflective entries were wrote in teacher journal by me as it became my voice that acted as an alternative lens through which research was reviewed (Robson, 2002). Lastly, student work was an important tool as it illustrated students’ comprehension of the topics (Denscombe 2007).

**Findings and Analysis**

To make sense of the field data; Hopkins’s (2008) ‘four stages of classroom research’ (p137) was adopted as an analytical framework. The stages comprise of, 1) generation of categories 2) validation of categories using trustworthiness techniques (in my case triangulation) 3) interpretation by reference to literature and 4) action for further development.

Looking across the four data sets, the following three main themes emerged:

**Visual Learning**

The activity of drama has three phases; preparation of drama, presenting it in front of class and the discussion which follows it (Horbook 1998, McCaslin 2006 and Baldwin and Fleming 2003). The results from all data sets give evidences that each phase of drama was providing opportunity to experience some aspects of visual learning to the students. For example, the preparation phase where students talked and thought about enactment offered them an imaginary world; they first form an imaginary picture of the situations given to them and later transfer it into visual representations through the scenes of drama or drawings on posters.

I felt that an element of drama activity that helped students to express their understanding was that it provides a space to imagine the lives of other people and experience their situation in an unnatural environment. Here imagination and creative expression is not only about visual illustrations but also about images that evoke emotions and a rich understanding of content in students' minds (Egan 1992).

The third element of drama activity is the discussion that followed after looking and observing each performance. Looking at others work act as an audio-visual resource in the classroom. It enhanced their understanding, as they were able to reflect on their own learning during follow-up discussion by comparing their thoughts with views and perspectives other than their own. Students shared in interviews and reflections;

‘Looking at the role play of helping others, I experienced how the real situation would be and how I even as a kid can help them’ (B, student interview).

Here posters were used in form of chart papers as a scaffold in the preparation phase; to help them draw what they wanted to present in the drama and write a short description explaining the drawing. Unlike drama, students’ responses for poster activity were not positive, most of the students showed less interest in drawing and were unenthusiastic. Despite of the
limitation of students’ unwillingness to draw using colours, their responses showed the effectiveness of posters in comprehending the topics. A feature of poster that helped them in understanding of the topics was the space it provides the students to transform their ideas into reality through artifacts such as images and pictures.

Social Learning

The second key finding after looking across all data sets was opportunity of social learning for the students. The evidences informed that social learning occurred as a by-product. As drama needs a team to execute the work, therefore students were working and learning together in small groups. Similar was the case while creating posters. The ‘working together’ aspect allowed collaborative learning among students. Collaborative learning is defined as a situation in which two or more individuals are engage in a single task where they learn together by sharing information with each other and evaluating one another’s ideas (Dillenbourg 1999).

Participant responses affirm that while working together in groups, students received an opportunity of learning from their peers.

‘Group discussions were good; it increased my knowledge about ethics, as we all shared our ideas with each other’ (R, student reflection7/5/2011)

My journal entries also informed me that during drama activities the students gradually became attentive about the fact that in order to perform well in front of the class, they need to co-operate with each other and value each other’s view as well.

Critical Thinking

Both visual learning and collaborative learning also developed critical thinking skills among the students. Critical thinking is broadly defined as ‘reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do’ (Ennis 1987, n.p). Critical thinking helps students to make decisions by an in-depth analysis of the situations or problems assigned to them (Eyerdam 2003). Drama was promoting thinking skills as it gave imaginary issues where students have to analyze the dynamics of an issue through placing themselves in other people’s shoes. Imagining themselves as someone else promoted thinking skills as they reflected on what they already knew about the issue from both the story and its characters and the self-knowledge. They made decisions by thinking about pros and cons of particular course of action. Students also shared,

‘In drama, I look at why people have done things, and look deeper into it’ (A, student interview)

Thinking skills were also developed while students approached a shared task through collaborative talk, and active listening during group activities. Collaborative activities promote thinking skills because during group activities; explanation, disagreements and mutual decision-making trigger cognitive domain of the students (Dillenbourg 1999). A student shared,

‘During the role play on honesty, while preparing and discussion in group I realized that how much honesty is important for my life as well which I was ignoring’ (A, student interview).

Poster work encouraged critical thinking of the students as they tried to record their thoughts in form of symbols and pictures and explained the reasons why they drew certain things. Students’ reflection on their own drawing and images helped them to develop critical
thinking skills, as they get involved in the process of self-analysis (Bloomfield and Childs 2000).

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The research aimed to explore the ways in which art activities create opportunities for students to express their learning of the EDM. The findings indicate that drama and poster work can create both the experience and expression of visual learning for the students, in which they can learn by imagining themselves as someone else (either through role-play or by drawing in posters), expression of their work and viewing other’s work (Edmiston and Wilhem 1996).

The findings also provides evidences that expression through art work of one group of students in the form of drama or a poster can also act as a visual aid for others in the class, where students takes the role of audience, observe other group’s performances and presentation. Overall Drama and Posters did assist students in expressing their views but it could not be assumed that this would be possible without encountering any hurdles. Few challenges were also faced by teacher-researcher in implementing these pedagogies. Reflection on these challenges also guides the action for future practice. During the research study, a key challenge for me was that, unexpectedly, most of the students were reluctant to do poster work. The reason for such unwillingness towards the use of this medium could be that poster was an entirely new task for them, even in secular school students are not used to transform their thinking into pictures or drawing.

Despite of my own experience, I still believe it cannot be generalize that poster making is less effective as pedagogy, rather success of any activity depends upon the dynamics of a particular class. On the contrary, most students responded positively to their experiences of drama and the way it assisted in the expression of their ideas. Nonetheless, few students were uncomfortable to perform in front of the class. They were shy and resistant to participate in role-plays. Literature suggests that if a student does not want to perform in front of the class, a teacher should not force him/her. To solve the problem, teacher can introduce new tasks such as recorders of enactments in the class which suits student’s learning style (Wihelm 2002) or divide the responsibilities such as scriptwriting, art design.

In nut shell, as a practitioner-researcher, I learnt many things from the process. The practice of systematic reflective process helped me to improve my teaching and learning approaches. It also allowed me to identify some factors that can hinder students’ learning in a classroom.

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Introduction

Background
Students in secular schools and Religious Education Centre (REC) in Pakistan are exposed to the reception model of teaching where the teacher is widely seen as a repository of knowledge and the students as passive listeners. The introduction of collaborative learning methods in REC and its impact on student learning challenges this approach to education as students are now also involved in working together in achieving the objectives of the lesson. By means of using specific collaborative learning approaches mentioned later in the paper, I believe students will be encouraged to take responsibility of their own learning - thus to a great extent, shifting the onus from the teacher to the student.

Purpose and Aims
The main purpose of conducting this research was two-fold. Firstly, I wanted to experiment with these methods in Pakistani context. Secondly, the aim was to acquaint the students to a student-centred approach to learning.

Context of Research
This empirical research study took place in an affluent area of Karachi, Pakistan at one of the REC, henceforth known as Centre A. The class taught was Grade 8 and was spread across six sessions. On an average, fifteen students attended these sessions. The class duration varied between 75 to 90 minutes.

Hypothesis
The hypothesis of my research is that students of Grade 8 in Centre A respond positively to collaborative methods of learning as it allows them to gain a greater understanding of content knowledge and enables them to learn social skills by interacting with one another.

Literature Review
Co-operative learning and collaborative learning have often been used interchangeably by many but according to some there are a few differences. According to Simons et al. (2000), collaborative learning is considered to be a knowledge construction process where interaction and negotiations occur with the teacher, other students and the teaching materials. However, Watkins et al. (2007) argues that the essence of the term `collaboration` is to labour together. It is vital that all participants in the pair or group share information and work together towards achieving the common goal. Thus, the success of one learner helps the other students to be successful. Co-operative learning, on the other hand is considered to be the most structured approach that is “imposed by the teacher and is designed to achieve a specific goal or end product” (ibid). In Pakistan educational setting, both in secular and faith based
education contexts, the teacher is considered to be the source of knowledge in the classroom. Students always look up to the teacher for the correct answer as she/he is taken to be the single authority in class. Contrary to this idea, Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) hypothesize that knowledge is not simply passed down from the teacher to the student. Rather, meaning is constructed through joint activity, interaction and collaboration between the students and the teacher. Thus, one of the aspects of collaborative learning is working together in pairs or groups – a strategy that will be used in this research to emphasize the positive interdependence between students.

Dialogue plays a vital role in group work. Anderson (1999, p65) is of the opinion that dialogue is a “dynamic generative kind of conversation in which there is room for all voices”. To support this point of view, Carnell and Lodge (2002, p15) posit that when people dialogue they are “engaged in conversations in a spontaneous way, building on the ideas of one another. This is often expressed as excitement, physical proximity, raised energy levels and sudden movements”.

At this stage, for the purpose of the work in progress, I will be using the terms `cooperation` and `collaboration` interchangeably as many researchers have done so in the educational literature.

**Methodology and Methods**

**Methodology**

This was a small-scale action research that was conducted over six sessions. The pedagogy adopted was mostly a student-centred approach to teaching. This paper will focus on three learning techniques that were used namely:

1. Debate:
2. Role Play:
3. Think – Pair - Share:

**Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative data was collected by the following instruments:

- Student Journal: (primary source)

Secondary sources:

- Teacher’s Field Notes and Reflections:
- Student Work:

**Ethical Considerations**

Participation in this research was voluntary. Confidentiality of the participants was ensured at all times.

**Findings and Analysis**

Collaborative learning techniques used were: Debate, Role Play and Think-Pair-Share, each of which presents a brief description of the task, followed by the teacher’s and students’
perspectives emerging from student journals, teachers’ field notes, reflections and students’ work.

1. **Debate**

**Description of Task**

The class was divided into three equal groups namely `Humans`, `Animals` and `Jinns`. All groups formed had a mix of boys and girls. The debate conducted was on an Islamic fable called *Ikwan –al- Safa* (Brethen of Purity) where the `Humans` and the `Animals` argued over who was superior. Each group brainstormed their ideas and then presented their case. The `Jinns` were assigned the task of being the judges. They acted as a neutral group where their role was to define a criterion, carefully observe the case between the `Humans` and the `Animals` and finally pass a judgement.

**Teachers’ Perspectives**

The first group called `Humans` had four members. Whilst the students brainstormed, Student A titled their presentation as “*Humans and Animals were created equal BUT...*”. Another student mentioned

“*humans are on the top of every food chain*”

His friend added

“*Humans are Ashraf –ul- Maklukat – Allah’s greatest creation indicating that they are in fact superior*”

Student D expressed her idea by stating

“*humans have evolved much much faster*”

Whilst facilitating the group, I observed that Student D rarely participated in the discussion and when she was asked to elaborate her point, she remained quiet. Her behaviour prompted me to gradually engage her in the discussion by asking her simple questions like what is your opinion about this point? What do you think about this matter? Despite my efforts, I noted her hesitance in engaging in the group discussion. At the end of the class she explained that she was not very comfortable in talking as she had recently moved from a village to this town and was therefore shy to talk in class. This incident also highlighted that students from a different background may behave differently to changing methods of teaching.

The debate was a very interesting one where each group presented their case to the third group i.e. `Jinns`. The students began to weigh one argument against another. Hence, they not only delved deeper in the matter but also became more analytical and critical.

**Pupil Perspectives**

The students seemed to enjoy this activity and were of the opinion that it improved their understanding of the subject matter as stated:

“*I think I learnt a lot through debate and discussion...how to co-operate with my fellow group members, how to express myself... I learnt how to think in different ways*”

“*...there was a lot of discussion...It was very knowledgeable and interesting to work together*”

The comments suggest that the debate allowed them to have a greater and in-depth understanding of the topic. Notably, the debate enabled them to synthesize as well as internalise information by arguing and justifying their ideas to the other group.
In addition, after much discussion and talk among themselves, the `Jinns` created a criterion that served as a tool to judge the other groups work. Engagement in this process and the manner in which they analyzed and assessed both the groups suggests that not only did this seem to have stimulated their thinking process but also seemed to have enhanced their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

**Analysis**

This was the first time I had done group work in my class. Students were randomly selected. All three groups had a mix of boys and girls but the dynamics in each group differed. Findings suggest that collaboration was taking place in all the groups.

2. **Role Play**

**Description of task**

The students were given the opportunity to form their own groups. Group A comprised of boys, Group B comprised of girls and Group C had boys and girls. Each group had to read, identify the themes in the story and present it to the class in the form of a role play.

**Teachers’ Perspective**

During their group activity, I observed that the working relationship amongst the students had improved as compared to the previous class. Students wrote:

*We formed groups with our choice. This was because we could be comfortable working and acting*”

*I formed my group because they were my friends and I enjoy working with them. This is because we know each other and we work well*

Hence, in this particular activity, the students showed preference in working with their friends. However, what was evident in these friendship groups was that it resulted in two distinct gender groups. Group C was the only group that had a mix of boys and girls.

Group A worked well as they were constantly engaged in talking to each other. Admittedly, Group A showed distinct signs of motivation and excitement.

The second group, comprising of girls only, worked differently. They belonged to different secular schools but were good friends. However, one of them seemed to be controlling the group and not taking their ideas on board. Consequently, some students were confused.

At this point I recognized my limitation as a teacher facilitating three groups simultaneously in a classroom.

The third group was a mixed gender group. Although they worked independently, they were still interdependent on each other as they needed to come together as a group in order to present their role play to the class. Hence, positive interdependence existed where efforts of each group member was required to achieve the group goal.

**Pupil Perspectives**

Role play served as an interesting and fun activity for the students as was reflected in their journals. In terms of learning, the enactments demonstrated that the students learnt a lot, both in terms of content as well as in terms of skill as stated in their journals.
Analysis

During this activity, students self-selected groups mostly based on friendship that also resulted in two distinct gender groups. Overall, I observed that the students were very much engaged in this process of creating a role play. In most cases, not only did it require them to take ownership of their work but also enabled them to learn some social skills by working together as a group. It gave them the space and the opportunity to create something new without any interference from the teacher.

Also, in order to achieve the group purpose the students were seen as highly dependent on each other. By talking, discussing and synthesizing information, they were constructing knowledge together.

Stepping back and reflecting on the group formation, I realized that group composition could play a vital role in the success of a group. Thus for my next class, I kept this in mind and grouped students by random selection.

3. *Think-Pair Share*

Description of Task

The students were randomly divided into pairs. It seemed like they also got uncomfortable when they ended up being paired with the opposite gender.

Teachers’ Perspective

I observed that the think-pair-share did not work very well. Most of the students did not seem to be happy with their pairs perhaps, because they were not paired with someone of their choice.

Mixed gender grouping could also be one of the reasons for students’ dissatisfaction with the pairing. The students belong to a cultural context where they do not always feel comfortable in interacting and working with people of the opposite gender.

Pupil Perspectives

Contrary to my perspective that this activity did not work very well, students’ reflective journals showed that most of the students enjoyed pair work.

Nevertheless, the written comments of a handful of students indicated that they did not seem to benefit much from the activity as they were not able to collaborate with their partners very well.

Analysis

Students were paired by random selection with the person sitting next to them. In this way the students were provided with the opportunity to “discover what anyone and everyone in their class can contribute to their learning” as every student is a valuable member of the class (Sharan & Sharan, 1992, p44). There seemed to be mixed responses to pair work. It can be inferred that while some students enjoyed and benefitted from pair work, others found it ineffective due to incompatible working partners. For some, working with the opposite gender made them uncomfortable whilst for others not working with their friends was challenging as forming a working relationship takes time and practice.
Discussion and Conclusion

Learning from this process of researching with RE students was illuminating for me as it enabled me to gain a better and deeper understanding of two important aspects of student-centred learning: student talk in construction of knowledge and my role of a teacher as a facilitator.

Student Talk

This research has led me to realize the importance and value of student talk in how students interact and create knowledge together. In all the activities conducted during this research, the students were engaged in the process of talking, discussing and analysing ideas. According to Sharan and Sharan (1992, p23) “children’s talk makes a significant contribution to learning. Talk is also a way by which students explore their ideas, clarify to themselves and to one another, expand and modify them and finally make them their own”.

Teacher as a Facilitator

Teachers play a critical role in implementing a collaborative learning pedagogy in the classroom where the aim is to promote interactions among the students and engage them in the learning process (Gillies, 2007). Whilst implementing a student-centred approach to learning, I recognized that my role as a teacher had changed. In contrast to the traditional method of teaching where the teacher serves as the instructor, in a student-centred approach, the teacher’s role was that of a facilitator. Rather than looking up to me for the correct answer, the students were involved in the process of dialoguing and discussing with their peers in order to reach a solution. My role was therefore viewed as a facilitator rather than a tutor. By promoting student-to-student interaction and allowing them to exchange ideas with each other, the research findings demonstrated that students were actively engaged in the process of creating knowledge.

In conclusion, the hypothesis focussed on student responses, content and social skills to the experimental collaborative methods. Responses to these were greatly positive. However there is a possibility that the students may be a victim of the ‘Hawthorne Effect’ where efficiency and performance can change solely because the students are being observed (Brussee, 2004). Other challenges included lack of participation, dominating roles, lack of understanding of the task at hand and mixed gender issues arising in group settings. In this setting, the data appeared to support the hypothesis. However, further research is needed in order to draw conclusions of collaborative learning methods in an RE class in Karachi, Pakistan.

References


THE VALUE BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS’ ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOR AND ENHANCED PROFESSIONALISM: A SCHOOL BASED INTERVENTION THROUGH A WHOLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (WSIP)

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Abstract

This paper highlights the strategies and approaches employed to bring about positive changes in the attitude and behavior of the teachers and enhance their sense of professionalism in a girl’s high school of Gilgit Baltistan Pakistan. In addition to that, it illuminates the successes, challenges and the influence of these strategies and approaches on the overall school environment. These interventions were part of the one year long whole school improvement program (WSIP) exercised by PDCN in the academic year 2009-10 of the particular school. The strategies started with vision building, team building and task delegation, distributing the leadership and teacher empowerment, emotional intelligence sessions and workshops on professional ethics for teachers. After this initial platform building, regular sessions of reflective dialogues, maintaining professional portfolios, managing the student’s and teacher’s behavior were made the daily culture of the school. Additionally, individual and group counseling, mentoring, peer coaching and calling guest speakers on special issues were made the regular practices of the school life. The interventions resulted into the positive attitudinal, behavioral and value based changes in teachers’ personalities and their outlook toward the profession. After few months a learning culture and enthusiasm for the profession was quite visible in the attitude and behaviors’ of the teachers. Their sense of achievement and ownership of their accomplishments, voluntarily preparing and gathering materials for their lessons and portfolios as lifelong learners were some of the characteristics of the school culture. Our yearlong experiences at the school, leading and facilitating the change, realized us the significance of the value based professional development of the teachers particularly focused on the attitude, behavior and professional ethics. Therefore, in the light of the experiences we suggest for the policymakers and teacher educational institutions, to design and deliver tailor made programs in the above mentioned areas.

Introduction and Background

Gilgit–Baltistan formerly known as the Northern Areas is the northernmost political entity within Pakistan. Several educational institutions are working in Gilgit-Baltistan. For instance, Karakurum International University, Education Colleges for male and female and thousands of private and public schools. Along with public, several private institutions serve their services for the educational and social development of the region. One of these institutions is the Aga Khan University-Professional Development (AKU-PDCN) which was established in 1999 as a part of the Northern Areas Educational Project funded by the European Commission and the Aga Khan Foundation. This institution has a remarkable contribution in the school improvement initiatives in Gilgit-Baltistan.
Various research studies have shown that the interrelationships among different aspects of school improvement have a critical role in enhancing or constraining students learning and outcomes. These factors together create the culture of a school, which is instrumental in enhancing or constraining student learning (Hargreaves, D. 1995. Fullan et al, 1990. Stoll and Fink, 1995). Another major factor in improving schools is the quality of support and monitoring provided by various educational systems. This has a profound effect on the quality of schools as learning organizations. Centered-based and individually focused training in Gilgit-Baltistan over the past decade has changed the traditional practices in schools to certain extent but not raised standard significantly. What is evident is that a trained individual, who returns to his own school, is engulfed into the very powerful current of the existing ethos, attitudes and beliefs of the organization. As a result, the newly gained skills are quickly eroded and the status quo is reestablished albeit with some minor changes in individual classrooms in most cases. Hargreaves also claims that there is little teacher development without school development (1995). This is not to say that all center-based and individually focused training is fruitless. Rather, it could be very productive if schools were somehow enabled to move forward at the same time as the newly trained individual.

Remaining within this academic thought, PDCN initiated WSIP intervention is a school based approach focusing on six pillars of school improvement. This paper highlights the way of intervention and key successes achieved in F.G. Girls High School of Gilgit Baltistan Pakistan.

Pre-Intervention Baseline Survey
In order to insure the relevancy, efficiency and effectiveness of the WSIP intervention, a thorough baseline survey was conducted to understand the existing structures, culture and overall ethos of the school. This survey portrayed a comprehensive prevailing picture of the school and served as fundamental ground for proposing and installing future improvement initiatives at the intervention stage.

Interventions

Professional Development, Positive Attitude and Teacher Motivation
Teachers, because of their peculiar position in the school milieu, can play a decisive role in the success or failure of any school improvement program. DuFour and Eaker (1998) have very rightly mentioned that “Teachers represent the heartbeat of a school and the changes essential to school improvement” (p.233). Hence a teacher who is professionally capable can prove a valuable asset in the overall school improvement. Based on this philosophy, a deliberate endeavor was made through various classroom based efforts and series of workshops to enhance the pedagogical knowledge and skills, content knowledge, context knowledge and leadership capabilities of the school teachers. The continuous efforts made to improve the quality of teaching and learning itself predominantly served the purpose of teacher’s professional development. Above all, the teacher’s professional commitment, motivation and positive attitudinal change remained the focal point throughout the intervention process. The ultimate aim of our effort was to create a team of teachers who not only consider themselves as teachers but also believe that they are lifelong learners too (lovely and Buffun, 2007).
Teachers Professional Portfolios

In order to keep a track record of the professional development of the teachers, individual professional portfolios were initiated and maintained throughout the year. The teachers actively maintained their portfolios by including various handouts on different teaching strategies, interesting activities, newspaper cuttings and their own prepared subject based attractive written materials and reflections on their practices. Retallick (2003) argues, “A portfolio must be more than a collection of documents…it must include reflection on those documents and experiences to show evidence of professional learning” (p.3).

The overall school improvement initiatives in general and the professional portfolios in particular remarkably contributed towards the enhanced professional attitude, commitment and motivation of the teachers. A noteworthy positive change was explicit in the school culture such as in the informal interactions at tea time, corridors and other out of classroom occasions. Majority of the teachers were found discussing various professional issues and taking and giving alternative solutions to and from each other. Sergiovanni, (1998) maintains that, “inquiry in classroom is not likely to flourish where inquiry among teachers is discouraged…Where there is little discourse among teachers discourse among students will be harder to promote and maintain” (p.40). In this sense we have been successful to initiate a culture of professional discourse and inquiry among the teachers and expect it to gradually permeate among the student community of the school.

Developing Leadership and Management

Keeping in view the peculiar milieu of the school, the intervention began with a focus on bringing about an improvement in the leadership and management capacities and professional attitude of the school leaders and teachers. Literature on school improvement for example Harris, (2006) highlights that the success of leading a school improvement initiative in any challenging circumstances mainly depends on creating strong professional communities through team work, trust building, and sharing culture. Be that the target, professional development sittings pertaining to the areas of team building, collaborative approach to the profession, visioning and developing a shared vision for their school were conducted as the inspectional themes of the ongoing weekly session.

A conscious and deliberate course of action was followed to ensure that these sessions not only remain as theoretical underpinning but also become part of the practice. For example, the team building session was followed by helping the head teacher in establishing subject teams, appointing coordinators, delegating authorities and responsibilities for effective and sustained operations of these newly enacted structures. In this regard a teacher Shahzadi maintains, “We and the faculty members of PDCN have established subject wise teams. We take help from each other within our group whenever we face any challenge or difficulty during the process of teaching and learning” (Translated from an Urdu reflection, 25/06/2010). In view of the importance of vision for the school a series of visioning exercise was carried out in the school. This series of visioning exercise was an amalgamation of theory and practice for the reason that in the end the participants reached to the conclusion of developing a shared and collectively understood vision for their school.

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Classroom Based Teaching and Learning Support

Pedagogical Support
Introduction and practicing of various teaching methodologies such as project based teaching, analogies in science, learning by doing, inquiry based teaching and usage of maximum resources in classroom teaching remained one of the focal areas. The raised level of motivation and interest among the teachers for these newly acquired methodologies was evident in their professional portfolios and resources they developed at home as preparations for their classroom lessons.

Content Support
Apart from the above ongoing teaching and learning support, a conscious effort was made to address the particular issues faced by the school at large. The formal and informal reflective discussion with head teacher and teachers revealed the general concern for student writing skills in English and Urdu. For that reason, two series of workshops one for Urdu and one for English were conducted for the school teachers. The Urdu workshops were primarily focused on phonics, different shapes of alphabets, their breakage, joining and sentence forming whereas; the English series chiefly addressed the grammar such as part of speech, tenses, conversion of sentences, voices and the narrations. Another common problem, observed was teaching of the earth science portions in the social studies. In this regard a series of workshop focused on earth science was carried out to enhance the content and pedagogy of the school teachers in general. In this regard a teacher Salhin writes in her reflection, “We have learned how Urdu alphabets have different shapes and how they are joined and pronounced and written. We learned about English Grammar and ways of using English Language in our classrooms” (Translated from an Urdu Reflection, 25/06/2010).

Student Behavior Management (SBM)
We started with initiating a system of delivering speeches in the morning assembly by some of the teachers pertaining to the moral, social and spiritual development was already in place. This practice was encouraged and strengthened by including all the teachers in the process through a turn by turn course of action. But only relaying on some speeches along with some disciplinary action cannot fulfill the crucial purpose of the student behavior management.

In addition to the literature arguments, the peculiar circumstances of the school and the surrounding community, gave the impression that a comprehensive school based policy and structure is indispensable to cater to the social, moral, spiritual and health needs of the students. In this regard the student behavior management committee was established in the school. The assistant head teacher took the lead as coordinator along with five teachers and five students as members of this committee. As its mandate, the SBM committee started its function by identifying students with behavioral irregularities and medical difficulties. At the second step, series of one to one counseling sessions were arranged for these students and in some cases their parents were also involved in the process. It was decided to continuously monitor the behavior of these students after every individual counseling session and based on the observations next counseling session is designed. The committee declared to uphold confidentiality and secrecy of such personal matters of the children and their parents.
Parental Involvement

Stern (2003), maintain that “Parents are the children’s first and most enduring educators. When parents and educators work together from early years, the results have a positive impact on children’s development and learning” (p. 78). In order to hook up the parents with the school, class wise parents meetings, monthly group meetings and occasional meetings were arranged between the parents and the school teachers but the attendance ratio of parents participation remained comparatively low especially in the case of fathers. On enquiry it was revealed that this behavior of parents is chiefly as a result of their agro economic involvements. Majority of the fathers is out of the village for their livelihood earnings in the day time and mothers remain involved in subsistent farming. Secondly, a considerable chunk of the students come from the nearby and far flung villages. In such cases, the children live with their relatives whereas the parents live in their native villages consequently such parents are difficult to be accessed by the school. But still conscious efforts were made to bring parents in contact with school by calling them on particular occasions such as exhibition of project work, terminal result days and class wise teacher parent meetings. The teachers felt that we have made a good improvement in this area as compared to the previous track record.

Key Successes

At the very beginning of the intervention, teachers’ professional attitude, behavior and commitment was a remarkable challenge. Teachers were reluctant to change and even unwilling to give a second thought to the practices that were there for years. The informal discourses were revolving around their annual increments, transfers and promotions. Through the inculcation of positive school culture starting with younger generation of teachers we ventured to overcome this challenge. Gradually, attitudinal, behavioral and value based change in teachers’ personalities and their outlook toward the profession turned into a success story. After few months a learning culture and enthusiasm for the profession was quite visible in the attitude and behaviors’ of the teachers.

The lack of community support and involvement in the school was openly admitted as one of the biggest challenges of the school by the head teacher during the baseline survey. She gave many socio-economic and cultural reasons for this issue. We decided to face this challenge and started our intervention through focusing on school management committee. The body was already there but in an inactive status. After extensive individual and collective meetings we became successful in attaining the enthusiastic support of the school management committee and the ADI for the overall school improvement. With the help of this committee we were able to attract around half of the parents towards the school.

During the baseline survey we observed that the student level of confidence in facing strangers in the school milieu is considerable low. We worked on this area by increasing our own interaction with the students and providing them opportunities of facing external people through project demonstrations and class speech. Providing leading opportunities and involving them in the classroom discourses was another effective strategy in this regard. In this way we were successful in enhancing student confidence and self-esteem. After the period of one year there was a remarkable improvement in the confidence and motivational level of these teachers.

The introduction and institutionalizing of these various teaching methodologies and resource based teaching, established the school as a prominent Government school in the region. On the one hand we concentrated establishing a pool of resources chiefly comprised of low cost no cost material. On the other hand we introduced modern teaching methodologies which
are using these resources. Gradually we were able to make it as part of the normal school culture which we consider one of our successes.

**Conclusion**

Generally, in the context of Gilgit Baltistan the parents in government schools are normally of low socio-economic and educational status consequently are less aware of their responsibilities as parents for the education of their children. Additionally the system plays a critical role in establishing working relationship with the target schools. Therefore before launching the intervention in the schools these system authorities must be taken not only into confidence but also as active intervention partners. Generally, it is believed that in a change process the senior and most experienced teachers are resistant to change. We experienced that instead of colliding with such change resistant teachers, we must start with building a professional learning culture with the young and receptive teachers. This slow but sure approach in our case remained very successful where we gradually infolded teachers one by one and expended the learning culture. Furthermore, due to the particular personal economic and social background of the government school students, more attention to the confidence building of students in the beginning of intervention is crucial. To make them part of a change their active and willing support is imperative. In order to gain this enthusiastic support from the students it is prerequisite to enhance their level of confidence and motivation towards their learning.

**References**


INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF MOTIVATIONAL TECHNIQUES ON STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE ACROSS GENDER IN GRADE 8 IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KARACHI

Sajida Baig and Sherwin Rodrigues, Notre Dame Institute of Education

Abstract
Students’ motivation is an essential element that is necessary for quality education. In order to motivate students’ for better performance motivational techniques are the important means that teachers can target during the teaching and learning process. The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of motivational techniques on students’ performance across gender in grade 8 in private schools in Karachi. A questionnaire on the effects of motivational techniques on students’ performance across gender was administered to students (n=119) from private schools (n=5) in Karachi. The findings indicate significant differences across gender in relation to motivational techniques on students’ academic performance (p<0.05). Students’ academic achievements were measured through their grade 7 final-year examination scores. Results showed that the academic scores of female students (M=713.22) was higher than their male counterparts (M=572.19) regarding motivational techniques such as creativity skills, immediate feedback, cooperation and goal setting used by teachers at the elementary level in the teaching and learning process.

Introduction
Gender is a social characteristic. It is the primary division between people which consists of the traits of a group which are considered proper for its males and females. As a result, gender differs from one society to another (Henslin, 2000). Gender is sociologically significant because it is a device which controls the members of the society. It opens and closes doors for people to function in a society (Henslin, 2000). Gender impacts learning because it is one of the sources of learner individuality (Eggen & Kouchank, 1994).

Family has a great influence in developing children’s beliefs’ about academic abilities (Bleecker & Jacobs, 2004, as cited in Meece, Glienke & Burg, 2006). Parents treat male and female babies differently when they are born. Girl babies are more delicately treated than boys. Unfortunately, these differential treatments of the boys subsequently affect the school success also. Macionis (2000) supports the view that the overall educational planning and management need to be fully streamlined to address gender concerns in schools.

Parental influence not only affects children’s choice of activities and achievement beliefs but also impacts children’s career interests and choices. Research has shown that parents’ gender stereotyped attitudes affect the attitude towards Mathematics but also their achievement in that particular area (Eggen & Kouchank, 1994).

Different perceptions about appropriate male and female behaviour affect the ways teachers treat boys and girls in the classroom. These treatments influence academic achievement as well as career decisions. Unfortunately, sometimes societal influences carry over into the school, resulting in boys and girls being treated differently in the classroom. On the bases of those experiences, boys are more independent thinkers and perform better in Mathematics.
and Science. On the other hand, females are more obedient, passive and illogical (Fennema & Peterson, 1998, as cited in Eggen & Kouchank, 1994).

Researchers are of the opinion that motivation is students’ energy which stimulates, directs and maintains a student’s interest to work effectively in studies and other academic activities to achieve their potential at school (Snowman, Dobozy, Scevak, Bryer, Bartlett & Biechler, 2009; Krause, Bochner, Duchesne & McMaugh, 2010; Woolfolk, 2007; Kuppuswamy, 2006; Rashid, 2004; Mangle, 2006).

It is evident from research findings that there is a positive correlation between motivation and achievement. Research by Awan, Noreen and Naz (2011) in Sargodah district (Pakistan) with secondary students also revealed the significant relationship between motivation and academic scores. Furthermore, they also suggested the use of motivational techniques to involve students in academic activities for improving their grades on the bases of findings which showed significant gender differences.

- Academic performance shows the quality of education and its primary indicators are the academic scores of students. However, these scores do not provide a clear picture of the causes of students’ success or failure nor do they suggest the ways to improve performance. For improving the quality of education, there is a need to identify and analyse the factors that can affect students’ academic performance. An understanding of these factors can suggest some measures to improve the quality of education (Nasir, 2012). Inamullah, Naseer and Hussain (2008) discuss motivation as the main concern of every educator. It is the quality that students, teachers, parents and the community must have to prepare themselves for the challenges and demands of the future.

- In Pakistan, few studies have been conducted in the field of motivational techniques and its effects on students’ performance. There is a need for further work in this area to create awareness among teachers and students so that they focus on motivational factors in the teaching and learning process. It is also essential for policy makers and administrators to be aware of the motivational factors for developing the curriculum for effective teaching and learning (Tariq, Hussain, Mehmood & Mubeen, 2011). With a little focus on motivation, teachers can actively involve students in the learning process.

**Methodology**

For this study, a quantitative research design was selected to investigate the effects of motivational techniques on the academic performance of students across gender in private schools of Karachi.

Five hypotheses in null form were formulated for the study which gave a direction to this research. The dependent variables were *creativity, immediate feedback, chance for cooperation, goal setting* and academic scores while the independent/grouping variable was the gender of the students.

**Data collection**

Data were collected with the help of a questionnaire that was directly administered to the students of grade 8 (boys and girls) of five private co-education schools in Karachi. The purpose of selection of the schools was to ascertain the effects of motivational techniques across gender on students’ academic performance. The sample of this study was based on convenient sampling technique to accommodate the research in the allocated time frame.
sample of 118 participants (table 1) of grade 8 students from private schools was selected for the study. Figure 1 depicts the gender-wise composition of the participants.

Table 1: Gender-wise distribution of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Gender-wise distribution of participants

The questionnaire comprised 29 items under four subscales (creativity, immediate feedback, cooperation and goal setting) to find out the students’ responses about the effects of motivational techniques on their performance across gender. Respondents were required to express their feelings with a five-point likert-format scale ranging from 5= strongly agree (SA) to 1= strongly disagree (SD).

Results

The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10 to analyse and interpret the data. The data were analysed with the help of Mann-Whitney U test for non-parametric data and t-test was used for normally distributed data to compare the findings of two groups (boys and girls).

Table 2 compares the summary of male and female students’ opinions about the effects of motivational techniques on their academic performances at subscale level (creativity, immediate feedback, chance for cooperation and goal setting).

Table 2: Comparison across Gender at Subscale Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Goal setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of table 2 reveals significant differences between male and female students’ opinions about the effects of motivational techniques at each subscale level.
Table 3: Mean difference between the students across gender on effects of creativity on their performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>-5.313</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 indicates that, on average, female students scored higher (M=4.33; SD=0.47) than their male counterparts (M=3.90; SD=0.40) on the subscale ‘creativity’ and this difference was found to be statistically significant [t (116) = -5.313, p < 0.01]. As a consequence the null hypothesis, “there is no significant difference in students’ performance across gender whose creativity skills are enhanced during the teaching and learning process at elementary level in private schools of Karachi” was rejected. So it is concluded that female students are significantly better than their male counterparts on the overall creativity subscale.

Table: 4: Mean difference between the students across gender on effects of immediate feedback on their performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>48.22</td>
<td>1063.500</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>71.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of table 4 reveals differences between male and female students’ perceptions towards the effects of immediate feedback on students’ performance. On average, female students scored higher (M=4.62; SD=0.33) than male students (M=4.33; SD=0.42). This difference was found to be statistically significant [Mann-Whitney U = 1063.500; p < 0.01]. As a result the null hypothesis, “there is no significant difference in students’ performance across gender who are given immediate feedback during the teaching and learning process at elementary level in private schools of Karachi” was rejected. So it is concluded that female students are significantly better than male students on the overall immediate feedback subscale.

Table: 5: Mean difference between the students across gender on effects of chance for cooperation on their performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chance for cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>50.60</td>
<td>1206.000</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>68.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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An examination of table 5 reveals differences between male and female students’ perceptions towards the effects of providing opportunities for cooperation on students’ performance. On average, female students scored higher (M=4.65, SD=0.35) than male students (M=4.50, SD=0.32) and this difference was found to be statistically significant [Mann-Whitney U =1206.000; p < 0.01]. As a consequence, the null hypothesis, “there is no significant difference in students’ performance across gender who are provided opportunities for cooperation during the teaching and learning process at elementary level in private schools of Karachi” was rejected. So it is concluded that female students are significantly better than their male counterparts on the overall chance for cooperation.

Table: 6: Mean difference between the students across gender on effects of goal setting on their performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>4.896</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>-2.457</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>5.496</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 6 it is evident that, on average, female students scored higher (M=4.49, SD=0.42) than male students (M=4.31, SD=0.38) on the subscale goal setting. This difference was found to be statistically significant [t (116)=-2.457, p <0.05]. As a result the null hypothesis, “there is no significant difference in students’ performance across gender who are directed by goal setting during the teaching and learning process at elementary level in private schools of Karachi” was rejected. So it is concluded that female students are significantly better than their male counterparts on overall goal setting.

Table: 7: Mean difference between the students’ academic scores across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scores of the students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>572.19</td>
<td>142.85</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-4.99</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>713.22</td>
<td>125.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 7 it is evident that, on average, female students scored higher (M=713.22, SD=125.15) than male students (M=572.19, SD=142.85) in their academic achievements. This difference was found to be statistically significant [t (88) =-4.99, p <0.01]. As a result the null hypothesis “there is no significant difference in academic scores of the students across gender at elementary level in private schools of Karachi” was rejected. So it is concluded that female students have significantly higher scores than male students in their academic achievements.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that female students scored higher in academic achievement as compared to their male counterparts as a result of the learning experiences in the classroom. Brophy and Good (1974) suggest that elementary school teachers tend to have a
more positive attitude towards girls because they are cooperative, conforming, respectful, and orderly. In contrast, at this stage of life boys are assertive, independent and difficult to manage. Kedar-Voivodas (1983) also supports this idea and emphasise that the role of gender in society is helpful for girls to regulate at the elementary level of schooling (as cited in Meece et al. 2006).

There are evidences which show the turnover in gender performance in the past decade (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001; Thiessen & Nickerson, 1999; Tinklin et al., 2001; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Younger & Warrington, 2005, as cited in Meece et al. 2006). A fact that needs to be taken into account while explaining girls’ achievements in schools is the influence of women’s movement on girls’ self esteem and expectations. Pakistan School Statistics (2004) shows the gender desegregated strength of middle school teachers in rural and urban areas both in private and public sector (male: 92771; female: 146580) which also influences the academic performance of the students across gender. Macionis (2000) is of the view that boys are also affected negatively by gender bias in the classrooms.

The home and school environment play an important role in shaping gendered patterns of motivation. Parents play a critical role in developing interest and abilities of their children while nurturing them according to their gender as a result of cultural practices. These gender biased treatments develop certain attitudes in learners which affect their academic achievements and decisions about career choices. Additionally, the school environment impacts children’s gender role as a result of the stereotyped experiences of the classroom. Parents, teachers and school administrators, therefore, need to play a positive role to minimize the gender biased attitude in the developmental process of learners by providing them equal treatment in all aspects of life.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are proposed in line with the results of the study:

- Teachers should play a positive role in minimizing the negative effects of gender differences by treating boys and girls equally and by combating negative gender stereotyping in their teaching.
- It is recommended that teachers at pre-primary and primary levels help male students to develop the habit of cooperation with the help of classroom instruction.
- The school administration needs to ensure equal participation of male and female students in the planning process with the teacher.
- Given that the social structure of the society contributes towards gender bias it is recommended that parents treat male and female children equally. This will enhance their academic performance as well as help in making more appropriate career decisions.

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USING DIALOGUE TO PROMOTE STUDENTS CRITICAL THINKING IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONTEXT OF PAKISTAN

Saira Moez, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

This paper on critical thinking indicates the potential for students to raise standards of their own learning. It is based on my master’s research undertaken in 2010 under the auspices of IIS-Institute of Ismaili Studies and Institute of Education, University of London as part of MTeach. My study investigated a detailed analysis in critical thinking performance of the students in Pakistan after dialogue as a tool was introduced. The use of research tools measure students’ critical thinking performance. Some significant changes were found in the performance of students once dialogues were introduced as a tool for critical thinking. The implications of the research findings are discussed in the study.

Findings also indicate that teacher’s reflection, interview and audio-video recording, as tools for data collection were more meaningful for the author to get inputs from the students. Hence, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of teacher’s contribution in generating discussion was crucial as it promote student’s critical thinking within their specific context.

Introduction

Critical thinking has received a significant amount of attention from a variety of scholars. Dewey (1916) suggested, “All which the scholars can or need do for pupils, so far as their minds are connected is to develop their ability to think” (cited in Fisher, 2009, p: 1). Dewey was the first to conceptualize critical thinking and claimed that it begins with confusion (Geertsen, 2003). Various researches in educational realm used widely acclaimed taxonomy of cognitive domain presented by Benjamin Bloom (1956, cited in Geertsen, 2003).

According to Fisher (2005) critical thinking means “a readiness to reason, willingness to challenge and a desire for truth” (p: 80). Critical thinking is seen as a process in which an individual is actively engaged in analyzing, reasoning, questioning and creatively searching for alternatives in an effort to solve a problem or to make a decision or judgment.

Discussion and dialogues have long been considered central to teaching critical thinking. According to Renshaw (2004) key arguments to support dialogic approaches can be traced back to the Socratic tradition of using questions to challenge pupils to think for themselves. There is an increasing body of research that supports the view that ‘talk derives learning’ (Wells, 1999). Fisher asserts that dialogic teaching is not just getting children to say what they think but is also challenging them to be creative and to think in new ways. Knowledge depends on reasoning rather than telling, dialogue becomes creative when it helps in making connections between ideas.

Alexander (2008) in his recent publications summarizes dialogic interactions as a process where “questions are structured to provoked thoughtful answers, answers provoke further questions and seen as building blocks of dialogue…….” (p: 32). Elder and Paul (1997) argue that thinking is not driven by answers but by asking questions. Teachers should use questioning strategies that encourage students to engage in analysis, problem-solving, and inquiry.

Kuhlthau et al. (2007) call for a greater focus on teacher questioning to prompt and probe pupil thinking, to promote deep learning through skillful scaffolding. Thus, my research
intends to investigate the importance and effectiveness of open-ended questions to generate dialogues and develop student's higher-level thinking into my context. In this regard, teachers play crucial role to guide, monitor and support students for this purpose (Glasgow, 1997). Benesch (1999) claims dialogical critical thinking is encouraged by teachers through appropriate facilitation. The type of questions teachers ask should make pupil think more deeply, not ones which promote recall or provide 'right' answers.

Thus, knowing its importance today, I intended to take account of pupils' ideas in developing the subject theme and use talk to provide a growing, continuing, contextual frame to enable students' involvement with the new knowledge. The purpose of this research is to challenge children’s thinking and provoking curiosity through probing, and generating creative dialogue. My hypotheses are:

- Dialogue can develop children’s thinking, create curiosity and motivate them for further research.
- Questioning can provide scaffolding and facilitate genuine dialogue.
- Skilful use of questioning can challenge children’s thinking, develop their awareness of their own learning and enable them to ask their own questions.

Subsidiary Research Questions:
- What are the factors that support dialogic teaching in class?
- What strategies can be used to generate dialogue?
- How does dialogue help to promote students’ critical thinking?
- What is the role of teacher in scaffolding and facilitating student dialogue?

Methodology

This study draws upon the qualitative enquiry of knowledge. Working within this paradigm I conducted action research with the aim of using disciplined inquiry to improve educational practice. Sustaining the fundamental aim of action research, I worked to improve teaching and learning through the ongoing reflections on action, which increased my understanding of practice rather than the mere construction of knowledge (Elliot, 1991). This research is meant to shed insight on the learning and changing attitudes of students through teacher’s reflections, observing students’ classroom dialogues and focus group interview.

Setting and Research Location

The study was conducted in a REC-Religious Education Center in Karachi, Pakistan over a period of four weeks. The REC before STEP classes operated in evening for two hours in a big hall which was too susceptible to noise from other classes. However, STEP classes provided closed and fully equipped classroom with all physical facilities. There were 24 students of age 13-14 years, who were taught IIS Secondary curriculum “Literature Module”. This action research provides evidence based on a particular group of students of the same age studying the same subject and coming from same socio-economic background.

Focus Group Participants

To observe critical thinking engagement of 22-24 at one time became difficult, therefore, I chose group of 10 students, consisted of 5 high participative and 5 less vocal students whom I observed in my last three weeks of teaching. The reason to choose them was to observe the participation of students in dialogue with different cognitive levels in small groups including less participative students.
Findings and Analysis

The data collected was then reflected upon at each step and was analyzed in order to improve future plans and actions. My initial reconnaissance showed that though students are vocal, friendly and comfortable talking in class, their level of thinking seems very surface level.

I explored three different classroom settings: whole-class, small groups in big class-size and focus group in small-class-size to observe student’s participation and learning within different settings. These findings are interpretively analyzed which also present reasons and purposes of my actions (Mcniff & Whitehead, 2010).

Indicators of critical thinking in Whole-Class Setting: teacher-led discussions

In initial classes I explored whole-class setting, where I used role-play as stimulus, which was followed by a whole-class discussion. It was aimed to seek the problems around collections and authenticity of Hadiths. I first made them aware of ground rules for the conduct of collective talk. Once I asked question, children were given generous thinking time and were encouraged to provide extended answers through scaffolding. Initially their answers were less critical, spontaneous and sometimes unrelated, although I tried to exploit any critical moment to use for extended talk, or by inviting other children to comment on them.

Excerpt transcribed from whole-class-discussion

**Teacher:** Why do you think there was a need to collect the Hadiths after Prophet’s (S.A.S)?

**Raisa:** Because, it was important guidance for all Muslims.

**Teacher:** Agreed, but didn’t the people in Prophet’s life realised importance of his guidance......why didn’t they collect at that time.

**Munim:** At that time most of the people learnt Hadiths by heart.

**Teacher:** Yes, you are right, so what happened after 200 years that formed necessity of collecting them in written form.

**Munim:** Maybe people who learnt by heart they were dying.

**Raisa:** In that case how did people in 8th century know what Prophet said?

**Ali:** I heard that some people recorded them on stone, wood, and leaves….

I realized that well-founded questioning promotes children’s understanding and created new knowledge through discussion and reasoning. Children learnt to question, give reasons and articulate their ideas. The quality of children’s talk is greatly enhanced when children are given time to think. In this way of learning, teachers’ motivation and encouragement gradually resulted in students’ high participation and facilitate children to make sense of their own experiences.

“The panel discussion is a very good idea I really enjoyed and learnt through this discussion……” (Student’s response)

However, I later realized that I was fostering extended exchanges with the same students. There were some individuals who dominated most of the talk. Talk is a powerful tool for raising the confidence of children even with low self-esteem whom I unintentionally ignored during discussion.

Indicators of critical thinking in small-group dialogues

“Today the greatest issue I experienced in whole-class dialogue was that I couldn’t involve all students equally to participate. I had less time to cover the lesson and many students to listen” (Teacher reflection)
I moved from whole-class to small-group dialogue with an aim to assure maximum participation of my all students. Firstly, we discussed the ground rules for working in small groups than I precede an activity by posing some thinking questions. At first students were unable to provide responses since they did not have prior knowledge. Therefore, I facilitated pupils' ideas in developing the theme of the lesson and in creating new knowledge.

In dialogic interactions, children were exposed to alternative perspectives in ways that challenge and deepen their own conceptual understanding. Moreover, it also allowed students to reflect on their learning and make sense out of the performed tasks.

“........Though this was not a planned discussion, but the need arose to meet their curiosity and to motivate them to learn more about Muslims accomplishments….., this astonishment led to curiosity and the students asked further questions to feed their curiosity.” (Teacher reflection)

Hence, small-group activity gave students enough confidence to ask thought provoking questions and make logical connections between the pieces of knowledge. Students begin to listen others and patiently waited for their turns. Children were speaking within small-groups more loudly, clearly and confidently. They were venturing ideas, and offering speculation and hypothesis, rather than seeking to spot and provide the ‘right’ answer. Less able children were taking more prominent part in dialogues as they were challenged to think and ponder on open-ended questions, their views irrespective of right or wrong considered as block-building for creation of new knowledge. Conversely, I realized that there was lack of time to observe all groups and provide scaffolding.

**Focus group teaching with a small class-size**

The process of action research helped me to identify the root cause of the challenges I faced in previous classes. Hence, it motivated me to try out the same tool in an ideal classroom size to observe the differences and find out relationship between class-size and dialogic teaching.

Once the students in small class-size occupied with a task they enthusiastically engaged in talk, discussion and analyzing the arguments presented by their peers. While I was able to keenly observe their level of talk and questions, I noticed a gradual improvement in their skills of questioning and reasoning in small-groups with provided support. Focus group teaching motivated and trace learning of less-vocal students which was difficult in large class-size.

**Factors influence students’ motivation and engagement in dialogic teaching:**

Dialogic teaching in a conducive environment allowed concentrated listening and reflective exchanges, where students were encouraged to talk freely. With time classroom talk has became more inclusive in my class. The shift from open to closed classroom raised student’s motivation and engagement in discussions (Ryan and Patrick, 2001). Overall reflections show increased level of trust and respect among students. They seemed willing to listen each other and confident to express views which might previously have been considered risks. They were more prepared to disagree with each other, without confrontation or embarrassment.

**Discussion**

The study provided me with an opportunity to learn that dialogues can develop children’s thinking, curiosity and motivate them for further research. The overall findings of this study are discussed under three major themes.
Role of teacher in scaffolding dialogues

This approach permitted to focus on the learning rather than the outcomes; it also helped students to learn through social interaction by sharing and building onto prior knowledge with appropriate scaffolding and assistance. Scaffolding allows teacher to model effective ways of approaching new material and carrying out complex task (Beishuizen 2008). The findings show that success of scaffolding depends on the teacher having a precise awareness of how far the child’s present thinking has advanced, together with the subject knowledge and verbal skills to frame questions.

Open-ended questions and students thinking

The use of open-ended questions helped students to think deeply and critically in a required direction. Additionally, it also creates an open space for multiple viewpoints which helps students to relate their learning with real life situations. It also allowed for diverse perspectives and as a result helped students to develop their thinking skills. The findings provide evidences of student’s thought processes and developed responsibility for the search of their own quest.

Small class-size and students’ learning

The findings provide clear evidence that large class-size has consequences on implementation of dialogic teaching and students’ engagement. It suggests that students are more attentive and comfortable asking and answering questions in small class-size, thus, allow maximum students’ participation in dialogues. It was observed that the number of questions asked was higher as compared to large class-size. Moreover, the real effects of small class-size are noticed through students' positive attitude toward the subject, attentiveness, overcoming shyness in class, and improved attendance. Thus, it can be claimed that student’s higher engagement in dialogue within small-size class enhances learning (Lippman, 1990).

Conclusion

It is well established that learning is highly related with the cognitive development and higher-level thinking. My findings suggest that if teachers persistently practice higher-order thinking strategies there is a good chance for a consequent development of students’ critical thinking capabilities.

Through my experiences, I have learned that questions are the way of igniting that spark of curiosity. I have realized that questioning and dialogic approaches allowed my students to be inquisitive about a topic, and thus engaged in critical thinking. Exploration of the role of the teacher is also important in developing professional development strategies to shift from monologic to dialogic teaching. Moreover, it is worth noting that small class-size can prove to be more conducive for dialogic teaching.

This study suggests that dialogue serves as an important tool in enhancing students’ ability to think, it also informed me about the usefulness and applicability of applied strategies into my context. I foresee this research as a contribution especially in the context of RE system in Pakistan. Besides this, it will provide insight into how far IIS curriculum boosts the implementation of educational principles and theories into context and how far existing teachers in RE are ready to adapt this strategy in their teaching.

Reflecting on the actions and the findings, it is evident that this theory is difficult to implement. I also suggest that in order to professionalize the RE context, institutions must
provide support for sustaining quality teaching through small class-size and sufficient time which will endow students with deep learning, individual attentions and feedbacks.

References


MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD: EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of mothers (working and stay-at-home) about their role in the emotional development of their children in early years (4-6 years). It also explores the impeding factors in mother-child interaction during the emotional development in early years of the children. The qualitative design was used to explore the effects of stay-at-home and working mothers’ interaction on their children’s early year (focusing 4-6 years) emotional growth and development. Through a purposive sampling, four participants (two working and two stay-at-home mothers) were selected whose children were 4-6 years of age and were enrolled in Kindergarten I and II. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews. The study concludes by presenting implications and recommendations for parents, teachers, teacher educators, early childhood educational institutions based on the children’s emotional development particularly focusing on early years.

Background of the Study

The past array of experience as a Montessori teacher and then Directress in a private Early Child Development (ECD) school in Karachi gave me an in-depth insight that early years play an important role in the holistic development of children.

UNICEF (2006) state the term ECD to refer to the processes by which children grow and thrive, physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively during this time period. During these years the growth and development occurs very rapidly in children’s life and lays the foundation stone of well-being. Riley (2007) and Mustard (2002) state in their studies that poor development during early years affects key aspects of brain development; it affects all body tissues and the immune system. Besides, it also influences cognition, imagination, behaviour and skills of children. The attention children receive during these years is irreplaceable and influences their direction in life. It is also evident from Richter’s (2004) study, where he describes that young children develop primarily through their relationships with the important people in their lives such as parents and caregivers.

Rational of the Study

My personal experience as a Montessori Directress gave me an in-depth insight that most of the children had learned and adopted many values of their parents, particularly of their mothers. I noticed that children would come to school with the stories of their parents, particularly of their mothers. For instance; “my mother said this; my mother did that, etc.” I assumed that mothers had a great influence on children’s daily routine and development.

Mother-child interaction has been acknowledged as an important element of early development (Bromwhich, 1990; Morisset et al., 1990) not only because it is the first socializing relationship that most children encounter with, but also because the early experience of mother-child interaction shapes the perceptions of children about world and
their later patterns of behaviours (Barnard & Kelly 1990). Mothers have great influence on children’s emotional development. In early years, mothers’ interaction and closer bond help in children’s holistic development, particularly, emotional development. It is assumed that working mothers are unable to provide quality time to their children due to workload as compared to stay-at home mothers. My personal and professional experience indicates that even minor incidents occurred in these formative years leave the imprint on children’s mind and those inscriptions remain with them throughout their lives.

While working as a teacher with young children (4-6 years), I observed that children were different from each other in all domains - physical, cognitive, social and emotional. For example, some children were very confident, social and cooperative; while others were very shy, reserved, and used to take more time to socialize with children of their age. They mostly appeared disinterested in their surroundings. As a Montessori Directress, I started wondering about the reasons and asked myself this question several times why some children were so different from others.

To investigate the reasons, I reviewed literature and discovered that home environment especially parents play a vital role in children’s upbringing. It affects the emotional development of children both positively as well as negatively. Safdar (2006), states that the role of parents is seen as an important force in their children’s holistic growth. Particularly, mothers have more influence on their children as compared to their fathers. According to (Essortment, 2002), the connection of children with their mothers at a young age allows a close bond. This makes the communication between mothers and children easier especially during the middle school and high years to foster and grow.

There are many studies conducted in South Asian context (Avan, 2008; Basu & Basu, 1999; Hunzai, 2007) on social and physical development of children in early years; but my literature search did not provide me with any research from Pakistani context that has tried to explore the impact of emotional development in early years on children’s holistic development. Particularly, role of mother-child interaction in children’s emotional development in early years seems to be an untouched area.

After getting in-depth insight from different studies (Ahmad, 2002; McIntosh & Bauer, 2006; Chase-Lansdale, Michael & Desai, 1991; Rajwani, 2010), including my own personal and professional experiences, my interest developed to explore impeding factors involved in mother child interaction in early (4-6) years. The research question that focused and guided research is as follows:

Q. What are the factors that hinder mother-child interaction in early years emotional development of a child?

Methodology

This study was conducted in the qualitative research paradigm which guided the study design. In line with Merriam (1998) and Creswell (1998), who view qualitative research helpful to draw, understand or explain the meaning of the social setting by using the naturalistic approach; I found qualitative research best fit for my research which aimed to investigate the impeding factors in mother-child interaction in early years emotional development of a child. Qualitative research method helped me to obtain complicated details such as; feelings, thoughts processes of mothers and their children in detail (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). Furthermore, another reason for selecting qualitative research methods was that I intended to explore the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’ questions throughout the study.
Research Sample

The research was conducted in a Karachi, Sindh. According to the need of the study; a private ECD school was approached. The purpose to select a school as base of the study was to reach out to the required sample for the study, because due to time constraint it was difficult for me to approach the participants who matched the set criterion for sample.

Through purposeful sampling four research participants were selected for this study (2 full-time working and 2 stay-at-home mothers) whose children ranged from 4-6 years age. The purpose to select working and stay-at-home mothers was to analyse the similarities and differences of the level of interaction between both groups of mothers. The rationale to select this age group was that by this age children develop holistically and learn and adopt many habits from their surrounding environment. I intended to explore that what are the factors that impede interaction between mother and a child in these formative years, particularly focusing their emotional development.

Data Generation Process

Data was generated through in-depth interviews and field notes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with research-participants mothers that enabled me to explore interviewees’ perceptions and experiences about different hindering factors in a mother-child interaction in children’s early years emotional development without prior limitations and constraints. Each interview was of 40 to 50 minutes and was audio tape recorded with prior permission of the participant. I maintained a diary to record field notes of research data. I took notes while interacting with my research participants. This exercise helped me to note the environment, impressions or other body gestures of the interviewee that could not be highlighted in audio taping.

Data Analysis

The gathered data was full of field notes and transcribed interviews. To make proper sense and draw the meaning from the data, I read it thoroughly. After reading each line, the accurate and relevant data was sorted out and was analyzed by its thematic analysis, a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description (Glesne, 1999). I gave a different coding to the transcribed data by different color indication. It helped me in making connection between various themes. I used my research questions as a framework for analyzing the data that helped me to see whether the data was relevant or not. Research findings were shared and confirmed with the research participants in order to make sure that the information was not harmful to them in any way; it also ensured that the data reported was reliable.

Findings and Discussion

The following major findings are drawn from the comparative analysis on working and stay-at-home mothers’ views about impeding factors of mother-child interaction in early years. The data revealed that both groups of mothers had similar views about impeding factors in the emotional development of the children. They considered stress, anger, quarrelling, and lack of attention, improper upbringing, punishment, mockery, scolding and restrictions as main factors which impede mother-child interaction.
Stress and Frustration

Both working mothers described that a mother’s level of stress and frustration are the main factors which halts mother-child interaction. Amina (working mother) shared that it is her own observation that whenever she is stressed due to marital conflict or household workload she becomes irritable and usually avoids her daughter. In response, her daughter immediately changes her facial expression and throws tantrums. She further illustrated:

> My own stressfulness impedes my daughter’s behaviour. Due to lack of time I cannot give much attention to her school work. Many a times, I take out my anger and frustration on her. Sometimes, I start beating her on very minor mistakes, so she usually stops interacting/responding for certain durations. (Interview, 16 February, 2011)

Parveen (stay-at-home) stated that when she has office workload stress or a fight with her husband then she takes out all frustration on her daughter. As a result, her daughter gets annoyed and avoids talking to her for a while. Parveen further added that when her anger subsides, she apologises from her daughter and takes her for an outing.

The data analysis shows that both groups of mothers were suffering from some stressors which were resulting negatively on their children’s physical and mental health. Past studies (Antoni & Lutgendorf, 2007) indicate that persistent psychological stress from the mother, manifested in anxiety, depressed mood, anger, and irritability, which is associated with a variety of health difficulties in children from infancy to adulthood.

Quarrel/Fights

Both working and stay-at-home mothers highlighted the fact that Quarrelling has a negative impact on children. Quarrel between husband and wife or among family members negatively affects a child’s mental and physical health. Amina reported that her daughter has an asthma problem. She often gets Asthma attack while finding her parents fighting and it takes long time for her to recover. Fariha (stay-at-home mother) shared that whenever her daughter sees her (Fariha) beaten by her husband, she often shivers and vomits. Then, she prefers living in isolation.

The data analysis depicts that mothers who suffer from marital discord resulting in more quarrels and fights between spouses directly and indirectly affects the holistic development particularly emotional development of their children. It was evident from the responses of all mothers that whenever there was any quarrel in their homes, children felt dejected for certain time periods. Hay et al., (2003) also state that when a marriage is tense and hostile, parents are likely to express anger, criticize and punish their children. They further assert that children who experience these maladaptive parenting practices often withdraw into a depressed mood themselves; others, mimicking their parent’s anger, become impulsive and aggressive.

Anger leads towards physical punishment

Both the working mothers identified anger as the extreme factor which weakens mother-child interaction. Fariha also shared that especially she gets angry when her daughter does not concentrate in studies. Then she starts beating and scolding her. In response, her daughter immediately gets scared and her voice starts quivering and she starts crying.

Damani (working mother) reported that whenever she takes out her anger on her son, he often passes urine in his pants and stops interaction for long hours. It also affects his social life. For instance, at school he becomes more aggressive. His teacher complains about his rude behaviour and harsh treatment with other children.
I heard almost similar response from all mothers that physical punishment creates a communication gap and hostility for a certain time between mother and child. Avan (2008) also describes that the punishment creates hostility in children and it badly affects the socio-emotional and physical development of a child.

Lack of time and attention

Parveen highlighted that a child needs full support, time and attention of mother. She shared that her daughter always seeks her full attention and tries to grab her. Her ignorance is painful for her daughter which halts their interaction. For instance,

If I am giving more attention to her elder sister then she cries and makes her mood off. Those things make her hyper and stubborn. In order to get my attention, most of the times she pushes my younger daughter who is 2 years old. (Interview, February 17, 2011)

Data reveal that the time factor contributes to the aggressive attitude in children and it impedes mother-child interaction. Damani explained that a child feels at uneasy and insecure when mother interacts with him/her on an occasional base. She further added that she was disappointed with her role as a mother as she could not spend much time with her child.

Responding to the same question, Amina became emotional and said that she is playing with the life of her daughter. She shared, that due to tough nature of her job she sometimes fails to give time to her daughter that makes her daughter reclusive.

Data analysis reveals that children are attention seekers. If they get less attention and time, they may turn into a negative thinker, which may lead them to become a pessimist individual. It is also evident from Berk (2009) that the depressed mother appears overwhelmed and unresponsive to her children. If her disengagement continues, the child is likely to become negative and irritable and, eventually withdrawn.

Conclusion

This study viewed different impeding factors in mother-child interaction in the emotional development of children. Comparative analysis of working and stay-at-home mothers explored that mother-child interaction is affected by different elements. The study draws the conclusion that a mother’s close and friendly bond positively impact on her children’s emotional development and helps them in developing emotionally and socially. Positive interaction with mothers provides children confidence, trust, openness and sense of socialization.

Inadequate time, lack of quality interaction, quarrels between husband and wife and mothers’ stress and frustration have negative impacts on children’s emotional development in terms of lack of confidence, trust, reluctance, detachment from their surroundings and resentment. The study recommends awareness programmes for both working and stay-at-home mothers based on children’s emotional development especially focusing on the early years. These programmes will keep them informed about the changing emotional reactions of children and the ways to deal with those reactions and will facilitate them in upbringing their children emotionally. These programmes will also help working mothers in keeping balance between their personal and professional life and spending quality time with their children.
References


DARYA DINO K DARYAN: PROMOTING A OPTIMISTIC LEARNING MILIEU IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

Traditionally, girls in most government schools remain inactive in the classroom and are shy to speak and express their views. They have been given very few chances to be recognized or to participate actively in the classroom. This tendency seems to be changing in one girls’ primary school situated in an urban part of district. Most of the students belong to the poor and lower middle class families. Few years ago, their school was in a poor physical and learning condition, but when the current head teacher was hired, she tackled the problems of the school’s including physical condition. As recently, however, she is working as a mentor, she realized that trained teachers not only can make the physical situation better but also can focus on improving the teaching and learning environment. Now she sees her trained teachers promoting a positive learning environment in their own classes and also supporting other teachers as they learn new strategies. As out of fifteen, six female teachers including headteacher in the school have been trained under the professional development component of STEP. She depicted that “after I participated in STEP programme, I realized that teachers can easily improve the way the classroom looks, but they must work hard to change the processes of teaching and learning.” The whole school now has a welcoming and pleasant feel. The head teacher conducts ongoing sessions for untrained teachers to continue the process of improvement. Lately she has talked about increasing the variety of learning materials in the classroom. As a result, each class now has a learning corner with materials like flash cards, pictures, models, and drawings made by teachers and children together. Activity-based teaching is used by all the teachers. These new approaches have increased children’s interest in school, reduced absenteeism, and decreased the perceived gap between teacher and student. Students are more confident and are willing to talk and share in the classroom. Teachers have modeled good social skills through their positive behavior, a change that is equally as important as the change in pedagogy in creating a positive learning environment.

This is a little effort of a thirty nine years rural Pakistani female head teacher Daryan at Daryan dino District (old name of Sukkur), who had showed change thrust upon her personal and professional growth and organizational development. Memon & Pardhan, (2001) supports her thrust that “the quality of education highly depends on teachers’ capacity building in terms of intellectual and professional growth, development and empowerment. As according to Wasley (1991, p20) “Empowerment of teachers is a desirable ingredient of School Improvement. Empowered teachers have ‘the autonomy to make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment’. They also take on new roles such as team leader, action researcher, curriculum developer, and a trainer (Boles & Troen, 1992).

This paper argues that the headteacher Daryan Khatoon is well placed to exercise curriculum leadership within the collegially run primary school; her role lays emphasis on interpersonal relations. Over all in this paper the authors’ will discuss the changing role of a teacher leadership, which extended beyond the classroom, through professional development programmes under the project titled the Strengthening Teachers Education in Pakistan
(STEP). Programme is funded by the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA) in support of the Government of Pakistan’s Education Sector Reform (ESR) efforts.

**Introduction**

In the past decade, public educators—both teachers and administrators—have faced considerable pressure from parents, the private sector, and politicians to be accountable for the “bottom line.” The bottom line is student learning, and now more than ever, educators are expected to create schools in which all children achieve excellent outcomes. School headteacher must possess a wide array of competencies in order to lead schools effectively toward the accomplishment of educational goals.

**What is School Milieu?**

Anyone who spends time in schools quickly discovers how one school can feel different from other schools. *School climate* is a general term that refers to the feel, atmosphere, attitude, beliefs, or milieu of a school. Just as individuals have personalities, so too do schools; a school climate may be thought of as the personality of a school.

The concept of *organizational climate* has a rich history in the social science literature. In the early 1960s George Sterns was one of the first psychologists who saw the analogy with individual personality and used the concept of organizational climate to study institutions of higher education. The use of the concept quickly spread to schools and business organizations, each with a somewhat different conceptual view of climate. Although there are a variety of conceptualizations, there is general agreement that organizational climate arises from routine organizational practices that are important to an organization's members, that it is defined by member perceptions, and that it influences members' attitudes and behavior. Thus, school climate is a relatively enduring character of a school that is experienced by its participants, that affects their actions, and that is based on the collective perceptions of behavior in the school. Thus, school climate is defined in terms of educators' perceptions of the leadership behavior of the principal and interactions among teachers. An open school climate is one in which teacher and principal behavior is supportive, genuine, and engaged, whereas a closed climate is characterized by lack of authenticity, game playing, and disengaged behavior.

Another metaphor regarding school climate is measured in terms of healthy interpersonal dynamics. This broad climate perspective examines the relationships between the school and environment, the leadership of the principal, relationships among teachers, and relationships between teachers and students. Openness of school climate has been linked primarily to expressive characteristics in schools. For example, the more open the school climate, the more committed, loyal, and satisfied the teachers are.

School climate has become a global construct that researchers often use loosely to group together studies of school environment, learning environment, learning climate, sense of community, leadership, academic climate, and social climate. This broad application reveals both the strength and weakness of school climate study—it is a useful integrating concept on one hand, but it also suffers from a lack of clear definition. Like so many other terms that are bandied about, the word *climate* threatens to become meaningless. Because its referents are so diverse, the word sometimes obscures, rather than creates, understanding. *School culture* is a related term that has been used to describe the work environment; in fact, climate and culture are often used interchangeably by some educators to refer to the distinctive
workplace of a school. A useful distinction is that culture consists of shared values and assumptions, whereas climate is defined by shared perceptions of behavior all stakeholders.

Why School Leadership Matters?

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling.

Another recent study on leadership emphasized not only organizational learning, but a trusting and collaborative climate, a shared and monitored mission, the capacity to take initiatives and risks and ongoing relevant professional learning opportunities. Research suggests that schools with effective leadership were also found to be schools where teachers were motivated to participate in training, showing connections between school leadership, school climate and willingness to participate in professional development.

Explicit changes at individual and organizational level Under STEP project

The STEP project set out to transform teacher knowledge, in it is constituent forms of curriculum, school and pedagogic knowledge. But learning is not merely the accumulation of knowledge and skills, detached from who we are and what we do. For example, when we talk of developing the teachers' pedagogic knowledge, we do not just mean that they have some familiarity with the theories of Piaget. Pedagogic knowledge calls upon the teachers’ knowledge of the learners, the goals they are trying to achieve, the strategies and activities they choose to reach their goals, the discourse they engage in and the relationships they develop. The authors had been documenting the impact of the professional development programmes in terms of explicit changes at individual and organizational level. In this paper, following, success stories are included to demonstrate the initial impact of STEP project initiatives in primary school.

Success story 1: Government Girls Primary School Shamsabad

This school is situated on top of boys primary school. Comprising six classrooms and over two hundred learners, it is co-educational, catering for learners from grade 1 to 5 and has sixteen female teachers including the principal.

Previously this school was one of the many disadvantaged primary schools; it had no electricity, no staff room or office, no washroom and clean water. The principal shares a class with the grade 5 or sometimes the grade 1 class. The school was severely lacking in resources, especially for the learners'.

Daryan Khatoon, working as a primary school head teacher at the school. She is a graduate with experience of fifteen years in primary education. She successfully completed diploma programme at AKU-IED. She believed that her experience at AKU-IED enhanced her confidence and empowered her to be a better principal. She said, “…before coming to AKU-IED, I had not sufficient leadership and management knowledge and skills, I was somehow not confident about my roles and responsibilities as a head teacher. Also, I was unfamiliar with the issues related to classroom management, school development, community development, female education and team building. Even for minor things, I was dependent on my management.
But after attending the programmes at AKU-IED, “I myself felt incredible improvement in my leadership and management style and skill. It developed my confidence to move forward and find out problems and their solutions locally and make decisions. For example, as a manager, I was responsible to enhance girls enrolment in my school during this academic year but I failed. I did not understand how to solve this issue. Because my attitude was very bossy and rude and I did not value my colleagues. After attending the programme, I made changes in my attitude and started working with my colleagues. As a result, we (me and my teachers) planned how to solve this issue and came up with ideas to knock at the doors of the community and meet with parents especially mothers and encouraged them to send their daughters to the school. Finally, we achieved the targets and realized the importance of involving parents specially mothers to solve the issue. Now we have decided that once a month there will be a meeting with mothers to strengthen partnership with the parents. The programme really developed my interpersonal and management skills. I did not know how to walk on the tight ropes of effective school management, but it has enabled me to run.’

To collect the evidence a meeting was conducted with the teachers from cluster schools who are working at the STEP project. The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate their progress on the project activities, as well as to share ideas about pupil achievement and progress. Rozina, one of the young teachers from this School, shows an animated (folk tale) she has created in language to support literacy work, whilst her colleague discusses issues of classroom organisation when using a few story books with a large class. Colleagues from a nearby school demonstrate presentations, spreadsheets on animal classification, and illustrated poems produced by their pupils in literacy and science lessons during the workshops. With the arrival of the resources everyone in the school was overjoyed. The first time I introduced resources to my learners, they were so curious and wanted to use them. Using the resources makes teaching and learning more enjoyable. I am no longer a traditional teacher but I, together with my principal always plan activities in such a way that learners work cooperatively.... Even shy and withdrawn learners become involved. ....with the theme 'living things ANIMALS' we are able to integrate with other learning areas like Literacy and Science. PowerPoint presentations for learners (as they work in groups) improve what was previously difficult work for them. Animated stories like 'HARE AND TORTOISE' enhance learners' curiosity and they in turn want to create their own animal stories. By doing role play using animal words, learners develop language and critical thinking skills....learners can become poets and writers. Stories like these also help learners for reading and writing. They are an entertaining way to foster the love of reading, increase vocabulary and learn a moral/life lesson that will be useful to them for the rest of their lives. I am proud to say that a number of learners have showed tremendous improvement in reading and writing and are more confident with using a story books. Using the story books also contributes in developing learners' spelling skills. For me there is less work because those learners who are confident are able to teach others! Many learners have shown more responsibility for their work.

Success story 2: Daryan khatoon’s support at Individual level
Fouzia Bhatti is 38 years old, working as a teacher in a primary school bagh Hayat Ali Shah. She is a graduate with an experience of 14 years in a primary education. She is mentee at Shamsabad school. About her learning, she said, “I feel a change in myself. I believe that now I can share and implement practical activities in my school by using no-cost and low-cost material. I must clear this thing that our mentor always reminded us about our own school context and give emphasis on using of low-cost material. I like these ideas, which I can afford to implement in my school. Throughout the workshop, we were encouraged by the mentor to use low-cost and no-cost material in our own classrooms. Hence, I learnt using such material
for conceptualizing activities. I appreciate the idea of low-cost, no-cost material. Now I have decided to make a resource corner in my school in which I would collect all these tiny things. I would also request other teachers and students not to throw away things, which we usually consider as useless, but place them in a resource corner. I would make it possible to take relevant material for teaching different topics. Further to this, she states, “Prior I teach the students traditionally but now I am making lesson plans. I teach students by interactive activities and make friendly environment in the classroom”.

Success Story 3: Daryan Khatoon’s Continues support at School Level
Bagh Hayat Ali Shah is morning shift girls primary school where Daryan Khatoon visited frequently to provide continues follow-up support to the mentees. She conducted meetings with head teacher and mentees and discussed on lesson planning, copy checking, copy covering, school improvement plan, classroom management, effective teaching material for class room teaching, development of display material, effective teaching with the involvement of student and so on. She shared that the students of evening shift, were destroying the display material, so in meeting head teacher and mentees agreed to paint walls instead of putting charts on the wall and develop flexible cards and models. They took interest and doing their work effectively.

Now after the continuously follow up visits, the condition of classrooms are entirely different. Head teacher along with mentees are working for the betterment of the school. She always supports her mentees morally and financially for the implementation of the new ideas in the classes. She gives easy / comfortable atmosphere to her staff. In this school boys and girls have separate washrooms, just because of her efforts. She always gives her best to the education. Head teacher reflected on her mentees’ efforts. She said, “Now teachers are taking very much interest in painting work, making of teaching aids with low cost / no cost material, using effective lesson planning in the classrooms. Mentees are collecting no/ low cost materials like, rubber bands, invitation cards for flash cards, boxes, rope for washing line, colors for painting etc. Mentees also shared that now they feel more responsibilities about their teaching, one of them reflected that, “Because of training and frequent follow up visits, I am happy to make my teaching more effectively and students are taking interest in the class.” another said, “Now student attendance ratio is increasing. Students are taking interest in group work, and I am also enjoying when I design the activities for students especially in science and maths subjects.” She reflected about mentors that, “with mentors kind guidance and suggestions I am doing my work more effectively.” She also shared that she is satisfied about her teaching with the help of lesson planning.

Conclusion
These are just a selection of observations from field notes and interviews, but it is clear that the development of [professional] identity has been an important outcome for the project teachers, as well as more broadly for the school and community. Further to this, principals need to possess a wide array of technical knowledge related to curriculum concepts, processes, and content. Equally important, however, they must understand the school culture and be able to work with the entire school community–teachers, parents, students, and support staff—in leading and supporting curriculum implementation. Furthermore, principals must be proactive in obtaining resources to support curriculum development, they must ensure that teachers receive the time and staff development opportunities to implement curriculum change, and they must keep a constant eye on the “bottom line” of positive student outcomes.
RELEVANCE OF CURRICULUM IN CHANGING TIMES
Introduction
The history of nursing education in Pakistan parallels the county’s independence (Carbonu & Soares, 1997). At the time of Independence in 1947 the nursing situation was especially serious and demanded immediate attention (Soares, 2000). There was only one school of nursing in Lahore. In the first decade after Independence 1947-1957 the government took constructive measures to promote the training of nurses and improve nursing services. In 1952 the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) was formed and a standard curriculum was developed. Twenty one years later this national curriculum first underwent revision and was updated in 1973 by the PNC for introduction and implementation by all nursing schools in the country. Now in 2006 Pakistan Nursing Council in collaboration with Higher Education Commission (HEC) has established a new national curriculum for baccalaureate (BScN) nursing which is referred to as HEC/PNC curriculum (Dias, Ajani & Mithani, 2010). To date there are 13 School of nursing in Pakistan offering the HEC/PNC curriculum for four-year BScN nursing program.

Needs Assessment
The writer undertook an extensive review of the website www.hec.gov.pk as well as of documents available in the forewords and notes in the document entitled “Curriculum of Nursing Education BScN (revised 2006) Higher Education Commission Islamabad and Pakistan Nursing Council, Islamabad to understand the background and rationale for initiation of this HEC/PNC curriculum. According to the given accounts a call had been given by the Government of Pakistan who appointed the Higher Education Commission (HEC) as the competent authority to revise/relook at curricula across all the major universities across the country. In keeping with this mandate the National Curriculum Revision Committee for Nursing Education decided for the production of its first national curriculum for BScN nursing which could be delivered across the nation. HEC mandate was to design educational programs to meet the needs of employment market and to promote the Basic and Applied Sciences in every field on national and international importance www.hec.gov.pk/InsideHEC/.

According to PNC this move to baccalaureate nursing was seen as other developing countries were producing BSc nurses who were serving in their home countries and abroad. With a baccalaureate preparation these nurses would be at par for job opportunities with other nurses in the developing world. Furthermore, the inception of this BScN curriculum coincides with the timely Islamabad Declaration on Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery (
March 4-6, 2007) in which there is a nationwide commitment to scale up nursing and midwifery capacity by encompassing a broad range of strategies that address workforce planning, education, skill-mix, maximum utilization of roles and career frameworks, work environments and regulatory frameworks to ensure efficient, effective and safe health care systems (www.moh.gov.pk)

Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) states the baccalaureate curriculum serves three purposes:

- Cost effective in the sense of time and resource as compared with diploma program
- Safe quality care literature has proven that there is a reduction mortality and infection rates within hospitals when nurses have baccalaureate degrees
- Advancement and economic growth of women in Pakistan, which is ultimately uplifting for the family and society

The baccalaureate nursing program is indeed a cost effective way for one to obtain a university education in Pakistan. With the diploma nurse training (a three year program) one has to work for a minimum of 2 years and then get admission into the Post RN BScN program which is a 2 year program. Therefore, in order for a nurse to attain a university education degree of BScN she has to go through a period of 7 years. With a baccalaureate degree at the exit she can attain the same in 4 years as the entry criteria for both programs is an Intermediate of Class X11 with a Science background and a percentage of 55% in the provincial examination.

Another thing which is worth mentioning in the Pakistani context is that marriage is mostly possible after one completes their university degree so it means a wait of 4 year (2 year of service and + 2 years of Post RN BScN program). From the cultural viewpoint the family in which the girl would marry would not spend on the daughter’s education so it is vital for her to complete her education prior to marriage. Now with a university degree she is eligible for better marriage almost 3 years earlier which is a blessing for the parents as it a social norm in Pakistan to have their daughters married before they reach 25 years of age.

It was envisioned that BScN curriculum would elevate the status of nursing in the country and give nurses a University education. This document represents the first national effort to develop a curriculum for the 4 year Baccalaureate nursing program. This document also includes a framework for nursing education, core competencies, philosophy, goals and objectives, and polices with rules and regulations. Therefore nurses would be equipped with the advanced concepts from both the Science and Humanities subjects. In turn, this would provide nurse with a broad base knowledge which would allow them to function skillfully, competently and proficiently. In addition, the program would foster critical thinking, knowledge based actions, and personal and professional development among the nurses. Lastly, the curriculum would aim to bring research integrated nursing knowledge into the students enabling them to become safe, competent, compassionate and professional nurses in the work force.

Curriculum

Designing a curriculum is challenging and time consuming activity (Keogh, Fourie, Watson & Gay 2009). Information relevant to nurse education today will be outdated in the next five years (Burnard et al 2005). Therefore, the curricula must be current to keep up with the latest trends and developments in the field. The HEC/PNC curriculum has a total of 138 credits and is spread over 4 years. Each year has two semesters of 18 weeks each. Each semester has range 15 to 18 credits. Dias, Ajani & Mithani (2010) point out the salient features of this curriculum is that for the first time there is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum.
across the nation for all schools of nursing. In addition, the strength of this curriculum is that there is emphasis on the disease burden of Pakistan as well as global health and diseases of the new era like SARS, dengue fever. Changes in the health care system are also having an impact on shaping program outcomes. Health care trends have a direct impact on curriculum development and range from the acuity level of clients in hospitals to shifting emphasis from tertiary care to prevention and health promotion at the primary care level. The HEC/PNC curriculum offers the student with a variety of clinical experiences both in the community and in the hospital setting. The curricula focus is both on community and hospital. According to the Registrar of Pakistan Nursing Council, there was a conscious decision for inclusion of both hospital and community focuses with a broader mandate of health promotion across the life span. Thus the student will learn about her professional responsibility at both the hospital and the community thereby creating health communities in Pakistan. Also there is practice time both with supervision and without supervision for students to practice in the skill labatory.

Furthermore, computer literacy and e learning is a mandated part of this curriculum so nurses will not lag behind other professionals (Dias, Ajani & Mithani, 2010). The curriculum supports increasing diversity and technological explosion in the sequence of learning activities which will prepare the future baccalaureate nurse to survive with a multidisciplinary workforce. In the curriculum there is computer literacy courses and the requisite knowledge level the student needs to possess.

Furthermore cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning provide a systematic framework of appropriate learning activities that will facilitate desired course expectations. It appears that that the principle of simple to complex guide the HEC/PNC curriculum as indicated in the unit objectives of the courses. Also there is a gradual build up of knowledge so that leaning is increased incrementally. Sequencing of courses has been thought through carefully. Furthermore the theory is supported with practical either in the skills lab or in clinical area for which the objectives are given. Teaching and learning strategies like discussion, demonstration, field visits, role plays and group work and clinical practicum complement the courses for achievement of the outlined objectives.

The document affirms that the role of PNC is one of direction. However PNC recognizes the shortage of nursing faculty. In view of the existing faculty situation, this document provides a detailed outline of the entire course in the form of a course grid which has details of course objectives, teaching learning strategies, course expectations, evaluation criteria and the entire content for each class is spelt out including the resources that are required to deliver the content. Consequently this document is expected to be utilized as a resource for the faculty. Given the detail to which the curriculum has been spelt out is a clear indication of Tylerian approach. Emphasis is placed on detailed course objectives; the identification of content to meet those objectives, and the appropriate teaching pedagogies to complement the content being taught is consistent with the Tyler framework. (Boland 1998)

**Goals/ Objectives**

The philosophy of the BScN program is clearly outlined and provides a clear understanding of what are the expectations from which this HEC/PNC curriculum emanates. The goals spring forth from the philosophy. A goal is considered the final outcome at the end of the teaching-learning process. Goals are global and broad in nature and have outcomes for both the teacher and the student. Mostly goals are achievable after weeks or months. In the case of the HEC/PNC curriculum the goal will be achieved at the end of the 4 year program.
The goals outlined are

- To prepare competent, safe, committed, and knowledgeable nurse clinicians (hospital and community settings)
- To educate nurses with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes and with clinical competency.
- To integrate evidence-based science into clinical practice to provide holistic care for individuals, families and communities.
- To enable nurses to meet the future challenges, including changes in technology confronting health care in the 21st century.
- To adhere to an established pattern of professional practice within the professional, religious, cultural, legal and ethical boundaries of Pakistan.
- To develop effective interpersonal and communication skills while dealing with peers, patients, families, communities and other health care professionals.
- To initiate a leadership role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of individual, family and community
- To maintain a healthy and safe environment for the prevention of disease, promotion and maintenance of health.
- To provide information, counseling and health education to individuals, families and communities
- To participate in screening, case identification and management of common minor illness and injuries
- To act as a change agent to promote quality improvement in the performance of nursing responsibilities
- To participate actively in professional organizations for the improvement of the nursing profession

According to Billings & Halstead (1998) competencies are derived from the philosophical beliefs that create the framework for the curriculum. Outcomes of the curriculum and the identified competencies would stretch beyond the walls of the classroom into the real world thereby building better citizens for society and productive workforce for the community. Boland (1998) brings this analogy to the forefront of curricula frameworks. She aptly describes curricula frameworks as the roadmap to understanding the discipline of nursing. According to her outcomes are equal to the trips or destination while competencies are mileage markers one sees across the way. Competencies are seen as behaviors needing to be acquired to develop those characteristics. Competencies give direction to the level of achievement the learner must demonstrate in a course of program.

Resources

Adequacy of resources is essential for the delivery of a curriculum (Mc Crorie 2005). In the case of the HEC/PNC curriculum the resources needed to support the delivery of this curriculum are both human and technical resources. As pointed out earlier human resources in the form of nursing faculty is a serious constraint. Urgently needed is a faculty development plan to support the delivery of this curriculum. There is a dire need for human development program to meet the shortage of nurse trainers in Pakistan (Baloch, 2009).

In terms of material resources there needs to be adequate classrooms, skills lab facilities and science lab facilities as well clinical placement both in the hospital and in the community. Other learning resources are computer lab, video, CD’s and other audio visual equipment for learning purposes.
As the curriculum is dynamic and flexible nursing institutions will have to keep pace with the ongoing changes in the health care and higher education. An evaluation is needed which looks at curricula reform that keeps pace with the changing health care system and the context of learning.

**Evaluation**

Accreditation and program reviews are instrumental to ensure academic excellence (Diamond, 2008). There is no evaluation plan outlined in the document or on the websites. Based on this premise the evaluation of the HEC/PNC curriculum will need to take place at 2 levels: course level and as a total curriculum. Course evaluation is at the micro level and is a continuous process which is based on criteria and cooperatively developed and is concerned with the measurement of quality and effectiveness of the course and effectiveness of learners (Neary, 2002). The aim of course evaluation is to understand the course, so as to sustain it, develop and where possible improve it. It can be carried out by course teachers. The course evaluation will need to take into consideration the evaluation of learners at the end of each courses. Also, the course will need to be evaluated by the faculty themselves and their peers.

The second type of evaluation is the evaluation of the entire four year curriculum. Bevis & Watson in Billings and Halstead, 1998 point out that curriculum evaluation is a verification of the reality by comparing what is to the standards or criteria that represent what faculty believe reality should be. Evaluation of curriculum implementation involves a number of supporting and intermediate activities that facilitate the curriculum from paper into practice (Applegate, M. A). Therefore, the purpose of curriculum evaluation is to make decisions about the curriculum, its faculty and the resources.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the development of the BScN curriculum is testimony that the country is making a concentrated effort to move nursing education from the hospitals to the Universities. From the outlined competencies and goals of this curriculum it is expected that the curriculum will foster critical thinking, knowledge based actions, and personal and professional development which will prepare the future baccalaureate nurse to function in a multidisciplinary team. In addition, as a a proponent of this HEC curriculum the writer had come forth with a better understanding of the HEC/PNC curriculum and can appreciate the extent of the work undertaken in developing the national curriculum for nursing. Now is the time has come to evaluate the interrelationship of the curriculum and the comprehensive learning experience of the nursing graduates in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained through the HEC/PNC curriculum.

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ISSUE AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Teacher is the core to achieve quality education which Pakistan desires. Similarly, teacher education is an important aspect of today’s modern educational system as it prepares pre-service teachers to face the future challenges of their profession. The teacher education across the globe is going through a rapid change to meet the requirements of the computer era and modern technology integration into education. The pre-service teachers in Pakistan also need to be updated on the same line. However, this rigorous activity needs improvement in today’s Pakistani educational system as it entail a lot many loopholes which require immediate attention. The purpose of this paper is to open the question of the effectiveness of the pre-service teacher education programmes in bringing a change according to the recent requirements of the world. The paper sheds light on three concerning areas of the teacher education which requires immediate attention for innovation and quality in teacher education. These are the issues of having an acculturated curriculum in Pakistan thus resulting in a conflict of the social sensibility of the Pakistani society, the incongruence of the recently developed teacher education standards and the practices across the country in teacher education institutions and the role of teacher education institutions in making pre-service teachers change agents working for transforming innovatively the theory into practice of education in Pakistan. The analysis of data revealed that Pakistani teacher education has multiple problems in the areas highlighted. This manuscript discusses research findings, identifying both problems and recommendations for improving the teacher education in Pakistan. Suggestions are made for what will be needed in the future and how teacher education institutions will have to adapt in order to promote effective teacher education programmes and have sustainable teacher education in future. The paper suggests new ways of developing curriculum and innovation to bring a positive change in the existing teacher education programmes across Pakistan.

Introduction

Teacher is the core to achieve quality education which Pakistan desires. To educate teachers, there are 275 teacher education institutions providing pre-service education (certificates, diplomas and degrees). Other than this there are 243 private sector teacher education institutions contributing in the same. In addition, there are 300 teacher education resource centers in the districts of Pakistan. The teacher education institutions are managed by the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension for pre-service programmes while the Provincial Institutes of Teacher Education (PITEs) are responsible for in-service education programmes (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Most of the teachers would agree to the fact that one of the primary purposes of the teacher education programmes is to educate teachers to become effective practitioners who can bring quality change in their contexts within their limited capacity (Bureau of Curriculum, 2010).

In the recent decade, the teacher education system in Pakistan seems to have lost its charm and effectiveness due to multiple reasons. Dilshad (2010) picked up few of those reasons and stated that teacher education in Pakistan lacks funding and financial resources, short teacher education period, undue emphasis on quantitative expansion, narrow scope of curriculum,
imbalance of professional development of teachers for core and optional subjects, over-emphasis on theory as opposed to practice little/no coordination between education departments and teacher education institutions, below average quality of instructions from the set benchmarks in the classrooms, lack of in-service education of teacher educators, failure in implementing useful reforms, vague objectives, poor quality of textbooks, defective examination system, lack of supervision and accountability, and lack of research and evaluation of teacher education programmes” (Dilshad, 2010, p.88).

The following study has also tried to highlight the three major factors which are a cause of creating a conflict in the social sensibility of the nation resulting in the deterioration of the education system.

Research reveals that the standard of education can be improved by preparing competent and effective teachers (Bhat & Ganihar, 2006). Likewise, Iqbal (2005) found that the quality of teacher education is the most pivotal factor in determining the efficiency of an education system. Darling-Hammond (2000) reported that “teachers who had more preparation for teaching are more confident and successful with students than those who have had little or none” (p.166). In addition, Darling-Hammond indicated that programmes with extended clinical preparation interwoven with coursework on learning and teaching produce teachers who are more effective and more likely to enter and stay in teaching (2000, p. 166).

Hafiz (2010) further added to the importance of teacher education by identifying the quality indicators that assists in promoting quality teacher education in Pakistan. According to him, quality indicators are “generic statements made in such a way that they ensure comprehensive coverage of the most relevant domains of the quality of teacher education institution” (National Assessment and Accreditation Council [NAAC], 2007, p.3). Yackulic and Noonan (2001) held that indicators in teacher education reflect the important components of teacher education programmes. Chande (2006) believes that performance indicators may be of three types: quantitative, narrative (subjective) and combination of quantitative and narrative.

Objectives of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the effects of acculturated curriculum, congruence of the teacher education standards with the performance of teacher education institutions and the role of teacher education institutions in making teachers as change agents in Pakistan. For this purpose, in-depth literature review was done and further opinions of teacher educators were recorded from both the public and private sectors of education in Pakistan. This research is delimited to the teacher education departments of public and private sector in Sind, which were offering pre-service teacher education programmes.

Methodology

Literary research was conducted at the first stage of the research and the possible indicators affecting the Teacher Education in Pakistan were identified. Later to second the opinion in-depth Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were carried out among the teacher educators of public and private teacher education institutions. From the private sector a total of 10 participants’ recorded their views and from the public sector teacher education institution 11 participants gave their opinions. The teacher educators from both the public and private sectors were selected based on the criteria of serving the teacher education for the past ten years and having a master’s degree in education.
Findings and Discussion

The results of the findings are stated below:

- **Role of Teacher Education Institutions:**
  Pre-service teachers are considered as change agents. The basic aim of teaching the pre-service teachers is that they will bring some kind of change in whatever positions they will work in future in the education system. As being change agents, the following problems are faced by the pre-service teachers in the teacher education given to them.

  Pre-service teachers when join any teacher education institution have a different approach towards teaching. They are mostly directed towards traditional teaching. There is a preset mindset that teaching is all about lecture method, opening books, solving answers from the books and all. However, very few have understanding that the teaching method whether traditional or contemporary to be adopted as per need of time.

  There is a common belief that teaching is an easy and part time profession and joining the profession is mainly due to parental pressure; there is no will to pursue it. Moreover, teaching is not projected as a career by the government, therefore, teacher education is also considered to be of no use as it would not benefit the students to earn a handsome amount in the future.

- **Acculturated Curriculum of Teacher Education:**
  Literature reveals that any country where curriculum is not state owned and is acculturated, results in a conflict in social sensibility. Cheung (2010) stated that since Hong Kong has shifted from enculturated to acculturated curriculum, there is a marked improvement in the learners critical thinking and understanding of the topics as more relationship between society and content can be observed. Similarly, Jasman (2011) identified the major issues in the Israeli curriculum as it is not state owned. According to him, it is difficult for the teacher educators to maintain a positive orientation to creating learning opportunities; they face problems in drawing up on an extended repertoire of knowledge and skills when making decisions and professional judgments; understand the “bigger” and more complex picture in order to take account of a wider range of factors and circumstances both within and beyond the immediate context. The very similar situation prevails in Pakistan as the curriculum is not state owned, hence, does not fulfill the requirements of the Pakistani society.

- **The Teacher Education Standards:**
  There are altogether 75 quality indicators for teacher education in the western world which has been designed by Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Pakistan is also a signatory of it. The National Accreditation Council (NACTE) has adopted somewhat same indicators for quality assurance of teacher education in Pakistan (MOE, 2006). These indicators have been categorized into six areas: Curriculum Design and Planning; Curriculum Transaction and Evaluation; Research, Development and Extension; Infrastructure and Learning Resources; Student Support and Progression and Organisation and Management. The teacher education institutions have to be accredited along a set framework designed by National Accreditation of Teacher Education (NACTE). The responses of the teacher educators regarding these standards are mentioned below:

  1. **Curriculum Design and Planning**
     The teacher education curriculum does not enable problem solving skills among students. The students do the exploration on their own and are, hence, forced to go for memorization. The curriculum does not pose any challenge in the minds of the students; therefore, constructive learning is impeded.
2. **Curriculum Transaction and Evaluation**

There is a wide gap in the methodology taught at the teacher education institutions and the schools. Interactive sessions are taught in an ideal situation, however, in reality the case is vice versa.

Sustainability and follow up are missing in all the teacher education programmes. Pakistan’s curriculum is not state owned and is acculturated which does not fulfill the requirements of the society. It creates imbalance and results in conflict in the social sensibility of the society.

The curriculum mainly focuses on the memorization of the concepts with unnecessary intake and assimilation throughout the curriculum. The curriculum is more assessment oriented. In the triangle of curriculum, more emphasis is given on assessment than the remaining two which makes it inclined towards testing only. The curriculum also does not turn theory into practice.

3. **Research, Development and Extension**

So far according to the teacher educators nothing has been done in this field. Research though, is an integral part of the Masters in Education program, still no contribution from the teacher education institutions have been made to prosper this field. The students do it for the sake of getting the degree and no constructive learning or skill development takes place amongst them.

4. **Infrastructure and Learning Resources**

The teacher education institutions and the schools where pre service teachers are sent have limited resources. The public sector teacher education institutions face the issue of logistics and arrangements. The teaching resources required are not available; hence, teaching pedagogy gets affected. The infrastructure available is also not up to the mark. The infrastructure itself results in disabling the process of learning.

The textbooks designed are in isolation and do not promote values, skills, attitude and beliefs which are to be inculcated in students. The adoption of different textbooks from abroad and also from privately run publishers does not fulfill the need and requirements of the objectives set by teacher education in Pakistan.

5. **Student Support and Progression**

Compartmentalization has been observed as one of the problems. The learners have more of a confined understanding with a limited approach which results in mental blocking and hampered learning. Lack of content knowledge, result in less understanding of the wider content. The textbook knowledge is insufficient to teach. The students are pushed and dragged to read to understand which does not help in effective teaching.

6. **Organisation and Management**

The pre-service teachers are not allowed to teach in the schools the way they are educated. The school leadership’s readiness to change and accept results in least support, thus, affects learning. Due to the global recession in the world, education lost its integrity and became a tool to earning through massive boom in degrees and certificates. This certification and excessive degree awarding brought teacher education to a collapse. The entire attention of education drifted towards seeking jobs in the public sector as the only requirement to get a public sector job is degree and not experience or learning. Degree is only a means to an end and can be achieved through any way.
Suggestion and Recommendations

The study highlighted the following suggestion to be taken to bring about a change in the existing situation of teacher education in Pakistan.

- The curriculum needs to be revised at the school level acquainted with latest information dealing with a varied, wider and multicultural approach. The curriculum should focus more on the tools required to develop the skill of learning rather knowledge in itself.

- Aims will clarify the content and method to be adopted for teacher education. In the curriculum triangle, emphasis to be relocated to objectives’ achievement rather assessment.

- The teachers must know the existing situation and based on that bring about a change in the existing situation for sustainability overcoming all the problems they faced.

- The western literature available to be questioned by the teachers and only those ideas to be adopted which have contextual relationship with the society. Thus critical and reflective thinking to be incorporated.

- Application oriented curriculum to be introduced where the learners can get a chance to apply the learnt knowledge in real sense.

- PBL- Project based and problem based learning to be introduced in the teacher education curriculum.

Conclusion

Teacher education institutions have a dual job to perform, they have to change the system, yet prepare their students to bring out incremental change within their own capacities for a brighter future of teacher education in Pakistan. According to all the feedback programmes based on funded projects, the unanimous conclusion is that the teacher finds it really difficult as the system is the biggest hindrance in the process of implementation. No support is provided by anyone. Every education programme goes in vain as it does not hit the belief system of the individuals. Reconceptualisation is not done which again fails to bring in any change in the mental setup of individuals, thus results in failure of the teacher education programmes. Therefore the first competency is to the aims and beliefs of the society and the targets to be achieved as a nation. Self awareness and self realizations is the key to success in teacher education.

References


Abstract

The paper investigates the integration of global component in the teacher education curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) and looks into its role in preparing globally competent teachers. The overall strategy for the study was based on survey. The population consisted of all the B.Ed (1 yr) trained teachers and B.Ed curriculum in Pakistan. The total sample n=200 B.Ed (1 yr) was selected through purposive sampling while the curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) developed by Higher Education Commission was chosen for the scrutiny. The data was collected through interviews and documentary/record analysis. To find the global competency, themes were derived from the responses of experienced teachers using phenomenological research, while major global issues (Global Human Rights, Global Population, Global Language, Global Economy and Global Citizenship) were analyzed in B.Ed curriculum (1 yr) through content analysis. The study identifies the missing gaps in B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum in preparing global minded teacher. The results concluded that the changing context of teaching is hampered due to theoretical integration of global education in the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum. The curriculum partially fulfilled the needs of the teachers due to which students are not globally prepared. The study recommends a strong intervention mechanism to revise the teachers’ curriculum to help teachers integrate the practical global phenomena in their everyday classroom teaching.

Key Words: Global Competent Teachers, Global Competencies, Global Education, Teacher Education, Curriculum

Introduction

The concept of globalization results in functionally shrinking of the world (de Blij, 2005) into a global village (Held, 1995). Where globalization brought many challenges, the demand for acquiring global competency is increasing. Teachers are considered as the heart and soul of every education system who transmit knowledge and enhance true learning in global education (Smith, 2000). Most of the educationists are in view that the educational reforms are associated with the professional development of teachers (Borko et al, 2002; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Fullan, 2002). Literature suggests that the quality of teachers depends on the educational qualification of teachers and quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education (Aga Khan Foundation, 1998; Jangira & Ahuja, 1992; Sharma, 1993). Unless teachers are trained and capable enough to meet the challenges, we cannot expect good reaping. Fargusan (as cited in Paliakoff & Schwartzbeck, 2001) observed that the quality of teachers has a direct impact on student learning. Therefore, their professional development is crucial to impart globally competent knowledge to the students.

The current state of teacher education in Pakistan is in a dismal state that obstructs its overall effectiveness. One of the problematic areas, identified by Dilshad (2010) is the tapered scope in teacher education curriculum. According to the National Education Policy 1998-2010,
although we are successful in mass production of teachers, but their content and methodology of education is shallow (Government of Pakistan, 1998).

Keeping the curriculum responsive to changing demands leads to prepare global competent individuals. Teacher training institutions are required to plan and design such curriculum, which can equip global competent teachers with attitudes, knowledge, and skills. According to Fullan (1999), not all change is improvement, but all improvement leads to change. Successful curriculum improvement should be based on the evaluation of the existing curriculum of teachers’ training programmes and on the expert views of all the trained teachers.

**Research Design and Methodology**

**Main Research Question**
1. How the component of global education is integrated in the teacher education curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) in Pakistan?

**Subsidiary Questions**
1. How the important global areas are portrayed in the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum?
2. Is the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum addressing the needs of teachers?

**Methodology**
The overall study is based on survey methodology.

**Research method**
The present study adopts mix method approach, i.e., phenomenology and content analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) as the major modes of investigation. The population consisted of all the B.Ed (1 yr) trained teachers and B.Ed curriculum in Pakistan. The total sample of 200 B.Ed (1 yr) qualified teachers disposed at five private and five public institutions are selected through purposive sampling, while for content analysis, the curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) designed by Higher Education Commission is selected.

**Research Instruments**
The data is collected through structured interviews and content analysis.

**Data Analysis**
To find the global competency of teachers, themes are derived from the responses of the experienced teachers using phenomenological research, while major global issues are identified from the B.Ed curriculum (1 yr) through content analysis.

**Ethical Consideration**
The informed consent letter was signed by the participants, which described the nature of the research and confirmed that the data will be kept confidential.

**Research Findings and Discussion**
The research findings are divided into two sections. The first section is based on the responses derived from the interviews, while the second section discusses the major global issues, derived from the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum.
Section 1
Phenomenology

Table 1
Showing the trained participants on the basis of gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several structured questions were asked to the participants. For the first question, majority of the respondents agreed that they did not observe the integration of global education in teacher education curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) during their studies, however eight of the respondents completely observed and seven partially observed the component of global education in the curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr). One of the respondents was in view that the current state of teacher education curriculum is not competitive and does not meet the current demand of teachers. One of the respondents said

“Although there was an integration of global education in teacher education curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) but it did not fully match the current situation of global education. The objectives set for most of the courses were hazy while the strategies taught to us were out-dated.”

Another respondent shared dissatisfaction in the following words:

“…I had a very bad experience during B.Ed course as it was completely based on parrot learning which did not help us to explore our capabilities and skills so how could you expect a person to have global educated mind.”

The concept of integrated curriculum empowers teachers (Vars, 1991) by providing deeper understanding to foster positive attitude among the students. The curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) seems to provide few of the global education components; however, it does not completely address the need of current time. It focuses more on the knowledge content than on providing practical insights.

When asked, whether they found curriculum of B.Ed (1 yr) practical, majority found it theoretical, however, only 9 respondents agreed that it was based on practical knowledge. One of the respondents shared her experience in the following words

“The curriculum did not address majority of the components of global education, which I was looking forward for…One can never expect practical changes unless intellectual teachers come forward to bring changes in B.Ed curriculum.”

Another respondent said

“…it depends on teacher how to transform theory into practice. I found the curriculum theoretical, but I did my practice with different type of teaching methods.”

The respondents were asked, if the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum addresses their needs or not, majority of the respondents disagreed. One of the respondents shared:

“B.Ed curriculum did not give me capacity to grow professionally…the courses did not provide me with knowledge and evaluative skills.”
Iqbal (1999) & Muhammad (2002) stressed that the trained graduate teachers in Pakistan should appreciate their profession, have intellectual competence and effective decision making and research skills.

Although limited number of teachers are in view that B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum helped them to gain practical knowledge, but majority of the respondents informed that their students are not fully prepared to face the global challenges. One of the respondents said

“The greatest obstacle to help students from developing countries to meet global challenges is due to lack of availability of resources… If the curriculum did not address the needs, we must try to learn it through the rich experiences of others.”

Another respondent felt that the youth of the under developed countries are facing more challenges due to lack of trained teachers. One respondent shared:

“We are unable to maintain standards or meet the global criteria. Since many of the teachers are untrained, we cannot expect students to have global mindedness.”

When asked the respondents if they applied the learnt knowledge to their practical teaching, majority of the respondents were in view that it was because of their practical experience and on-going teacher training workshops that they were able to gain more insight of practical knowledge. Majority of the respondents suggested that lectures, conversations and group studies and discussions are the best mode of imparting practical knowledge to the students. One of the respondents shared:

“I applied the learnt knowledge to my practical teaching to fulfill psychological needs of students and to boost up the confidence level of my students.”

Contrary to that, another respondent said

“I feel that I didn’t learn any fruitful things from B.Ed, but I am applying my knowledge and skills through the additional trainings and trying to provide them active learning environment.”

The quality of teaching depends upon the professional knowledge and pedagogical skills (Exley, Walker & Brownlee, 2008) of teachers. Chandra (2004) emphasized that the teachers should acquire continuous trainings to have sound knowledge and up-to-date skills to apply practical knowledge to their classrooms.

The respondents shared the teaching strategies they prefer to adopt

**Table 2**

*List of all the teaching strategies, use by B.Ed (1 yr) trained teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project based Learning</th>
<th>Cooperative Learning</th>
<th>Activity based Teaching</th>
<th>Use of ICT</th>
<th>Interactive Teaching</th>
<th>Self- Study</th>
<th>Debates/Discussion Method</th>
<th>Case Studies</th>
<th>Role Play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

415
The list clearly defines that teachers use modern and latest methodologies, however, it is may be due to lack proper training that not all can use innovative strategies effectively. The positive learning outcomes can be reaped through successful teaching practices (Hargreaves & Ho, 2000; Thomas, 1975; Connell, 1974). Mastering contents of the subjects is not the sole ladder to success rather teachers need to plan effective teaching strategies.

All the respondents highlighted the role of teacher education in preparing global competency but many shared that although teacher education is a crucial step for professional development but unless practical components are included, one cannot term it as global competent curriculum. Misra (1993) stated that proper designed teacher curriculum is linked with the effectiveness of teachers which eventually enhance the educational standards and quality.

The role of teacher education in preparing global competency face a set of complex challenges because teachers are educational innovators, able to project a strong and coherent vision of teaching; at the same time struggle to meet the conflicting needs and expectation. They should have enough knowledge and skills to reflect, critique existing norms and methods and contribute for the improvement of teacher education.

Section 2

Content Analysis of Global Issues in the B.Ed Curriculum

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Human Rights</th>
<th>Global Economy</th>
<th>Global Language</th>
<th>World Population</th>
<th>Global Citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Foundations of Education</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>School and Society</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Measurement and Evaluation</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Counseling and Guidance</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>School Organization and Management</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Secondary School Teaching</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Elective I (Language)</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Elective II (Social Studies/ Science)</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Functional English</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study highlights that the concept of global human rights is not practically taught in any of the courses of B.Ed curriculum. However, indirectly it is taught in many courses. For instance, it was noted that in Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, Secondary School Teaching, Elective II (Social Studies/Science), and Elective I (Languages) the concept was discussed at length. The concepts of life, liberty and security of person, freedom of thought, conscience and religion were taught in Foundations of Education course. The concept of equality before the law, freedom of movement and residence, nationality were seen included in the Social Studies course but the practical teaching of how to integrate these into practical teaching was the missing gap. During the interview, majority of the teachers discussed that their students are not prepared for the global competent world. Few also revealed that the global human right issues were rarely incorporated. The concept of global population is discussed liberally in the Foundations of Education course, and marginally in the School Organization and Management and Social Studies course. The analyzed content shows that English language receives its due share and weightage as it is directly and indirectly taught in every course. Students who want to take it as elective get the chance to make an in depth study, while others study English language through functional English. Contradictory to that, it was observed during the interview that most of the respondents were bilingual or used native language (Urdu19) in their responses. Only limited numbers of respondents were fluent in English. This shows lack of practical efficacy of coursework to polish global language skills of the respondents. In the analyzed curriculum, global economy is indirectly discussed in Social Studies, Foundations of Education, and languages. However, it does not receive its due weightage and share. Global citizenship continues to be an ignored topic. It does not get the weightage it deserves. It is taught in Social Studies and School and Society courses. Teacher can teach the concept of citizenship by providing students with a set of guides by which to examine a global issue, and teaching them to apply it to a specific case study.

Results
The study identifies the missing gaps in B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum in preparing global competent teacher. The changing context of teaching is hampered due to theoretical integration of global education in the B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum. The curriculum addresses more theoretical aspects and lacks to address needs of teachers due to which all the students are not globally prepared. The B.Ed (1 yr) curriculum partially fulfilled the needs of the teachers.

Suggestions
The study recommends strong intervention mechanism to revise the teachers’ curriculum to help teachers integrate the global phenomena in their teaching. Since teachers organize learning process rather than transmitting the knowledge alone, a great responsibility lies on the curriculum developer to infuse globally competent areas in teacher education curriculum by revisiting and revising the current teacher education curriculum.

References

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ESL CURRICULUM: AN AREA TO BE EXPLORED

Narjis Khatoon, Al-Murtaza Professional Development Centre

Introduction

I am an English teacher for the last twenty seven years. I like teaching and exploring possibilities of improvement in teaching in our school and other schools because we help teachers from different schools as well. This liking brought me to Aga Khan University’s Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED). Life is never quiet after coming to AKU-IED.

Background

I am working as Professional Development Facilitator in a local trust school, where we try to give high quality education at the minimum cost. We have our own Professional Development Centre, where we try to share with teachers and other academic managers, pedagogies, skills and any new learning, for instance the work done on curriculum was shared with teachers as well others related with education, firstly to give them a sense of ownership and secondly to include their expertise in the process.

We were doing as I think other schools do, which is to make a teaching syllabus by just listing units or chapters to teach from the course book and follow that through the year. This situation was not providing me with professional satisfaction. As Richert Anna (1995) has said, ‘Teachers learn by inquiring into their practice. They think about their classroom experiences in order to make sense of them.” (pg. 2 Teachers who teach Teachers-Edited by Tom Russell and Fred Korthagen)

Rationale

Like other teachers we have always been trying hard to improve our students’ reading and writing skills. We were successful to a certain extent but at the same time it was felt necessary to try new avenues. The discussion was on for some time among teachers of all branches and then finally we decided to prepare a new curriculum for our school which should be more interesting for students as well as easy to follow for teachers. It should also help in improving our students’ language skills.

I have mostly taught secondary classes so I have used examples from class VIII in this document.

Literature Review

Believing what J. Gaylen Saylor, William M. Alexander, and Arthur J. Lewis claim that through curriculum learning opportunities can be provided and they say; “We define curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated.” (Developing the Curriculum, Fourth Edition by Peter F. Olivia- Longman). Efforts were made to prepare a curriculum which should be informative and interesting for students as well as easy to follow for teachers.
Methodology

Teachers of different subjects have their days to meet once a fortnight in their respective branches. We shared our concerns in these meetings; finally we decided to work on preparing a new curriculum. We worked together to prepare the groundwork to have a short awareness course for teachers from other schools.

Before we started to work on this issue first we had to clarify the difference between meanings of the words ‘syllabus’ and ‘curriculum.’ The word curriculum is being used in multiple meanings by different users. The meaning in this paper is used in the sense of ‘what is to be taught’ written in detail, which can improve students performance in academics and should be easy to follow for teachers. We also had to keep in mind to help our teachers wherever they needed help as well as other teachers from other schools.

The decision of preparing a curriculum was made but somehow we felt afraid to pick up our National Curriculum and go through it but we had to do it, so we finally picked up the courage and struggled through it. Time was spent in trying to understand what is there and is it what we need? Good ideas were there but perhaps feeling adventurous we decided to explore curriculums from other countries as well.

After skimming through a few we found one which seemed to have a nice progression closer to contextual needs of our students and teachers in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

We studied this document, made amendments according to our context, as English is our second language and in some cases third language because there are students who speak two other languages apart from English. The given number of words to be read, in a year were far too many because as a nation we are not readers and we found that required number of words for reading according to that document is simply not possible for our students so we reduced the number of words.

It was realized that objectives for different skills were presented in a very systematic manner with a gradual progression in each level and across levels. So we mostly benefited from this and integrated it with chosen parts of National Curriculum.

Our Learning

The exercise of going through this document has helped us to realize that teaching through ‘Text Types’ is going to be beneficial for our students and teachers because Student Learning Outcomes from Aga Khan University- Education Board (AKU-EB) are based on these as well.

Further help was the use of ‘Rubrics.’ There are quite a lot of rubrics available on the internet, we were able to use more of them because they are mostly prepared for different text types, and if necessary some amendments can be made according to individual needs before using these. Using ‘Internet’ has been very beneficial for us.

Teaching through ‘Text Types,’ has been and is very interesting for teachers and learners both. While reading, students have to match/search the related characteristics in the text, which helps them in comprehension of the text. Discussion starts when and if any student raises a question or has different thinking than the rest. This leads to a very much student centred class as students exchange dialogues, give evidence/s in proving their point/s. As a result better/deeper comprehension is achieved.
For example if students are given the text “High Ropes Course” to read, they are first asked to guess the text type and then find the characteristics that are related to that text. (See the text “High Ropes Course” (appendixes A & C) and characteristics of four major text types (appendix B).

Students are given characteristics of four major text types as a handout, they then skim through the text to get the general idea of the text type, and then they try to find the appropriate characteristics in the text.

In case they have made a mistake in guessing the text type and look for characteristics of a different text type, they soon realize their mistake because they are unable to find their chosen characteristics. We find that this activity of searching characteristics in texts creates comprehension.

Realizing which text type is mostly used in daily life, importance was given to ‘Expository’ text and students are introduced this text type very briefly from early classes and properly from class V. From class V to class VIII, we try to teach the major genres that come under its umbrella.

For teaching ‘compare and contrast,’ which as we all know is part of expository text, different ways of teaching were tried but it was experienced that teaching through ‘Venn diagram’ was more effective as students were already using this diagram in Mathematics.

After reading any article, students are encouraged to discuss about different aspects of it i.e. coherence, importance of connective words and structural patterns of text and so on.

**Literature**

During poetry teaching we try to help students, determine the purpose of different forms of poetry (e.g., ballad, couplet, epic, elegy, ode, and sonnet). Students are also guided to read a poem and give the following orally or in writing:

- main idea
- theme and its development
- summary
- paraphrasing
- recognize literary techniques such as personification, alliteration and assonance.
- the use of figurative language to appeal senses including similes, metaphors and onomatopoeia.

It is experienced that teaching figurative language through poetry is much easier than teaching through prose. Descriptive poems are full of figurative language therefore teachers can explain and students can understand easily. By reading the poem several times to find figurative language and then explain to the class helps students to enjoy and understand the poem perhaps a little more. Students of class IV onwards are encouraged to compose poems; it seems to help them to be familiar with poetry and creates likeness for poetry in them. It seems to help in higher classes when they are faced to write summary, main idea or even paraphrasing.
Vocabulary Development

Students are helped and guided to use their knowledge of word relationships, to determine the meaning of new vocabulary and to understand its meaning in the context. We try to teach vocabulary keeping the following in mind:

1. Use knowledge of affixes to understand new vocabulary.
2. Use knowledge of affixes to analyse words and work out their meanings.
3. Build vocabulary by using affixes (on going across levels).

Working on curriculum has opened new doors to explore, for instance vocabulary enhancement. It was being taught but I suppose in a very traditional manner through words, meanings and making sentences of the new words. But through the use of affixes and root words, we realized the importance of teaching vocabulary effectively. Few examples of ‘Prefixes, Suffixes and Root’ words were collected and put together to be given to students (see appendix D). Students are encouraged to look for and add further items to this list.

Students spend few minutes or so after finishing their class work on formulating words by combining two or three words from this list of prefixes, root words and suffixes. Students enjoy this quite a lot as they want to carry on with this exercise.

Teachers also provide students with opportunities to work with word derivations by adding suffixes in reading assignments and separately.

Writing

Teachers guide students to write clear, coherent, and focused essays. It is our aim that eventually their writing exhibits awareness of audience and purpose. It is also expected that their essays contain most characteristics of the text they are writing in. Students are supported to progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive essays of at least 250 to 300 words. Their writing is expected to demonstrate command of good English, which has minimum amount or no errors in it.

Here again study of ‘Text Types’ helps students because related characteristics help them as points for each type of writing to make sure they have included almost all important points.

The new curriculum has sub-points for each kind of writing, which is a help for teachers in planning lessons as it helps us to make sure that each point is covered in our plan. Compositions according to text types with sub-points help students also because they can use these to make sure they have included all points in their writing. For example:

Persuasive compositions:

- Include a well-defined thesis (i.e., one that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment).
- Present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinion.
- Provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader’s concerns and counterarguments.
Conventions
It is learnt through experience that we have to teach grammar separately as well as in context because being non-speakers it is difficult for our students to learn only from context. They do need practice otherwise as well. So we are teaching through a combination of traditional and recent methods.

Challenges
Realizing the importance of ‘Reading’ students are encouraged to read as much as possible on their own, including a good representation of narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information) and in their library period as well.
So far teachers chose some books, read the books themselves, motivated students to read those books by discussing that in class in an interesting and persuasive manner. All students from class IV onwards write reviews of what they read in school library.
It is proving to be very difficult to motivate students to read other books as well as their course books but we have not given up and we keep looking for ideas in this respect.
We are working on sharing responsibility to improve reading comprehension to be shared by teachers of all subjects.

Future Plans

Struggling readers
Need to help the struggling readers has also been realized, we are in the process of organizing some help for struggling readers because as we all know that longer we leave to intervene the worse their condition becomes. We are collecting information in this respect. We will InshaAllah start it soon.

Interactive Read Aloud
Another important strategy to use in class to improve students’ reading comprehension is ‘Interactive Read Aloud’ or ‘Reading Aloud by Teacher.’
A teacher can teach perhaps all the reading strategies to students through this, as we have come to realize it is:

An opportunity to
1. demonstrate how to make connections with the text by tying the new ideas found in the text to the student’s own prior knowledge and background.
2. demonstrate how to tap into topic knowledge from previous study or reading.
3. demonstrate how to draw inferences.
4. demonstrate how to elaborate details.
5. model making predictions.
6. encourage students to make predictions.
7. to comment on the author’s use of language.
8. show young readers and writers the author’s style or craft.
9. ask questions about specific story elements.
10. examine the text for its use of grammar, punctuation, and figures of speech.
11. raise questions.
12. create other examples.
13. demonstrate when and where students can use similar structures in their own writing.

Teacher Training Courses
We have had courses for teachers and we will carry on with these as and when needed. I think we can say that working on curriculum has been a way to respond to change in our school.

Reference
Appendix A

High Ropes Course

The high ropes course is waiting to help you and your friends build confidence and group cooperation. It’s also lots of fun. Many courses, indoor and outdoor, are available in camps, clubs, and schools across America. You may think that climbing the high ropes is dangerous, but it isn’t. Safety ropes and harnesses are carefully managed by course experts and members of your group to give you lots of support. When you attempt to cross a suspended log or move by rope across an expanse that seems scary, you’ll receive encouragement from your teammates. You’ll also feel great when you can encourage someone else to succeed. Even if you cannot complete the course, you’ll feel supported and know the accomplishment of having faced the challenge. Why not get a group together this summer and grow into a team on a high ropes course?
Appendix B

Characteristics of four major text types

1. Characteristics of persuasive writing include:
   - stated position or belief
   - factual supports
   - persuasive techniques
   - logical argument
   - call to action

2. Characteristics of narrative writing include:
   - plot structure
     - introduction
     - rising action
     - climax
     - falling action
     - resolution
   - conflict
   - characterization
   - setting
   - theme
   - point of view
   - sequencing
   - transitions

3. Characteristics of expository writing include:
   - Topic and purpose
   - Subheadings
   - Chronological Order
   - Logical Order
   - Background Facts
   - Definitions of Terms

4. Characteristics of descriptive writing include:
   - elaborate use of sensory language
   - rich, vivid, and lively detail
   - figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and personification
   - showing, rather than telling through the use of active verbs and precise modifiers.
The high ropes course is waiting to help you and your friends build confidence and group cooperation. It’s also lots of fun (Stated position or belief). Many courses, indoor and outdoor, are available in camps, clubs, and schools across America. You may think that climbing the high ropes is dangerous, but it isn’t. Safety ropes and harnesses are carefully managed by course experts and members of your group to give you lots of support (Factual support). When you attempt to cross a suspended log or move by rope across an expanse that seems scary, you’ll receive encouragement from your teammates. You’ll also feel great when you can encourage someone else to succeed. Even if you cannot complete the course, you’ll feel supported and know the accomplishment of having faced the challenge (Persuasive techniques). Why not get a group together this summer and grow into a team on a high ropes course? (Call to action).
Appendix D

Page 15 is the hand out given to students for Word building with prefixes, root words and suffixes. This information is typed on ‘Excel’ in landscape, therefore it is presented separately.
STUDENTS’ VIEWS OF IMPACT OF TEXTBOOKS ON THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

Riaz Hussain, Aga Khan University Institute for Education, Pakistan

Abstract

The history of curricula and textbooks development in Pakistan has remained contentious particularly during Zia Ul Haq era (1977-1988) and after. There have been quite a few reviews of the curricula and textbooks undertaken both by Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan and independent researchers. These reviews have mainly employed document/textbook analysis methods and few of them explored teachers or students’ views of curricula and textbooks. This paper argues that since teachers and students are the ultimate users and beneficiaries of textbooks so their views are worth exploring before suggesting or initiating any change process including curricula and textbooks reforms. To fill some of this gap, therefore, this study explored secondary school students’ views of impacts textbooks had on their achievements. Data were collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 112 secondary school students of Karachi. The data were analysed and chi-square test was applied to test the hypotheses at 5% level of significance. The analysis of data indicated that Oxford University Press (OUP) textbooks had more impact for the achievement of students than Sindh Textbook Board (STB) textbooks. The study highlights curricula and textbooks as debatable phenomena and has attempted to bring students’ perspective into this debate. Based on its findings, this paper suggests reforms in the curricula and textbooks in order to enhance their impact for students’ achievements and calls for further research to explore students and teachers’ voices in order to undertake meaningful curricular reforms in Pakistan.

Keywords: Textbooks; students’ achievements; students’ views; Pakistan

Introduction

The Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan undertook a review of all textbooks in 2002 and recommended that no major changes were required in the curriculum and textbooks (Khan, 2005). However, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI, 2003), a non-government organization (NGO) based in Islamabad, carried out an independent review of textbooks and found significant problems in the national curricula and textbooks that would, according to the report, have serious consequences for national life in Pakistan. The report caught headlines in the print and electronic media and attracted strong opposition from a sector of the masses (Mustafa, 2004; Qureshi, 2006) that forced the government to undertake a second review of the national curricula and textbooks. The second review, also, did not propose any significant changes in the curricula and textbooks. However, other researchers such as Ahmad (2004) and Nassem (2006) found flaws in them and suggested reforms in curricula and textbooks. These researchers mostly employed document and textbook analysis methods to generate data and none of them explored teachers or students’ views of the curricula and textbooks. It is argued that since students are the ultimate receivers of instructions from curricula and textbooks so their views of impact of curricula and textbooks on their achievements are worth exploring before initiating any change process including curricula and textbooks reform (Mitra, 2004; Laren 2006; Hargreaves; 1996). To fill some of this gap, therefore, this study explored secondary school students’ views of impacts OUP textbooks or STB textbooks had on their achievements. The overarching hypothesis there are
significant differences in views about achievements between students using OUP textbooks and students using STB textbooks guided this study.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Framework**

Textbooks are taught in the schools to achieve aims and goals of education espoused in the national curriculum. In a developing country like Pakistan, textbooks are the only teaching tool for teachers and learning tool for students. They convey academic ideas and define the national curriculum for most of the teachers (Haq & Haq, 1998; Bednarz, 2004). Therefore, textbooks play an important role in students’ achievements as a result of their schooling. Achievement, according to Steinberger (1993, p. 2) is “…student ability and performance; it reflects the whole child; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student’s life in public school and on into post-secondary years and working life”. This definition provides a wider view of student achievement and does not confine the term to the scores obtained by students on paper/pencil tests. For the purpose of this study student achievement was defined in terms of cognitive, social and emotional development. Student comprehension, conceptual change learning, developing virtues of good citizens (civic sense), development of self-esteem and positive attitude to social life are considered student achievement for the purpose of the current study. However, in this paper a review literature on two components of student achievement, that is, comprehension and self-esteem is presented as follows.

**Textbooks and Student Comprehension**

Comprehension is the ability to grasp the meaning of material. This may be shown by translating material from one form to another (e.g. words to numbers), by interpreting material (e.g. explaining or summarizing), and by estimating future trends (e.g. predicting consequences or effects).

Comprehension of a text depends on at least four factors; readability, illustrations, hands/minds on activities and previous knowledge. Firstly, comprehension of a textbook depends on its readability. Readability is the ease with which a text can be read and comprehended. The quality of paper and ink used, font size and line spacing are fundamental factors which enhance textbooks readability. Readability also depends on the linguistic competencies used in the textbook and those possessed by the students. The readability factor is equally important across subjects including both languages and sciences (Indian Educational Review, 1995). Secondly, comprehension of a textbook is enhanced through the use of illustrations. Seguin (1989) describes three types of illustrations; (1) photographs—either original or copied, (2) drawings—either figurative or technical, drawn with a desire for realism, maps and (3) diagrams, sketches, statistical graphs. Illustrations often explain to a child more than a whole page of words (Dossal, 1996). Thirdly, textbooks should suggest practical observations, surveys, measurement and information research activities that engage students’ mind for better comprehension of ideas. Fourthly, textbooks should evoke the previous knowledge of students for better comprehension of the text (Dole, 2000). Comprehension provides a base for other components of students’ achievements including self-esteem.
Textbooks and Student Self-Esteem Development

Self-esteem is “the value each of us places on our own characteristics, abilities, and behaviours” (Woolfolk, 2007, p. 85). It is usually a favourable opinion of oneself (Elmer, 2001). It implies that self-esteem is appreciation of self and self-worth. People with high self-esteem have positive attitude, value themselves highly, are convinced of their own abilities and view themselves as competent, in control of their own lives and able to do what they want to do.

Developing students’ self-esteem is an important responsibility of schools. There are many different tools that can help build self-esteem in children and among them are textbooks that can deliver positive messages about confidence, courage, self-esteem, and self-worth. Textbooks can help in developing the self-esteem of the students by enhancing their knowledge and thinking skills to enable them to deal with problems of their daily lives. Textbooks present characters and situations that have the potential of affecting students’ self-esteem. The degree to which textbooks influence a child's sense of self-worth is largely determined by the extent to which that child identifies with the characters and situations and becomes emotionally involved with them (US-CCR, 1980). Stereotyping of any section of students in textbooks discourages them. Poussaint (as cited in US-CCR, 1980) asserts that this discouragement leads to embarrassment and these students withdraw or absent themselves from the school. Other students might develop a rebellious attitude against a system that looks down upon them. Girls also have been found to be affected by textbooks that fail to present adequate female role models. It implies that textbooks and contents therein have immense power of influencing either positively or negatively the development of students’ self-esteem.

Related Research Studies

A review of the related literature revealed little research carried out in Pakistan exploring students’ views of the impact textbooks have on their achievements. Most studies carried out in Pakistan have focused on content analysis of social studies textbooks followed by Urdu and English textbooks. Mostly researchers have analysed textbooks and their contents in relation to what knowledge, values and attitude they attempt to promote among students (e.g. see SDPI, 2003; Ahmad, 2004; SPDC, 2003; Nayyar and Salim, 2003; Mattu and Hussain, 2003). These studies on textbooks carried out in Pakistan show inaccuracies, flaws in textbooks and being laden with stereotypical and ideological contents. Studies carried out elsewhere explored students’ views both qualitatively and quantitatively (e.g. Stodolsky, Salk and Glaessner, 1991; Lockheed et al. 1986; Alazizi, 2004; Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Vansledright, 1997). However, none of these studies explored views of students regarding impact of textbooks on their achievements. In case of Lockheed et al (1986), they explored the effects of mathematics textbooks on student achievements but they did not explore students’ views. Moreover, their definition of student achievement was limited to test scores only. What differentiates this study from earlier studies is its focus on students’ views of impact textbooks had on their achievements by employing a causal comparative design. As explained earlier student achievement in this study refers to cognitive, social and emotional development.

Method

The nature of the research question formulated for this study begged for a prospective causal comparative research design. The impact of use of STB or OUP textbooks was

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20 What are the views of secondary students on the impact STB or OUP textbooks had on their achievements?
investigated on the achievements of secondary students of private schools in Karachi who formed the two categories, one using OUP textbooks and the other using STB textbooks. Five hypotheses were developed on the various components of the dependent variable, two of which are reported in this paper. A purposive sampling technique was used to conveniently choose three equally reputed private schools in Karachi. A five point likert scale questionnaire was constructed in the light of the literature reviewed which sought to measure the views of students regarding the impact of textbooks on their achievements. The collected data were tabulated under two categories of low level of agreement and high level of agreement of the respondents to each hypothesis. Yates correction was applied to the chi square test of each hypothesis. Odds ratios were also calculated. Chi square test results are presented in the following sections.

Results of the Chi Square Tests

This section presents the results of the chi square tests applied to two of the null hypotheses followed by analysis of results and discussions on the results. Conclusions are drawn from the discussions on the results of tests of hypotheses on the basis of which recommendations are made for curriculum developers and textbook writers. This section also presents suggestions for future researchers.

Results of Tests of the Two Hypotheses

A chi square test was performed to examine the relation between textbooks and students’ comprehension. The relation between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 112) = 0.590, p<.05$ (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Level of Agreement</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>High (22-33)</td>
<td>Low (&lt;21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STB</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 0.590 \quad df = 1 \quad p = 0.05$

Again, a chi square test was performed to examine the relation between textbooks and students’ self-esteem development. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 112) = 4.141, p<.05$. This seems to represent the fact that based on the odds ratio students were 5.09 time more likely to develop self-esteem if used OUP textbooks than if used STB textbooks (see Table 2).

21 $H_1$: There is no significant difference in views about the impact of textbooks on comprehension between students using OUP textbooks and students using STB textbooks.

$H_2$: There is no significant difference in views about the impact of textbooks on self-esteem between students using OUP textbooks and students using STB textbooks.
**Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Chi square test of the first hypothesis indicated students’ views to suggest that both OUP and STB textbooks equally enhanced their comprehension. However, it is important to note the high agreement of students to the illustrations provided in OUP textbooks as compared to mixed responses of students to the illustrations provided in STB textbooks (see Table 3). There are two possibilities for this result about STB textbooks. One, perhaps students using STB textbooks had no experience of looking at textbooks having better illustrations so their opinions were not much informed and second, their positive responses regarding the role of illustrations in STB textbooks suggests that how even low quality illustrations were important for comprehensibility of the text.

The second hypothesis was rejected to mean that the OUP textbooks had more positive impact on students’ self-esteem development than STB textbooks did. It means that in the opinion of the students there were contents in STB textbooks that ignored or underestimated particular segments of the society and their culture and promoted narrow outlook towards life in the students. Moreover, STB textbooks in the views of students did not contain enough suitable material that could inspire self-worth in them. These results support previous findings of studies which have reported attitudinal changes in students through reading texts towards fellow human beings, animals, minorities, gender etc. and self-esteem development in students (Nayyar, 2003; Dean, 2007; Nassem, 2006; Mattu & Hussain, 2003).

These results mirrored students views of contributions textbooks made to their achievements. Quite clearly these results, particularly the results of the second hypothesis, point at some areas where STB textbooks require reformation. Particularly while selecting text, care may be taken so that something which is discouraging, discriminating and narrow in its outlook does not find a place or infuse into the textbooks. Supporting, though partially, findings of earlier studies this study revealed that depending on their content textbooks play very crucial roles in shaping the personalities of the students. They help students to comprehend the ideas contained in the texts and relate it to their own world realities. Textbooks provide an outlook to the students and determine how they view themselves, their fellow beings, minorities, gender and nationalities and how they play their role in their society. Based on these findings this study recommends that Pakistani textbooks may be reformed keeping stakeholder views in mind in order to improve their positive impacts on the achievements of the students.

### Table 2

**Students’ perception regarding the impact textbooks have on the development of their self-esteem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Level of Agreement</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High (22-35)</td>
<td>Low (7-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STB</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 4.141 \quad df = 1 \quad p = 0.05 \quad \text{odds ratio} = 5.09 \]
For researchers it is recommended that further robust studies may be conducted to examine students and teachers’ views of curricula and textbooks. Their voices are crucial for the development of comprehensive reforms and their implementations.
Table 3
Responses of Students Regarding the Impact of OUP or STB Textbooks Had on Their Achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>OUP</th>
<th>STB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High agreement</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide diagrams along with the text to enhance your understanding of the concepts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage you to interact with the information given in the text</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide photographs along with the text to bring clarity to your understanding of the concepts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distract your attention by presenting drawings that confuse your understanding of the concepts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activate your prior knowledge before giving you a new concept</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discourage your reading of text because the language used is difficult to understand</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present too many concepts without discussing them in detail</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>783</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be sure about your academic achievements</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoy being at school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>create a sense of belongingness to your school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in the sports events of your school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resist accepting responsibilities given by the teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misbehave in the classroom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay isolated from class fellows</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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SDPI [Social Policy Development Institute], (2003). The subtle subversion: The state of curricula and textbooks in Pakistan. Islamabad: SDPI.


TRANSFORMING UNAUTHENTIC CURRICULUM CONTEXT INTO AUTHENTIC CURRICULUM CONTEXT: AN EMERGENCE OF AUTHENTIC PEDAGOGUES

Rozina Jumani, Notre Dame Institute of Education & Higher Education Institutions
Yasmeen Jumani, Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan

Introduction

Authentic learning is a pedagogical approach that allows learners to explore, investigate, discuss and construct their own meaning related to real life issue (Donovan et al, as cited in Mims 2003). According to Rule (2006), the term authentic learning is relatively recent, the idea of learning in contexts that promote real-life applications of knowledge. Authentic learning is defined as learning that is flawlessly integrated or entrenched into meaningful, real-life situations (Jonassen et al, 2008)

The term ‘authentic learning’ is comparatively a new idea of learning, it has its philosophical roots in constructivism that promotes real life application of knowledge by involving learners in higher order thinking task. Lombardi (2007) explains that constructivists advocates authentic learning when learners construct their own meaning focusing real world - complex problems and seeking their solutions using role-play exercises, problem based activities, case studies and participation in virtual communities of practice. Schell (2000) believes that if classroom practitioners i.e. teachers and instructional pedagogues place high value on learning in authentic context then their instructional programs will be different and unique than usual.

Situating the Context

In June 2010, Notre Dame Institute of Education (NDIE) inaugurated a program of postgraduate degree and certificate in Educational Leadership. This program was offered to Master (M Ed Leadership) or Postgraduate (PG Ed leadership Certificate) and/or Graduate (GC Ed Leadership Certificate) mid-career professionals with at least 5 years of teaching experience essential for the enrolment of two-year master degree, or one year certificate program either PG or GC in Educational Leadership.

This program is accredited by Australian Catholic University - Australia; hence NDIE a license institute to offer this program to graduates and postgraduates school leaders, educational administrators and educators across Pakistan. This paper thus highlights the learning journey of twenty participants who studied ‘Leading Authentic Learning’ and ‘Authentic Learning and influence of Leadership’ and how this module enabled them to transform their roles as ‘authentic pedagogues’ who led authentic learning in their schools context.

These modules were taught simultaneously at Karachi and Lahore centres, however, in this paper the reflections of pedagogues belonging to Karachi centre i.e. participants from Karachi, Hyderabad & remote areas in Sindh, and Quetta will be presented.
Methodology

For the study, narrative inquiry technique or narrative analysis within the qualitative paradigm was used framing with case study approach, especially to capture participants’ understanding of transforming while going through the learning process. Narrative inquiry is suitable to seek participants’ tacit knowledge, their creation of meaning and how they relate with their work context to improve the situation. All participants from various levels were engaged in an in-depth semi structure interviews where they opened up and analyzed their transformed role. Further, participants’ account is shared to inform the process of transformation which was totally intrinsic and based on internalization of the philosophy of ‘leading authentic learning’ what they believed in and practiced also.

Framework for authentic learning environments – a snap-shot of literature

Herrington & Oliver (2000: 26) describe nine elements of authentic learning as an essential framework for establishing authentic learning environments.

1. Provide authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life (e.g. Brown et al., 1989; Collins, 1988; Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Martens, 2005)
2. Provide authentic activities (e.g. Brown et al., 1989; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1990; Jonassen, 1991; Young, 1993)
3. Provide access to expert performances and the modelling of processes (e.g. Collins et al., 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991)
5. Support collaborative construction of knowledge (e.g. Bransford et al., 1990; Brown et al., 1989)
6. Promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed (e.g. Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Norman, 1993)
7. Promote articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pea, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978)
8. Provide coaching by the teacher at critical times, and scaffolding and fading of teacher support (e.g. Collins, 1988; Collins et al., 1989; Greenfield, 1984; Harley, 1993)
9. Provide for authentic, integrated assessment of learning within the tasks (e.g. Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2004; Herrington & Herrington, 1998; McLellan, 1993; Reeves & Okey, 1996; Young, 1993, 1995).

This approach works well where curriculum areas are integrated as learners are engaged into projects which blends language, mathematics, problem solving, social studies including environmental studies and science i.e. exploration altogether; thus project work needs integration among curriculum areas also known as interdisciplinary approach towards learning.

Setting up for Field Exposure - An Emergence of Authentic Pedagogues

In the modules ‘Leading Authentic Learning’ and ‘Authentic Learning and influence of Leadership’ apart from other instructional pedagogies, research component was used where each participant despite less or more connected with classroom teaching, spent six months in the classrooms to seek the relevancy of the taught course within the school.
Most participants were from administration i.e. principals/ head-teachers/ section-coordinators etc and very few were either teacher educators or teachers having direct link with teaching in the classrooms; thus all participants paired with a teacher of their specialized subjects in a particular section of the school. Because the participants belonged to diverse contexts i.e. urban and rural context thus, a flexible instructional plan was devised that could enable them to teach initial topics of the unit then gradually bring about the elements of authentic learning in their instructional plans. The initial hiccups and doldrums in the classrooms made them realize their deficiency in meeting the demands of the curriculum and instruction, but gradually they were able to inspire their students in the classrooms.

As one of the participant quoted,

‘The meaning and purpose of learning has perhaps become more clearer since the application of contextual learning is emphasised upon’.

They were able to make meaning while implementing the plan, as another participant from PG commented,

‘The course on ‘leading authentic learning’ open and made clear many areas in the field of education, it helped me to understand what authentic learning is and what is not.

By preparing the lessons I was able to discover myself as a leader and a teacher. I was able to know my strong and weak points, I was able to understand what and where I require the improvement and also I learnt how to improve that area. This course helped me to improve my thinking’.

**Transforming Roles of Pedagogues - Insights from the Field**

This section of paper presents participants’ learning journey of what they encountered i.e. positive and/ or challenging in the field, how participants managed to bring initial changes in transforming unauthentic context into authentic context in their respective fields. It would be ambitious to claim that all have transformed at once. As one of the participant reported:

‘I was challenged by the preparation which was involved in planning a lesson. I was making sure that the lesson should be good, interesting and above all should have activities which lead the students into authentic learning’.

‘The first step was to select the unit and then topic. This was done carefully because this was a model lesson which will provide us with all the activities involve the authentic learning. The teacher who partner with me had very little ideas about the authentic learning. She was uncomfortable with me as she had to give the lesson with the Principal’.

‘The students’ reaction was interesting, as they found for the first time, the Principal in their class for teaching. They enjoyed and had fun as they got into the activities of authentic learning’.

Participants were also careful about the notion of change as it is a gradual process especially if convincing all stakeholders together is very difficult. As participant shared that,

‘When I planned and taught a lesson based on the idea of authentic learning, I decided not to be very idealistic in planning as the system where I am working does not have qualified trained teachers. ....

I felt that thought the lesson was not totally authentic, but it had touched almost all the elements. I created a scenario of second hand scale where students used their
knowledge and got to know the actual application of it. I conducted VIII class of boys’ section without any disciplinary issues and all the students were engaged and enthusiastic about the processes.

Afterwards, I started to teach one of the Matric Maths class on regular based for the students who needed remedial help and by relating the content with real life application...

An achievement which I consider major one is a dramatic change in the students’ motivation as their keenness to participate was visible during the session.’

Moving Gradually from Unauthentic context to Authentic Context of Learning: The Process of Developing Authentic Pedagogues

This section represents participants’ reflective narration of how the process enables them to experience change, their journey from unauthentic context to authentic context of learning.

‘Before joining the M.Ed Lead, I was already working as instructional leader. Though I learnt a lot from the earlier first two modules in previous semester but did not get that much excited to bring change and to reflect the practices need to be change in my local context till I started with ‘Leading Authentic Learning’ course in my current semester. During this course, I did not only learn about the idea and elements of authentic learning but also practices and experimented the achievements and challenges in reality’.

Participant Reported Retrospectively

‘Some of the major achievements during the module were the understanding and application of authentic learning. Before attending the module I often wondered why the students are unable to fully grasp many concepts especially in mathematics, and the answer to it was touch of authentic learning.

I have become more conscious in preparing and delivering my lessons and try my level best to make my lesson really authentic. I don’t claim of becoming a perfectionist, but I do feel a development in my teaching. I have learnt and started to use different and new strategies of students’ assessment. Though a general pattern is followed, yet in class, I probe questions that enable student to think of the content and apply it in real life in various contexts.

Another significant achievement is creating links in all the subjects. Whenever possible I try to help students understand the importance of learning / studying other (all) the subjects. This is done in our informal manner. I myself have started to make connections, which I rarely did before.

Through the module I have become more reflective, I try to evaluate and analyze microscopically the success and weaknesses in my plans. If there are short comings or hindrances, then I try to take a different approach that is within my means. I have also learnt to be critical to myself’.

Another fellow commented

Application of theoretical concept:

‘Reading up on what authentic teaching and learning are complemented the practical experiences that I had had. Everything and more jell into perspectives and I was able
to apply these theoretical concepts to practical work and reflect on their usefulness as well as limits’.

**Empathize with teachers/classroom issues:**
‘The practical teaching experience made me understand the work of a teacher and her predicament vis-à-vis, no. of children, classroom facilities and most importantly limitations of her own personality and knowledge that created barriers for her to deliver well’.

‘Classification of the confusion that surrounded the concept of “authenticity” and the realization that authentic world mean original and what would be more original than what is home grown! So I learnt that in order for the children to understand the importance of history for instance, they must be provided with an opportunity to explore around their own community, city, and country and then look elsewhere. A perspective on who they are and where do they exist in time would be the key to know what the world is doing’.

**Learning about the nine elements of authenticity:**
‘What helped me in prove upon the lesson plan were the pointedly asked questions within the discipline of each element. I only had to apply those questions to my lesson plan are know what was right or wrong’.

The above narratives would allow the readers to realize and appreciate the gradual transformation occurred among participants.

**Continuing with re-conceptualized role as ‘authentic pedagogues’ in their work context**
This section informs participants’ commitment to continue their learning journey to bring about required improvement in their work context. There is a realization that new emerging role is very complicated and also requires careful initiatives which could mean collaborating with all stakeholders in the school context to transform gradually for bringing the authentic learning environment which is the need of the time. As one fellow said,

‘Authentic learning is the “truth”! and therefore there are no two ways about leading and campaigning for authenticity that we all do’

Commenting on how this journey will be continued, another participant commented.

‘I would like to continue with the work initiated in this module by developing a master plan for the kind of transformation with my school management team, also taking input from teachers.
This plan will help me as a leader to be focused and outcome oriented. It could also serve as a long term planning document for my school specially focusing teaching and learning. This will include planning for professional development of teachers, aligned to the needs for implementing authentic learning plans.
Alongside one will be refining, reviewing curriculum to find out where and why authentic learning can be incorporated. Similarly assessment modalities will also have to align in relation along with resources. The reason why I would like to do it is that it would enable me to actualize the vision that is developing a critical thinker. A mind that is able to connect to the global perspective needs and in able to develop skills, attitude required to make adjustments in coping up with the challenges of tomorrow’.
Also I feel that learning needs to be applied in real life and only then the acquired learning allows you to know it. It is worthwhile or not. Hence this module is helpful in establishing this important feature’
Implications

It is important to bring sustainable change on gradual level along with introducing the notion of authentic learning, it is equally important to bring essential changes at assessment level; otherwise the process could be wasted. As reported by a fellow:

‘Assessment at the primary level need to focus more on the softer skills e.g. teamwork, confidence curiosity and less marks oriented to promote integrated learning, classroom presentations and elocutions as authentic assessment rather than paper pencil tests’.

At the completion of module, all participants and a faculty sat together for post-mortem of their field-based experience which concluded on following recommendations:

- It was suggested to invite all the participants for refresher programme i.e. two days in each quarter, where they could bring classrooms issues that could further be investigated.
- In order to bring authentic learning context, it was recommended to choose one school as model school where the structural as well as pedagogical interventions to be planned. This school then become corporate school for the institute where most practicum could take place.
- Faculty visit to various schools to facilitate the process was also suggested, until the pedagogues would establish confidence in the context thoroughly.

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RELEVANCE OF CURRICULUM IN CHANGING TIMES

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The Concept of Curriculum

As has been best described by Lawton (1975), curriculum is ‘a selection from the culture’, i.e. a selection from all available knowledge, beliefs, skills, values and habits. It is believed to include all that a child imbibes in and out of the school, which includes a range of learning experiences gained during the schooling years.

What is it in the twenty-first century that we want children, young people, and adults returning to study, to know? What kind of knowledge can people acquire through learning?

The Role of Curriculum in Promoting Effective Learning

Have you ever noticed how children at play love to discover new uses for familiar objects, new ways of arranging the world around them? Young or old, when your mind perceives things freshly, it delights in making or discovering new patterns.

Children have a much greater potential than can be developed by our current educational system. Teachers need to tap the hidden treasure: the mind’s profound capacity and drive to learn, and the joy of learning when the proper environment for it has been created. This treasure is “everyday genius”.

An educated person is one who has learnt how to learn. There’s no better way for students to learn a subject than to get their hands involved during the learning experience. Learning involves understanding. Delivering the content isn’t the whole game. We as educationists need to reflect on the meaning of understanding. Anyone can remember a method, but understanding is about knowing why we use it. It is not about children remembering the facts – it is the point at which a piece of learning has clicked. When the children have understood a piece of learning, they have made it on their own and can apply it to new content.

Innovative approaches in designing the curriculum framework are constantly being explored. These include systematic arrangement of courses and activities in distinct subject areas of learning.

In designing a curriculum, the following four essential elements need to be taken into account:

• development of the child
• acquisition of knowledge
• individual freedom
• social control.

The Modular Curriculum

One such approach is the focus of a Modular Curriculum. Modular education program was first introduced in 1989 in the USA by Pitsco to revolutionise the way students are taught in Grades 7-9. The approach through modules as a curricular innovation has received widespread attention. Such planning can currently be found operating successfully in every aspect of school or college life – academic, pastoral and social dimensions. It takes into account the essential elements that need to be considered in designing an effective
A Modular curriculum is said to be exciting, relevant, and hands-on. It is enormously adaptive and versatile.

**Why Modules?**

The term ‘module’ has little meaning on its own. It is the way in which the units are used that is important and it is from the aims of those utilizing them that they derive their significance. Modules are the building blocks from which a course or larger area of the curriculum is constructed. It is the manner in which they are brought together and the relationship that exists between them once this is achieved that is important. They are means to an end but not an end in itself.

As has been explained by David Warwick (1988), the term module is usually taken to mean a single unit, complete in itself, but which may be added to further units towards the achievement of a larger task or a more long-term goal. Modules encourage and enable systemic change, helping students become responsible for their own learning and freeing teachers to do what they do best – teach.

It is an innovative curriculum that guarantees that students will interact with the topic they’re learning. With modules, students are engaged through a multimedia curriculum and hands-on activities. They are surrounded by more technology, educational instruments, software, and experiments than they may see in all of their other classes combined. As a result, critical learning experiences in math, science, and language arts now take place in a classroom that is transformed into a real-world learning center – an environment where they use technology to apply knowledge every day.

According to David Hargreaves, a modular curriculum promotes active learning where objectives are shared with the students and do not just exist in the teachers’ minds. This takes the students out of the passive role into the active and collaborative roles with the teacher. It is truly two-way exchange of ideas. At the end of a unit, students can jointly evaluate the extent to which the unit objectives have been met and motivate them for the beginning of the next unit. This helps students to play a role in curriculum development.

Modules are a proven method for effectively delivering core content knowledge at the middle-level and the lower grades. The actual mechanics of the process will differ according to the age of the pupils and the nature of the work, but the rationale remains very much the same.

**Designing the Modular Curriculum**

There is no one starting point and it is a never-ending process.

In designing the Modular curriculum in schools, it is important to consider the following factors:

1. The curriculum content and learning processes should be considered with a focus on integrating the core curriculum, i.e. central skills of literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal development. As the children move from one piece of their environment to another, they form patterns that create original and unique interactions among many different things.
Gradually these patterns are refined and take on useful meaning. The integrated learning nurtures this interactive quality of the brain, providing a variety of experiences that stimulate all the different areas of brain activity, allowing students to exercise their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses. It also presents the big picture when new information is introduced by ensuring that the content reaches out to other subjects. When focusing on one area of information, children should be reminded where it fits in with other areas. All minds will be stretched in each area of development as the content reaches out to other subjects. The 30-minute slot in the timetable needs to be boosted and the goal setting should form a platform for children’s personalized target setting, e.g. linking the personal with the mathematical.

2. Learning is a continuous process and therefore the current environment in which the child is growing up must be considered. What he learns from his direct experiences in the outside world must be kept foremost in mind. He observes the environment freely, responding to any and all aspects of it without erecting barriers between them. In designing the curriculum, it is important to consider the relevance of curriculum in the child’s context while planning pedagogies, learning spaces and assessment approaches in providing effective learning experiences.

3. The rate of change in the wider system of the world is faster than taking place in the educational system. Therefore the gap between what is taught in schools and what the children learn from the direct experience in the outside world needs to be bridged. This would require both updated knowledge as well as a set of skills required to face challenges at various stages in life. What is being taught needs to be adjusted to understand the dynamic interaction of the forces engaged in the accelerating tempo of change and to ensure that learning does not fall behind.

4. We must not only try to analyse the skills that the children require but also consider the type of concrete experiences which will best facilitate the development of problem-solving skills. Our technical age needs creative thinkers who can approach problems with a fresh outlook, and also those who have an awareness and sensitivity towards the beauty around them. The development of self-expression is of fundamental importance for education to fulfill its purpose. It is easier for a memory to move into the long-term storage if only one is involved. The curriculum needs to focus on those elements of content that best do the job of developing skills and communicating key ideas. The priority here is to ensure that the experience helps children grasp key concepts, which is crucial to a child’s development. The objective should be to stimulate learning with imagination, innovation and inspiration.

5. The teachers need to be professionally committed to the modular approach and must themselves have an appreciation of the beauty around them in the world.

**Approaches to Planning a Modular Curriculum**

There is no “right approach” to modular planning. It does not specify a universal format for modules or dictate teaching methods to be adopted. The chosen approach can be made to fit precisely into the overall aims of the institution. One of the greatest advantages of the method is its flexibility.

- **Infant level**
  Informality and spontaneous reaction to individual need are required at the infant education. An example of modular approach at this level is that of learning corners. In order to provide a fair balance of experience, each child could choose which activity he wanted to do, how long he would do it, and in what order the various experiences were to be followed instead of being marshaled round all the areas in strict rotation.
Each area could be colour coded. A child could take the matching colour card and work in that area for as long as he wanted. Later the card could be returned and another colour card of a vacant station could be chosen by the child as the next activity. The staff could keep a watchful eye on the time spent by the individual child in the areas of his interest. In this way, a range of first-hand experiences of sharing, co-operation, decision making and freedom of choice as well a direct method of monitoring results could be provided.

**Primary level**
Theme teaching or an approach through topics is most frequently adopted by the modular approach. A variety of skills, approaches, subject matter and resources are brought to bear on a topic of general interest. Each unit could cover one, two or three days or even half a day a week over half term period. The work given to the children is better matched to their abilities when teachers employed a combination of didactic and exploratory approaches.

A modular science curriculum employs a unique program scope and sequence designed to introduce students to the foundational concepts of inquiry-based learning and the scientific process. Students navigate through a progression of instruction where they inquire, hypothesize, research, experiment, analyze data, and draw conclusions. This process is designed around activities that are aligned with core content for Earth, physical, and life science.

**Secondary level**
The modular approach at this level is more cumulative in its effect. Here it matters little in which order the content is followed, provided that it is dealt with thoroughly and follows a certain consistency, and that each set of results is completely understood by those following the course.

This system identifies broad areas as units that should make a distinct contribution to the educational experience of all students. It also allows efficient use of time and resources. The open style units incorporate the skills, concepts and generalization common between units; e.g. a humanities unit module will build upon the common objectives shared by history, geography and economics. The combined planning is designed to produce corporate units as well as to assist in the sharing approach, methodology and resources. The work of the co-ordinators in a modular curriculum is helping to break down traditional departmental barriers.

An important area in modular planning is the process of learning how to learn – the skills of study itself. Care is needed to avoid teaching styles developing within subjects and across the curriculum as a whole, which over emphasise the abstract and theoretical at the expense of experimental and the practical, writing as against talking, facts as against skills and understanding and prescribed work as against initiative.

e.g. Solving algebra sounds simple, but getting students to solve algebra is a real challenge today in education. Statistics show that students continue to struggle to overcome this critical milestone in obtaining a high school diploma. A modular Math curriculum solves the algebra problem by combining individualized, targeted learning with small-group, hands-on learning activities to make the math concepts meaningful and relevant. It provides a learning continuum suitable for Grade 6 onwards.
Advantages

• Pupil motivation
- targets are short term and are set immediately
- feedback is direct; students do not have to wait for assessment after assignment or exam
- targets are specific; they give precise skills and knowledge to be developed
- freedom to choose from an open selection of modules to meet own individual needs
- contract is formed between teacher and taught
- criteria referencing leads to unit credits awarded to pupils on successful completion of each module
- approach to continuous assessment is realistic rather than multifarious files, projects, and other course material.
- active learning takes place that gives a sense of purpose and success. Pupils enjoy, become confident, take interest and have personal worth.

• Teacher motivation
The motivation of the teacher is inextricably bound with that of the pupils. Learning is easier to sustain and far more conducive for all concerned. Breaking down the curriculum into its component parts gives greater individual responsibility to the teacher. A module is his to develop professionally. This will help him focus feedback effectively on areas within the unit that have not gone well, while positive feedback may suggest further modules for him or others to develop.

• Course design
Three approaches to designing the course are as follows:

a. individual need or freedom of choice - possible to select what is required. It is completely independent, brought together in different configurations. Material is presented as a series of small units, which may then be combined one with another in a variety of ways. The coherence exists in the mind of the constructor, e.g. Lego blocks - many shapes can be constructed from the same blocks. Their use is limited to the imagination of the builder, or e.g. modular kitchen with a variety of units.

b. the order or sequence of units in which each unit is selected. The whole is the sum of the parts. Sequential stepping stones to greater understanding. e.g. rockets designed as a series of modules but fired precisely at the same time.

c. internal relationship or links between the individual modules which bind together separate areas of academic inquiry. There is no debate over the finished product, as the function is predetermined. Freedom is only in the way it is handled. Too much freedom can destroy the ultimate design and make the overall pattern incomplete. e.g. a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece can occupy one place only within the puzzle.

•Curriculum development
It is about the planning of learning objectives intended to bring about certain changes in pupils and the assessment of the extent to which these changes have taken place.:
  - objectives
  - methods and materials
  - assessment
  - feedback
There is no golden rule about the length of a module, nor the number of hours that should be spent on it. Six to eight weeks is the usual time-span, as it fits neatly into the duration of the school year, allowing two modules per term and additional time for administrative and assessment procedures. Units of short durations - lasting no longer than one or two periods - are currently being used by many schools as part of the pastoral curriculum.

**Drawbacks**
- Pupil may be fully motivated, but the monitoring progress and recording achievement may not be well-devised.
- Courses may be elegantly designed, but resulting schemes may be too complex for all to understand
- Curriculum may be developed through modules, but it may become fragmented in the process.

**Conclusion**
In order for students to benefit from a flexible approach to study, it is essential that we ensure a consistent standard across the curriculum. Every module ensures that student learning remains positive and consistent in diverse school settings and is filled with the kinds of reading, writing, math, science, technology, and hands-on activities that make for a complete, educationally sound learning system and curriculum.

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“EXPLORING THE CURRENT PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ECD TEACHERS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGH SCOPE CURRICULAR TEACHING APPROACH”

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Abstract

Early Childhood of human life is crucial in terms of holistic development of children. In this regard, the teachers of early years need to play a significant role in the teaching and learning process. Currently educators and teachers are using a number of curricular teaching approaches. High Scope is one of the mostly used curricular teaching approaches in the context of Gilgit Baltistan, of Pakistan.

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and practices of early childhood teachers to implement High Scope curricular teaching approach.

The findings suggest that prior training on curricular teaching approaches provided the participants an understanding to relate the theoretical knowledge into practice. The study also reveals that these teachers are using learning from High Scope, which involves active learning, integrated teaching with integration of different subjects and using teaching learning material. The findings also highlighted that these teachers face difficulty in full implementation of High Scope teaching approach due to lack of relevant teaching and learning material, multi-age children in the classroom, and open admission throughout the year. These challenges minimized the teachers’ motivation to follow High Scope with its true essence in their local context.

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays an integral role in child development. A child who develops well physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and intellectually during the early years is more likely to be a happy and a productive member of society than the one who is not provided the opportunities to develop holistically. According to Riley (2007) and Mustard (2002), poor development during early years affects key aspects of brain development. It affects all body tissues and the immune system. Besides, it also influences cognition, imagination, behaviour and skills of a child.

Early years are the learning years of life, children are exposed to conducive learning environment during these year will develop optimally. According to Coulbeck (2005), Bowman, Burns and Donovan (2000) unless, we know and understand our children, unless we act effectively on what we know, we cannot help them very much. Children are viewed as active learners who learn from activities based on their personal interest (Homan 2002).

Kay (2001), states that teachers of young children have one of the most important and difficult of educational jobs. The job of teaching encompasses a set of skills and knowledge that is both wide and complex. Coulbeck (2005), reports that a teacher of early years children entails a variety of exchanges with the child in a complex social setting in which the teacher
seeks to motivate the children, organize activities, present information and stimuli and provide security within which the child may learn.

The purpose of doing this study was to explore the perceptions, opinions and practices of teachers. Generally there is concern that teachers are implementing certain curricular teaching approaches because they are being observed by the system teacher educators and management. In addition, some of the ECD teachers also have impression that teaching through curricular teaching approach is time consuming method. It is therefore believed that doing a study can explore the existing reasons behind the issue which will help to understand the existing classroom practices linking with the perceptions of teachers. High Scope teaching approach is implemented in more than fifty schools of Gilgit-Baltistan successfully that is why for further implementation it was essential to explore the perceptions and practices

Secondly, study has explored the reasons and factors behind which hindered the implementation of High Scope teaching approach. The results of the study will assist system to design the short training courses according to the reasons and will help to design the training course content accordingly. The study findings will also help to apply the High scope teaching approach in other schools in future. It will also make me understand the coming flaws in the teaching practices according to teacher’s perceptions. The purpose of taking one ECE approach out of six frequently used teaching approaches is because it is the only approach which is implemented in most of schools in the context of the north part of the country and particular in system schools.

**Literature Review**

“it is striking that modern neurosciences have demonstrated that long before the age of six, children are aware of the different cultural backgrounds amongst each other in their classes. It is thus before that age that pluralism can be instilled as a life value” (His Highness The Aga Khan, Mombasa, 14 August 2007).

Keeping the importance of early years and needs and curiosity of children towards learning, it is important to provide them a safe and stimulating learning environment which allows children to explore and discuss using their various senses independently and with peer and adult support.

The term curriculum model or curricular teaching approaches refers to a conceptual framework and organizational structure for decision making about educational priorities. There are a number of curricular teaching approaches being used in the early childhood education. There may be many other curricular teaching approaches particularly being used in early childhood education setting. Six curricular teaching approaches were identified i.e. Bank Street, Head Start, High Scope, Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf.

Based on the work of Jean Piaget, High Scope Educational approach views children as active learners, who learn from activities they plan, carry out and reflect upon them. Based on more than forty years of scientific research, it provides teachers and caregivers with a blue print for daily routines, classroom and play ground organization and teacher child interaction all designed to create a warm and supportive learning environment.

Coulbeck (2005), Bowman, Burns and Donovan (2000), emphasize that teachers in the early years play a tremendous role in the proper upbringing of the child. They further emphasise teachers engaged in the early years need to have knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning process, child development, foundation curriculum, which stimulate learning, enable the children to acquire skills and inculcating desirable attitudes in them.
Research question addressed in the study is: How do two ECD teachers translate their learning of High Scope teaching approach in their teaching practice? & what are the factors which influence their classroom teaching practices?

Research Methodology
The research was guided by qualitative research strategy. The purpose of using this method is because it is appropriate for answering my research question. The study was conducted in one of the schools of the Sun Shine school system (Pseudonyms) and in a Government school in the Gilgit region. The schools participated in the study have teachers who are trained through RCC and have selected through purposive sampling method.

The duration of the study was about four months. The duration of the observations and post observation discussions was more than one and half hours on average. Inclusion Criteria was professional training in curricular teaching approach and their affiliation with the public and private system was the main criterion for the selection of these teachers. Semi structured interviews, observations, post observation discussions and content analysis used to collect data for the study. Researcher conducted one interview with the two research participants. 5-6 observations carried out during the study. Interview guideline was developed which helped to explore the opinions of teachers. Observed the teaching and learning practices in classrooms by using an observation tool with some indicators which are based on the High Scope Teaching Approach. (These indicators are taken from Monitoring tool developed by AKES, P). Every observation was followed by the post observation discussion to validate and triangulate the data collected during observations and also probing towards their understanding about the activity done. Document analyses done to validate and enrich the data. I analyzed teachers lesson plans, reflective journals, records of meetings/ contacts with the parents, material related to assessment which has been maintained over a period of time and students work such as note books etc. These artifacts used as an evidence of the implementation of different concepts learnt during the training course. Notes have been taken while observing the classroom practices and tape recorder used to record the interview conversation and post observation discussion. All the raw data typed in Microsoft Word in the form of field notes and interview data collected from the research participant for managing the data. Then same themes categorized into units to manage for the analysis. Data Analysis has been done manually.

Research ethics was given due importance as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) that are righteousness of the research, formal permission, relationship, trust, privacy and confidentiality and special care taken regarding cultural sensitivity.

Informed consent taken before collecting data Pseudonyms used for the research participants and as well as for the context.

Results and Discussions
Findings of the study arranged under six major themes which have emerged from in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and post observation discussions and selected relevant document analysis. The first theme talks about teachers' understanding and perceptions about early childhood education and learning. The second theme describes teachers' understanding about High Scope Teaching approach and its implementation. The third theme tells about the role of High Scope teaching approach providing opportunities for the holistic development of children. The fourth theme talks about the integration of curricular concepts. The fifth theme demonstrates the factors that hindering the implementation of curricular teaching approach
Plan-do-review process both the teachers shows their concern that it consumes time and they spend only about 40 minutes rather one and half hours in plan-do- review process. In work time although teachers facilitate and support children’s learning through integrating different concepts but as soon as children structure their activities and start to enjoy dramatic play teachers wind up the activity and call back children to whole circle. According to my observation I reflect that children need plenty of time to play, and explore the material and discuss it with their peers. Educator Michal Elis (1988) discusses the significance of play as a medium for learning and development.

Both the research participants are integrating the concepts with the learning areas which are delivered in concept time. They have developed a sound understanding about integration the curricular concept with other subject areas in the form of learning areas. When teachers teach a concept about the maths this is being integrated with the language and library area as well as with the science area. This provided benefits for both the teacher and child. Teacher feel satisfaction when children recognize, read and even write the targeted concept in given frame of time and children also learn in fun ways. When teacher teach alphabet they try to relate with the material placed in the learning areas. Children’s planning for the material work also reflects teacher’s expectations they plan not only for the sake of play rather for the learning purposes. As a result of integration children are able to recognize, read and write the alphabet.

In both the research setting teachers are providing opportunities

In outdoor they are singing round and round in a garden like a teddy, teacher focuses learning students are asked to observe their surrounding and then teacher asked what did u saw they responded c cat, h house, ta titli p pathar

Through document analysis I also come to know that teachers are planning their activities in written form on daily basis. One of the research participants said that lesson planning teacher ka hatiyar hai jiss k magair jungh mei jayein tou nakam hotay hain means its teacher’s weapon without it when we go to battle we do not succeed.

In both the schools teachers were facing difficulty to manage time and manily focus on writing skill.

The data reveals that teachers are intentionally focusing the writing by reducing timing to work time they do not care if plan-do-review process is not included in their routine. In my first observation it was found that the daily routine chart without time duration in both settings when asked the reason they said we know the duration how much time have to spend which reveals that teachers ’own perceptions influence teaching practices.

Although in both school’s classrooms are divided into well-defined learning areas but there is no sufficient learning material to manipulate which may hinder the practices.

Children come for admissions throughout the years and children have different ages some are 4 years and some are 6 and 7 years old children. The huge age differences also hinder the proper implementation of HSTA plan-do-review process as teacher has to spend most of the time teaching letter to different groups.

Another factor which inhibits the implementation of HSTA is lack of understanding about the national ECE curriculum. Curriculum document is also totally based on HSTA. Both the teachers had limited understanding regarding the National curriculum document.

Lack of parental involvement was another hindrance. Parental involvement is essential component of HSTA for the maximum outcomes of child development.
Conclusion

The study highlighted the interplay between the factors that influenced these early childhood teachers’ decisions about whether to implement HSTA in their classroom properly. Both the teachers are aware about the importance of this curricular teaching approach but translation of their knowledge at the classroom level is limited. However, their commitment to their work and system is quite strong; they just need appreciation and encouragement from the system and workshops for their professional development. My findings also suggest that parents should be involved at the classroom level. It was a huge challenge teachers are facing in ECD section. Lack of parental involvement inhibits teachers’ practices and teachers ultimately do what parents expect from their children. Teacher’s main focus on writing is only to satisfy parents. There should be certain opportunities to involve parents at classroom level. Without their involvement curricular play-based approach will not work and will not be sustainable in future. Furthermore, the findings suggest, however, this approach is context feasible to implement to achieve the maximum child’s outcome.

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THEORIZATION OF EDUCATION CHANGE FOR RELEVANCE
THE ROLE PERCEPTIONS OF DEOS IN PAKISTAN: TOOTHLESS TIGERS OR SELFLESS SERVANTS?

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Abstract

The study of educational leadership and management in Pakistan is relatively a new territory – a road less travelled. This is truer when it comes to the study of District Education Officials’ (DEOs) ways of managing education. These officials actually bridge the government higher functionaries and policies in terms of policy implementation, monitoring and supervision of the schools in their respective districts. These officials theoretically should exercise significant control over the functioning of schools in their jurisdiction. Though on paper they have heavy responsibilities but actually they have limited arena to exercise; their power due largely to complex web of power centres in their respective provinces.

A small-scale exploratory case study was undertaken in qualitative research paradigm to investigate the perceptions and practices of the district educational officials in Pakistan. The sample of the study was drawn from the eleven districts of Baluchistan, eleven districts of Sindh, and ten officials from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) who were selected for their professional development at AKU-IED under an USAID/ED-LINKS Project during 2008-2010.

The study investigated these DEOs’ self-perceived roles and responsibilities through mainly interviews. Some head teachers were also interviewed to see how they view the roles and responsibilities of these senior officials. As well, the headteachers, who were also participating in the same course, were asked to comment about the DEOs’ role and what that means to their schools. Moreover, the DEOs were also asked to comment on their learnings during their certificate course programme.

The findings of the study reveal that DEOs perceive their roles as more administrative, at best management and hardly leadership. Reportedly, they do this work very often in trying circumstances, pressurized by political influences, local traditions, tribal dynamics, and uncertain law and order situations. They feel almost besieged with debilitating rather than enabling circumstances. Despite these limitations, they try their best to do at least the minimum they are required; but find it difficult to go beyond. Self-efficacy in this case is in short supply; though some do claim that they are able to accomplish what they can; in the given circumstances. Though good intentions are in abundance but materializing them is a Herculean task for them. They appear to be the toothless tigers; as they appear to be senior government officials but their actual influence on their area of operation appears too little; they cannot account even their humblest employees due to many reasons, including political interference.

Note: For the same of meeting the word limit, this paper presents very, very brief report of the findings which will be converted into a full-fledged article(s) later on.

Key words: District education officials; Middle management in education; educational management; educational management in Pakistan, district education management in Pakistan; educational leadership and management.
Introduction

This small scale exploratory qualitative study was undertaken to investigate the perceptions and practices of the district educational officials in Pakistan. The study investigated these DEOs’ self-perceived roles and responsibilities in their respective districts through mainly interviews. As well, some headteachers were interviewed to see how they view the roles and responsibilities of these officials as they interact with these officials on a daily basis for the implementation of the government policies and procedures. The DEOs were also asked to comment on their learnings at the IED where they were offered a certificate course of around three months to help them improve their management and leadership knowledge and skills. This article is the first attempt of putting together their self reported and perceived roles and responsibilities of their work. The research participants were drawn from the selected participants for the course and they came from Baluchistan, Sindh and ICT. The total number of research participants, the nature of the interviews, and other methodological questions are discussed in the respective sections below.

The article reports here for the first time the preliminary findings of the study, hoping that more systematic and long term studies would be undertaken based on this preliminary study to build a strong base of evidenced-based knowledge to understand the complex roles and responsibilities of the officials who are seen often as toothless tigers but equally importantly a class of officials who try their best in less than a perfect world to do what they can. It is easier to pass judgements about what they do not do; but equally difficult to say what they could do, in a difficult country like Pakistan, dubbed by one recent study as “A hard country” in many senses of the word.

Research Question(s)

Following interlinked key questions were explored:

How do the DEOs (district education officers) perceive and practice their roles and responsibilities as educational leaders and managers in Pakistan? How do the head teachers view their managers’ roles and responsibilities? How did they find the learning at AKU-IED?

Research Participants (RPs)

The primary subjects of this study are those DEOs who have benefited from the ED-LINKS programme during 2008 – 2009. However, this study was not exclusively meant, as was said in the beginning of this report, on the so called ‘impact’ of the programme. The secondary participants of the study were the headteachers to see how they perceived the contribution of the middle management as a source of support and inspiration or obstacle/hindrance. These headteachers were only those who benefited from the IED programme except ICT. No headteachers participated in the ED-LINKS programme for reasons best known to the ED-LINKS. Therefore some heads were interviewed in Islamabad seeking their views about their directors as they are called (they are not called DEOs, but Assistant/ directors). So, two headteachers of ICT were interviewed to see their views of the seniors and whether they see them as supportive in their endeavours.

The number of primary participants with secondary participants from each site of selection is given below in a grid form (see Table 1).
Table 1: Research Participants against each Province/Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research participants</th>
<th>Baluchistan</th>
<th>Sindh</th>
<th>ICT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDO’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEO’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headteachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection Criteria
The selection criteria of the research participants (RPs) were the following:
- have attended the ED-LINKS sponsored AKU-IED course;
- are willing to participate in the study;
- are able to communicate fluently either in English or Urdu; and
- are able to spare time for the interview and subsequent discussion;

Findings of the Study
This article, due to word limit, discusses only the first part of the question (perceptions of DEOs’ about their role and responsibilities) and the second and third question [regarding HTs’ perceptions of the DEOs’ roles and responsibilities, and their learning from IED course] will be reported in future.

Perceptions of their roles and responsibilities

A. Bridge between two layers of governance
Very generally, the DEOs of all the three places (Baluchistan, Sindh and ICT) perceive their roles as a bridge between the EDOs and headteachers (HTs), meaning thereby that they are responsible to share and implement policies that seniors devise and convey the problems of the headteachers to the seniors for their resolution. Reflecting this role, one of the DEOs from Baluchistan said, “Basically we … work as a bridge between EDO and headteachers of the school. ….” The quote reflects their image of themselves as bridge between the upper and lower echelons of the bureaucracy. The same respondent further added, “The governance structures are based on bureaucracy and appeasing the seniors who behave like demagogues.” The statement reflects that that the other end of the bridge is seen as muddy; they have a negative perception of the upper bureaucracy; they perceive their seniors as authoritarian figures, which they are unable to challenge.

B. Follower vs Leader
The DEOs interviewed saw themselves more as followers than leaders. They reported that the DEOs are supposed to follow the policies and have no real say in their formulation. One of the Directors of the ICT argued that his and his colleagues’ job was implementation of the policies, and they have no say as such in the policy formulation. They can at best give advices but they have no say in framing the policies. This implies that they see themselves as more “followers” than “leaders”. One DEO commented, “The important thing (in their job) is to do whatever you are assigned to do effectively.” This officer perceives his job as given and thus key quality is to do it effectively, as we say in management literature, managers do things right. Doing things right is what is key here in this perception. The role is seen more
as ‘given’ and performing it effectively seems to make the job important. Thus, it leads to what we said above as compliant culture.

C. Troubleshooters vs Problem-solvers
Some DEOs thought that their job description is relatively unclear; their roles are often defined by external factors, like the political forces. They respond to these external demands and try to survive in a relatively hostile environment. Describing their roles, one of the DEOs from Baluchistan stated, “We should visit and inspect school frequently and identify and solve issues such as student’s lack of interest, issues related to feudalism etc.” Another DEO reported, “They (DEOs) should visit every school and arrange programmes, it all depends on funds but unfortunately they don’t have enough funds to make proper visits. This issue and many other issues can be resolved by providing them sufficient budgets.” The citation shows some of the problems that we have already discussed in the contextual review.

D. Inspectors vs Facilitators
DEOs visualize themselves as more followers than leaders. They think their job predominantly is to provide basic things to schools and oversee what they are supposed to do. One of the DEOs articulated their central role in these words:

We provide and ensure the regular provision of free books to students of class one to ten. We make sure that teachers complete the syllabus in the due course, we visit every class for the same and we try our best to guarantee that students are being taught according to syllabus and that they maintain their daily diary so that they don’t feel burdened.

This in nutshell is reported often as DEOs’ key responsibility because their bosses often keep on telling them that these are the sorts of their duties they are supposed to perform.

E. Psychologists vs politicians
DEOs have to deal with all sorts of people in their role set. They have to deal with not only just the personnel inside the school, but also outside the school. Elaborating how they perceive their role, a director from ICT said, “[Their job is] understanding different kinds of nature, temperaments, abilities, capabilities, talent, attitudes, and aptitudes of the staff; and [appointing] a right man for the right job. People believe that running the management is a one man show, but it is not.” The official argued that his organization is an outdated one and there are no clear cut rules and regulations developed to follow. In such an uncertain situation it is difficult for them to execute their duties. He elaborated:

Unfortunately, in Pakistan we have no system in place, we have no defined sets of procedures, and if we have any of them, they are outdated. The institutions are not intact even. We need to build capacities of institutions. People here are working on personal capabilities, institutions do not facilitate them.

What this vignette tells is that due to ambiguity in roles there is wide variation for interpretation and misinterpretation of the rules and regulations.

F. Political pressure and corruption
While discharging their duties, DEOs face many challenges but the most daunting is political pressure leading to corruption for one favor or another. One of the DEOs from ICT, went on to say,

Another challenge was, mostly people use their authorities in wrong ways on political grounds. Being Director Administration people expect the same from me, but I don’t believe in using my authorities
for unfair means which make people against me sometimes.

Citing corruption as one of the major issues, another DEO complained,

One of the major issues we are facing is like if we have 100 teachers, only 20 among them are on duty
remaining have their representatives for just signing the attendance record, which the teachers hire for
Rs 2000 (two thousand rupees) per month for appearing in the school in their place.

This problem appears to be common in both Sindh and Baluchistan but not reported from
ICT. Such teachers, we are told, are called ‘Ewazi’ (replacement) teachers, persons who are
not teachers but a relative of theirs who have no teaching qualifications are sent to school but
the real teachers actually do some other business. Alluding to the level of corruption one
DEO frankly told that,

Everyone (i. e., DEOs) is involved in some kind of corruption at times. Recently, in our district…the
Deputy DEO had given Rs 120,000 (one hundred twenty thousand rupees) for his transfer. In the new
place he would first recover this amount …and then only he would do anything for education.

Another DEO from Baluchistan reported that due to lack of follow up by the DEOs, even
good work is being destroyed. Citing an example, he went on to say, “99% of the 16 fully
furnished computer labs that were constructed in 101 schools of Baluchistan in 2003 stay
unsuccessful because of teacher’s negligence. Proper follow-ups should be done in this
regard.” Thus, lack of efficacy and helplessness are recurrent themes most DEOs’ referred to
in their interviews.

We conclude this very brief reporting of the findings with a quote (writer unknown) that
reflects the mood of this study, “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can
be changed unless faced.” More or less the same spirit has been expressed by a verse from the
Qur’an which says, “Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they
change it themselves” (al-Qur’an, 13: 11). A poet conveys the same message so well:

خدا نے آج تک آس قوم کی حالت نہ بدلی، نہ ہو جس کو خیال اپنی حالت آپ بدلنے کا

God never changed till today the condition of a nation; unless it thought of changing its
condition itself.
SINDH EDUCATION REFORM PROGRAMME-1: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE: ROLE OF PITE SINDH

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Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) Sindh

Abstract
First Sindh Education Sector Reforms Program SERP-1, 2007–2011 initiated with the support of World Bank and European Union. This symposium focuses the role of PITE Sindh played in policy discussions, implementation and assessment. The Paper is consisted of three parts.

First part reports a research on newly introduced Associate Degree of Education (ADE) leading to B.Ed (Hon.). Demographic data, motivation to select teaching as career by the perspective teachers in ADE program is explored.

The second category of reform includes the introduction of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework including of standards for Accreditation and Certification of CPD Providers. The Pilot program of CPD standards for Accreditation and Certification of CPD Providers was carried out in year 2010 led by PITE Sindh.

The third category of reform under SERP-1 was the introduction of Sindh Education Sector Management (SESM) Course. The program contained eight modules which were designed by AKU-IED and further reviewed by PITE and Sukkur IBA teams. The program was jointly piloted by PITE Sindh and Sukkur IBA. The duration of the Course was 24 days. Total 117 officers were trained. The third part of paper highlights the main features of the SESM course, role of PITE Sindh and Sukkur IBA, lessons learnt and finally the future road map for sustainability of the SESM.

Part-1

Continuing Professional Development: An Experiment

Continuing professional development is the need of teachers in the emerging information age, because the traditional models of professional development, short-term workshops, and university courses do not appear to be powerful enough (Yore, & Anderson, Shymansky, 2005).


The purpose of this experiment was to establish a CPD framework and pilot accreditation of the CPD providers. Initially there exited no such framework in the province. For this purpose the institutions were invited to apply for the accreditation process.
Methodology
The experiment started with planning meetings at Teacher Education Development section, Reforms Support Unit, TED-RSU and PITE Sindh. Six institutions from private sector applied for the process. Initial Accreditation Visits IAVs were paid to evaluate the physical, human, and financial capacity against a set of eleven accreditation standards and 51 indicators.

The CPD providers developed training material, on “Fraction” in primary school mathematics curriculum as identified on the basis of result of students’ assessment carried out by the Provincial Educational Assessment Centre (PEAC) Sindh. CPD pilot carried out in Educational Management Reform EMR focused Districts, Dadu, Naushahro Feroze and Mirpurkhas, with 30 Primary School Teachers at each centre. Monitoring and evaluation teams observed the sessions continuously, the quality assurance teams paid frequent visits.

Results
An analysis of the CPD Accreditation Standards was made. It was learnt that some of the indicators were satisfied 100% by the CPD providers; some were around 75%; some indicators remained at 50% satisfaction and below.

The analysis took a lot of efforts and time doing it manually, no software and IT specialist was hired for this huge task.

Four institutions out of six were provisionally accredited. The first draft of the CPD Proposal and training module was reviewed by the Evaluation Committee on March 3, 2011. The report indicated areas for improvement in proposal and the module.

The consortium selected resource persons and monitoring and evaluation specialists amongst the teacher trainers of public sector. The training module was in the English language, putting the primary schools teachers in difficulty. Their reflections show that they were focusing on language more than mathematics.

Discussion
Absence of any model of CPD in the province was the basic issue. The team started from zero, finally succeeded to pilot the CPD accreditation and certification in the province.

National Accreditation Council on Teacher Education NCTE suggested verification of a large number of documents for accreditation purpose. However such record is seldom maintained in the private sector institutions.

Data analysis was carried out manually no investment on software was made nor on hiring a statistician IT specialist.

The public sector institutions were not invited to apply, but the consortium hired the human resources from public sector institutions that reveal two implications, i- that government institutions have sound human resources and ii- that CPD should be context based. The district government and local institutions can build a sustainable infrastructure.

Insufficient time was given for audit of institutions. Training material was needed in Sindhi language and the number of trainees at each centre was large.

There is need for advocacy to make clear understanding of CPD and ensure the participation of the stakeholders accordingly.
Conclusion

The experiment was a fruitful effort to establish at least initial CPD model in the province. The way forward to implementation of CPD needs consideration of information-age, ICT is the best tool to collect online data, analyze it electronically with transparency and accuracy. The public sector has potential to root its own framework utilizing best of local human resources and establish cluster based CPD network and teacher Resource centre. The contextual CPD network will prove sustainable.

Part-II

A study to Explore Relationship between Demographic, Intrinsic, and Extrinsic Motivational Factors of Prospective Teachers Enrolled in First Semester of the ADE Program

This study explores the demographic data and motivation and to select teaching as career by the Perspective Teachers enrolled in newly started ADE program. This ADE program replaced traditional CT and PTC courses. The purpose of these changes is to improve the quality of teachers’ initial professional preparation. However, setting up a good teacher education program, supported by high quality curriculum and instruction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for producing high quality beginning teachers. This study investigates the relationship between the demographic profile of the entrants to the ADE program and the motivations they express for their choice to join the program and to select teaching as career.

Results

There were 93 male and 185 female Teacher students in the sample. While 168 belongs to urban and 109 were from rural Sindh. Some of the perspective teachers have teaching experience before joining ADE. The data states that 17% have 1-2 years, 03% have 3-4 years, 01% has 5 years experience while 79% have no teaching experience. Only four participants shared that they are married.

The preliminary data analysis reveled that the perspective teachers have moderately high level of motivation (93%) to join ADE because they want to be teacher in future. 73% of the Students have ADE program at their first choice while 25% have second and 2% have third choice. It shows that the perspective teachers placed a high value on their choosing ADE at their first choice.

The data indicates the highest level of intrinsic motivation. The item about ‘Teaching is aim of life’ shows 93% are agree and the item ‘It reflects my religious believes that teaching is a noble job’ shows that 90% are greed with the statement.

The data illustrates that most of perspective teacher are not agree with the items which are significant extrinsic motivational factors. For instance, scholarships and parents enforcement in the selection of educational course are two highly influenced extrinsic motivational factors but data indicates that 66% participants are not agree which shows their high motivation for joining the program. The factors like better job opportunities (74%) and improving their English language and computer skills (73%) are high rated items which indicate the male adoptive extrinsic motivation, which shows a high commitment with the profession which lead them towards selecting teaching career.
The data tells that the participants have average 87% agreement with the items that are male adoptive in nature. Like inspiration of ideal teachers (83%), high social status (79%), job security (70%), suitable for personality (87%), and the factor ‘interest to work with students’ (92%) which shows their aptitude.

The data shows that the participants are agreed and satisfied form academic faculties like teachers cooperation in their learning process (81%), teachers academic help (95%), method of teaching (97%) which is student centered and activity based assessment fairness (84%). The high rate of the factors above reflects participants satisfaction level is high. While some of the factor are not rated high like assignment load, availability of books and other resources, and physical faculties.

**Conclusion**

The study aimed to obtained insight of the Perspective Teachers enrolled in first semester in ADE program into motivation to join ADE program and their career motivation. Therefore, it could be conclude in terms of joining ADE program and career motivation that they are enthusiastic. The percentage of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factor is high, on other hand, their the reasons for selecting teaching as career are male adoptive which indicate their commitment with teaching profession. Thus the overall findings of the study could be interpreted as positive and promising not only for pre-service teacher education which aims to produce quality teachers but also for schools where they will got jobs opportunities. This will ultimately result to uplift the quality of education.

**Part- III**

**Sindh Education Sector Management (SESM) Course: An Experiment of a Leadership Development Course in Sindh: Good Practices, Issues and Way forward**

The Sindh Education Sector Management (SESM) Course aimed at capacity building of education officers for their managerial role. Objectives were to (a) Improve level of professionalism and commitment in Education officers and (b) Upgrade the skills relating management and supervision.  The Course consisted of 24 days eight (08) modules, initially designed by the Aga Khan University Institute of Educational Development (AKU-IED) then reviewed and implemented by PITE Sindh and Sukkur IBA team. The themes included job description, Services Rules, educational planning (PC-I to PC-V), financial management including: Budgeting, Accounting and Audit, Personnel management, record management, supervision and maintaining the quality education and Community participation.

**Framework of the SESM**

The participants of the SESM Course were the district and deputy district officers education, head masters, supervisors and principals.

**SESM Model**

- Face to face 3days each module
- Field work one week following each module
Good Practices of SESM

It was observed that most of the CPs came prepared for each session. All resources were prepared well in advance. The CPs shared critical incidents and reflections from the field and linking with theory.

CPs’ Inter-personal skills were exhibited during group work and collaborative activities. Healthy critical dialogue promoted among them. They continued discussing issues and ideas even on the lunch and dinner.

The program was residential, the time was used purposefully working on assignments, developing portfolio.

Syndicate sessions developed appropriate way to address issues.

Dress code, time management, social skills were developed.

Officers were introduced to use of computer, they became keen to learn and work computers.

Challenges of SESM

The Program faced some challenges as well. Some of them are:

The overall all time for each module 18 hours was quite less. Sharing and discussion used to take more time. Sometimes Cps failed to meet the deadline for assignments.

Initial cohort came for a single module, but later they came for two modules consecutively and two cohorts at a time, creating administrative and logistic issues.

The assignments for the field practice were given but follow up arrangement was not available on the ground. As a result, the quality of assignments remained average.

Recommendations

The SESM should be made as a regular activity and may be designed on the pattern of Civil Services of Pakistan. The performance should be measured and to be linked with promotion policy. The performance may be the due weightage so that all CPs consider this course as an obligatory for their better performance in the field and promotion based on the performance.

The Modules may be revised and content thickness may be reduced and all the modules should be made skills and practice based so that maximum skill development may take place.

More time for the practice of CPs in each module may be provided and strong follow-up mechanism may be devised and pursued properly so that quality in learning may take place.

The Quality Assurance check may be placed by third party so that quality of the work may be ensured.

The passing out Officers, when go back to their field, transform the same knowledge and skills to their subordinates as well so that the program should become more cost effective.

After the end of the program, and at least six months later, the impact of the program may be assessed. This will support in knowing about the good practices and issues of the program and the practice of the program in to the field.

Conclusion

The SESM Program was overall found a successful program had a good number of successes but at the same time the issues and challenges faced informs that leadership training should
be aligned with the career path for the officers of education so that they value the program. In future, designing a skill based and practice based program should have strong educational leadership who believe in working in a disciplined way.

References


A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION: A REFLECTIVE RECOUNT OF THE EVOLUTION OF AKES,P

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Abstract

This paper presents an overall picture of the evolution of the Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P) over a century. Reaching out to the remotest areas of Pakistan, AKES,P, has been providing quality education for over a hundred years. The first school of AKES,P, was established in 1905 in Gwadar, Balochistan. Over a century later, AKES,P, now operates 179 schools and 5 hostels in Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral, Punjab and Sindh, mostly in rural areas. These represent very diverse schools, ranging from a rural school with less than 30 children to a large urban school with over 3000 children. AKES,P, places special emphasis on improving educational practice; leadership and management in diverse and challenging settings; child-centred teaching methods; increasing use of ICT; female education; school-based teacher development; and working in partnership with the government and communities. The paper elucidates the institution’s journey since its inception, under five major themes, which include: Institutional Development, History of Teacher Development, Evolution of Teaching and Learning Practices, Creating a Child Friendly Environment, and Community Development.

Introduction

The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P), an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), is amongst the largest private networks of education institutions in Pakistan. AKES,P’s mission is “to enable many generations of students to acquire both knowledge and the essential spiritual wisdom needed to balance that knowledge and enable their lives to attain the highest fulfilment” (His Highness the Aga Khan).

Institutional Development

Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P), previously termed as Central Education Board (CEB), initiated its services in 1905 with the establishment of its first school in Gwadar, Balochistan. In the following decades, AKES,P’s operations significantly expanded with the formation of six more Aga Khan Schools (AKSs) in key localities of Sindh – Karimabad, Garden and Kharadar in Karachi, and later in Hyderabad, Sultanabad and Mirpur Sakro in Interior Sindh. As a historical breakthrough, the institution managed to reach the harsh and rugged mountains of Northern Pakistan in 1946. Thus, the organisation expanded its reach from the extreme South to the extreme North. In the mid ‘40s, Diamond Jubilee (DJ) Schools for girls were established in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). From the outset, AKES,P, adopted an evolutionary approach and besides providing access to education in specific areas, efforts were made to create awareness about the importance of female education across the Ismaili population. The Mirs, other notables, and opinion leaders of the communities were taken into confidence and hence began the process of educational intervention.

Following a demand-driven approach, by the mid ‘50s, a good number of primary schools were established in different regions of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) including Hunza, Gojal, Punial,
Ishkoman, Gupis and Yasin. The educational facilities (physical, financial and human resources) were provided by the Imamat, and access to education was almost free of cost.

In 1962, the ‘Central Education Board’ (CEB) was established to deliver governance and management for the schools. Communities in the target areas gradually started getting involved in the educational process thereby providing rooms, facilitating teachers and convincing those community members who were not yet open towards the proliferation of education. The challenge now was to bridge the gap between the demand for education and the community’s lack of willingness to pay for it. In 1968, the CEB was registered under the Societies Registration Act. Then in 1970, the Regional Education Boards (REBs) were established to assist the CEB in managing the schools in their respective regions. Until the mid ‘80s, these schools were mostly run by a voluntary setup, which included the Chairman of the REB and Council. Moreover, in the early ‘80s, professional management was introduced with the appointment of a school inspector who was responsible for facilitating teaching-learning and monitoring and supervision of school operations. A Central Education Office was also established, followed by a monitoring system in GB called the Inspectorate.

By the mid ‘80s, the Sherqilla School was founded as a Silver Jubilee project. It was followed by the construction of the Aga Khan Academy, Karimabad, Hunza, which was a residential facility for girls from across GB and Chitral (GB & C). Today the Academy is operating as a Higher Secondary School with excellent quality of education. When AKES,P, established the first school in Chitral in the early ‘80s, the overall literacy rate, according to the National Census 1981, was only 14.14%, with 24.12% for men and only 2.9% for women. The district now has the second highest female literacy rate in the KPK province.

In the Southern region, in 1972, the schools were nationalised. Nevertheless, the Sultan Mohamed Shah Aga Khan School was very quickly denationalised through a special appeal made by His Highness, and hence the quality remained consistent. In 1984, when all the schools were denationalised, there were many challenges, including the recruitment of 350 teachers in 1985. In order to mitigate those problems and bring-in quality of education, a School Improvement Programme (SIP) was developed focusing on: infrastructural refurbishment, governance, management training, and teacher education programmes.

In 1998, CEB was converted into AKES,P, and registered with the Government of Pakistan as a service company. An Executive Officer was hired to support the Education Administrator appointed by His Highness the Aga Khan. This was later followed by the recruitment of General Managers for the three regions.

With a special emphasis on tertiary education provision, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed yet another level of expansion. The Aga Khan Higher Secondary School (AKHSS), Karachi, the first AKES,P, school to offer higher secondary education, was established in 1995, followed by two other AKHSSs in Gilgit and Hunza. In 2000, another AKHSS was established in Ghahkuch, district Ghizar, and a decade later in Seenlasht and Khuragh, in Chitral.

Moreover, AKES,P’s first school in the province of Punjab, AKS, Hafizabad, was founded in 1997. This decade also witnessed the supportive endeavours for the establishment of Community Based Schools (CBSs), both in the rural and urban areas of Sindh.

In an effort to bring its support services closer to the schools, AKES,P, introduced the concept of Field Education Offices (FEOs) in 1996, which are now called Regional School Development Units (RSDUs).
In its pursuit of excellence, AKES,P, has strengthened its institutional capacity through partnerships and linkages with a wide range of partners. These include the International Academic Partnerships (IAPs) with Philips Academy-Andover, Salem School-Germany, and AKU-IED. Schools have also participated in Intel® ‘teach to the future programme’ and iEARN scholarships and programmes. Furthermore, institutions like the Karakoram International University, British Council, National Commission for Human Development, CIDA, USAID, EC, AusAid, ESRA, NORAD, JICA and AKDN agencies have collaborated in many academic and development endeavours.

Moreover, introduction of Early Child Development (ECD) programmes, affiliation with Aga Khan University – Examination Board (AKU-EB), establishment of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) and IT units, and ICT integration are other institutional development initiatives at AKES,P.

**History of Teacher Development**

AKES,P, is known for its emphasis on the teacher development and learning opportunities it provides to its employees.

The history of teacher education goes way back to the early ‘70s when the then CEB started nominating teachers for Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) and Certificate of Teaching (CT) offered by the Government College of Education, Gilgit. In the early ‘80s, AKES,P, in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, introduced an in-house teachers training programme called the Field-Based Teachers’ Development Programme (FBTDP), which allowed a significant number of teachers to do their PTC & CT Courses. One of the unique features of this programme was its field based approach. Moreover, continuous refresher workshops were offered for teachers and head teachers. In order to address the shortage of teachers in small sized schools, in the ‘90s, short courses on Multi-grade teaching were organised under the FBTDP.

Correspondingly, from 1987-89, the school leaders in the Southern region designed a three year school improvement plan for the schools in Karachi and interior Sindh. The SIP mainly focused on the renovation of the schools, training of the leaders, training of the teachers, and the development of the curriculum. In 1989, another teacher education programme called the Language Improvement Programme (LIP) was launched to improve English language skills, in collaboration with the British council.

Thereafter, in the mid ‘90s, when schools adopted English as the medium of instruction, the Language Enhancement and Achievement Programme (LEAP) was launched to improve the English Language skills of teachers. With the support of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), native English speaking teachers were engaged in designing and implementing training programmes for teachers of English, Science & Mathematics. In the late ‘90s, the European Commission provided generous support for a ten-year education development programme called the Northern Pakistan Education Programme (NPEP). Under this programme, AKES,P, offered a wide spectrum of professional development opportunities to its teachers, head teachers and managers. The major professional development initiatives included: courses in Content and Methodology, Early Child Development (ECD), English Language Improvement, Leadership and Management (e.g., ADPE & ADELM), and sponsorships for B. Ed, M. Ed, and Ph. D from national and international universities such as AKU-IED, Notre Dame Institute of Education, NUML, University of Toronto and others.
In 2003, a programme for ECD was initiated, called *Releasing Confidence and Creativity (RCC)*, funded by the Royal Netherland Embassy – which focused on improving the ability of families and communities to effectively support children’s early development; and improving system capacity and commitment to ECD programmes. It offered a wide spectrum of courses including diplomas, certificate courses and field-based courses to teachers, teacher educators and parents.

In 2009, under AusAid funding, the *Educational Development and Improvement Programme (EDIP)* was launched in the remotest regions of GB. Building on the experience of past interventions, the EDIP took up a whole-school-development approach towards professional development and a cluster-based model to provide field-based support to a network of schools.

**Evolution of Teaching and Learning Practices**

Since the inception of AKES,P, schools, the teaching and learning practices have massively evolved over time. Initially, traditional methods were in practice, whereby a teacher would read the text and students would repeat. The text was then translated from English to Urdu and then to the local language. The main focus was on memorising facts and reproducing them in the examination. The mode of assessment included verbal tests, dictations and solving mathematical problems.

In the ‘80s, as a result of multi-level interventions and professional development initiatives, the teachers were exposed to innovative pedagogies with a focus on child-centred activity-based teaching. This new approach led to a paradigm shift from mere memorisation of facts to a participatory learning approach where students were engaged in meaningful learning activities which fostered conceptual understanding and critical thinking and creativity.

Over time, the medium of instruction was changed from Urdu to English in all the three regions, which was supported by the ongoing professional development programmes. Teaching strategies gradually transformed from the lecture method to more interactive modes such as discussions, debates, and experiential learning where children were encouraged to observe, touch, and manipulate learning materials. The current decades have witnessed further innovations, as children are more and more exposed to diverse learning opportunities through projects and assignments in order to learn from various avenues, such as peer-interactions, libraries, online resources, CDs and DVDs, and participation in national and international events (for instance, IEARN, YES, and Olympiads).

Gradually, innovative ways of assessment were introduced and oral examinations were replaced by written examinations. The introduction of a centralised examination system in GB & C standardised the assessment of students’ learning, as students of all the schools appeared for the same test paper developed at the Regional level. The exam coordinators, field-based educators and teachers were trained in item writing and the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy to improve the standards of assessment. As a result, emphasis on assessing students learning at higher levels of comprehension, application and analysis increased. Furthermore, affiliation with the AKU-EB increased the validity and reliability of students’ assessments.

Along with professional development and capacity building of teachers, substantial work was carried out in the area of curriculum development and enrichment. This involved the alignment of *Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)* with the local context through relevant examples. A focus on Early Years Learning and Development during the recent decades has opened up new avenues in classroom teaching and learning practices. As a culmination of the
RCC programme, the *High-scope* approach was introduced in the Pre-Primary classes, whereby the provision of a conducive, stimulating, and nurturing environment to children is emphasized with an aim to foster holistic development of a child (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual).

**Creating a Child Friendly Environment**

The history of creating a child friendly environment and purpose-built learning spaces at AKES,P, goes back to 1926, when a member of the Ismaili community donated the Alidina building to the Aga Khan Girls School Kharadar. Much later in the ‘60s and ‘70s, purpose-built schools were constructed in SMS School, Karimabad, and AKS, Garden.

In GB, however, till 1980, the DJ schools were run either in the ‘house of the teacher’ or in the private rooms adjacent to religious spaces (Jamat Khanas), called ‘Lunger Khana’, without any provision of furniture and equipment. Thereafter, the local communities built one or two rooms, mostly adjacent to the religious spaces. These rooms were constructed using locally available material (mud and stone), and employed primitive technologies. Thus, these facilities were vulnerable to natural calamities and not sustainable.

In the early ‘80s, the *Self-Help School Construction Programme (SHSCP)* was initiated, in GB & C, with a specific objective to construct seismically safe classrooms and toilet blocks. Under this programme, the construction activities were carried out in partnership with the local communities who provided free land, local materials and unskilled labour. This programme was launched with generous financial support from various international donor agencies. One of the major features of this programme was the provision of new and purposefully manufactured furniture and other equipment for schools where new construction was undertaken. In addition, under NPEP, 15 Community Learning Resource Centres (CLRCs) were constructed in GB & C, which provide a common learning space for the community.

**Community Development**

AKES,P, emphasises community mobilisation, knowledge of local conditions, rigorous management, appropriate technology and sustainability. The role of the Ismaili Council setup has always been integral for AKES,P’s initiatives undertaken for community mobilisation. Through REBs and Local Education Boards (LEBs), the Council facilitates linkages and provides communication channels with and support mechanisms for the community, in order to develop awareness regarding education.

The history of community mobilisation activities goes back to the mid ‘40s when members of the Ismaili Council started dialogues with communities to create awareness regarding education. Most of these awareness campaigns consisted of self-driven, unstructured activities such as lectures, dialogues, discussions and informal talks carried out by community leaders at the local level. By the ‘80s, this relationship had turned into more formal and structured linkages, when under the guidance and supervision of the Council, LEBs and REBs were established. Later in the ‘90s, under the supervision of LEBs, School Management Committees (SMCs) and Village Education Committees (VECs) were formed with every school. These committees consisted of representatives from local communities, and provided a link between AKES,P, schools and the respective communities. Under NPEP in the Northern Pakistan, QUAAID project in the South, and other funded programmes, extensive training courses were arranged to build the capacity of LEBs, VECs and SMCs. These committees played a huge role in creating awareness regarding quality education,
attracting more children towards AKES,P, schools, motivating parents to invest in the education of their children, and providing classrooms and other required resources to run a school. The launch of the SHSCP further enhanced ownership of the communities in AKES,P, activities – leading from community participation to community partnership.

One important initiative in empowering the community has been the setting up of CBSs in Karachi, rural Sindh, GB and Chitral. Under this concept, a local community is encouraged to mobilise its resources to set up schools where their children could have access to quality education at a reasonable cost. The community owns and manages the school, while AKES,P, provides teacher training and technical support. As a result of a number of interrelated activities undertaken through the generous support of the EC and other international donors, the communities are now more confident to sustain the CBSs and other community-based initiatives.

In addition, the registration of Community Based Education Societies (CBESs) with the government has been an important step towards sustainability. The purpose of registration was to make the SMCs more autonomous for decision-making and also for the mobilisation of resources. Since 2006, CLRCs have been established in GB (11 centres) and Chitral (4 centres). The objective of the CLRCs is to provide the local community with access to educational resources, including information and communication technology.

In 1997, the Female Human Resource Development Programme (FHRDP) was initiated with the objective to facilitate female students of GB & C to pursue secondary and higher education. Hundreds of female students from underprivileged and marginalised communities have benefited from this scholarship and many of them have joined various professions such as medicine, nursing, teaching and banking.

**Conclusion**

As a dynamic learning organisation, AKES,P, has gone through many phases of change. Viewing from diverse perspectives, these changes can be seen in multiple forms, particularly at the personal, social and institutional level. The personal change is perhaps the most remarkable one, as in some very remote, climatically harsh and geographically rough areas, AKES,P, has set milestones of human development. As a result of consistent efforts of over a century, the institution has developed considerable numbers of professionals in diverse fields. The impact at the social level is much wider, which can be seen in the form of basic orientation of the communities, their awareness and motivation regarding education and their constant drive to improve their quality of life and achieve excellence. In areas where access to school was once a dream, female literacy rate has now escalated. Over a century, AKES,P, has emerged as an institution of quality, repute and a point of reference in the field of school operations. The journey of transformation continues, as AKES,P, constantly endeavours to reach out to inspire better lives.