



Quality of primary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Education plays an illuminative role in the development of a country. It is widely acknowledged that quality education is the single most important instrument in enhancing human capabilities and achieving the desired goals. The major purpose of the study was to check out the quality of Primary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The main objectives of the study were: To analyze the teaching methodologies used at Primary level. To check the appropriateness of curriculum at Primary level. To examine the physical facilities available at primary level. To analyze the evaluation and assessment system used at Primary level. To suggest some recommendation for the improvement of quality of education at Primary level. All the head teachers and teachers of the Primary schools of Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were the population of the study. The sample of the study was consisted of 100 head teachers (fifty male and fifty female) and 300 teachers (one hundred & fifty male and one hundred & fifty female). The study was survey type in nature. The researcher personally developed the questionnaire to collect the data. Collected data was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted in the light of the objectives of the study. Statistical tools were used to analyze the data. In the light of conclusions it is recommended that curriculum at Primary level must be comprehensive. Examination and assessment system must be impartial and transparent. Computer facility also directly affects the quality, so it is recommended that this facility must be provided to all schools at primary level. Infrastructure also affects quality of education; it is recommended that proper physical facilities should be provided to the institutions on priority basis for quality education.

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Introduction

“Primary education holds a central position in the whole educational system. At this stage the largest number of man - power is available. The educationist considers this stage as a backbone or foundation stone of the whole educational system, while sociologist considers it as an effective weapon of social reforms. It can be said that Primary education is closely related with informatory and initiative stage of the society” (Mirza, 2003).

“Primary education is considered to be much urgent and essential element for the advancement of the countries all over the world. It is the key sector / phase of the entire education system. On one side it provides a literate workforce for the country and on the other side it works like a feeder for the next coming stages of education which directly or indirectly depends upon the quality of primary education which is the initial stage. Due to which skilled, professional and trained work force will be produced which will work actively in every walk of life especially in political, social or economic fields” (Brown, 1998). Quality of Primary education has its own importance and value for all of us. If we give Primary education a prominent place and status then we can expect from it that it will definitely add to our progress and prosperity directly or indirectly. In simple words quality of Primary education plays the role of bridge to all next coming stages of education. Therefore the progress and development of a nation depends directly on the quality of primary education. There is no second opinion, but only quality education can prepare students who can face the challenges of global market. School education is criticized over many forums

that it has no quality and producing students without any knowledge and understanding of basic concepts.

Ayub explained that “Teaching methods directly affect the quality of lessons, in particular for the core subjects. Also structure of lessons, attention of pupil, the language of instruction and the context to which the teacher involves the pupils in the lessons are also looked into. The teacher is essential part to the quality of education. Good teachers know how to keep their pupils involved in lessons. A good working relationship and communication between the teacher and the pupils is also important. An environment in which pupils feel safe and secure is conducive to them by taking responsibility for further progress” (Ayub, 2011).

The quality of teaching is determined by the appropriate utilization of teaching materials and educational A.V.aids. Experienced educators agree upon the need to improve teacher quality, especially in rural areas, because rural teachers are usually least trained. Whenever there are changes in curriculum and teaching methods, teachers in rural areas are least able to change teaching behaviors. It is not surprising to see that most rural teachers still use lecturing as a major teaching method, and that the classroom atmosphere is too teacher-centered to allow actively and engage learners. The utilization of teaching materials and educational A.V.aids play a significant role in promoting student learning.

Memon, (2007) is of the view that “Teachers are perhaps the most critical component of any system of education. It is seldom considered that teachers join their job without acquiring the desired and required skills and pedagogies. Even after

joining teaching as a profession, teachers do not show interest in their jobs and think that once they become a teacher, now they are teachers forever". Association for Teacher Education in Europe, (2006) describes in its policy paper entitled "The quality of teachers" "that the quality of teachers affects both the quality of schools and the learning of pupils.

Stones, (1994) stressed that "Quality teaching cannot be theoretical nor can be distinguished on the nature of teaching by theories. Both theory and practices are essential. Indeed they are inseparable. Quality teaching is utmost property conceived of unified embracing. Both theory and practice in which teachers, teacher education and researchers are jointly responsible for the development of theoretical measurement and the input of teaching" (Stones, 1994).

"Quality of curriculum is an essential part of quality education. Without a standardized and society oriented teaching materials quality education looks like a dream. Quality of curriculum and good teaching contents moulds the learners in a desired and better way. Carefully planned and well organized curriculum develops an enterprising spirit in the new generation; the builder of the nation. Standardized curriculum brings nations close together" (UNESCO, 1998).

For the curriculum in Primary education the question is "whether education and teaching materials are based on modern educational principles and subject-specific teaching methods, both in terms of the content and structure of the teaching and educational area". Legislation requires that the curriculum must meet the targets objectives that will be expected from the schools in the forth coming life. It is also important that provision of quality curriculum content is sufficiently geared the pupils with language and learning problems faced to all especially including the initial level that is the primary grade (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

According to Baloch, (2003) "Curriculum of teacher training and curriculum of school education are criticized within Pakistan. It is common perception that curriculum of teacher training is old and does not fulfill the requirements of the technological era. Teachers learn this curriculum only for degree, not for knowledge. School curriculum does not prepare the students for the market. Students' rote selected the topics and appears in the examination. When these students come in market place with degrees, face many problems and found himself unable to fulfill the requirements of work place". Baloch, (2003) described the condition of present school curriculum as: It is obvious "that all the educational objectives are usually concerned with the development of the individual and with the quality of his behavior in various life situations.

The school curriculum must be learner centered. Our present curriculum is just centered on textbooks and subjects. Our whole educational practice primarily aims at teaching the texts and developing the subjects". National Education Policy, (2009) specified that "quality is the most central and essential priority. The Ministry of Education has adopted the following vision: Our education system must provide quality education to our children and youth to enable them and to realize in them their individual potential and capabilities in contributing to the development of society and nation, creating a sense of Pakistani nationhood, the concept of tolerance, social justice, democracy, their regional and local culture and about their history which is based on the basic ideology enunciated in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan".

Qualities of education assume that existence of adequate physical infrastructure is much urgently needed. It also assumes that such quality infrastructure should not be compromised by any means for the institution. The quality of infrastructure of the

internal & external environment is closely related to the quality of education. Investments in the development of the physical facilities of the institution go a long way in improving quality education. Basic facilities like school building, electricity, laboratories drinking water are the basic requirements for education. Without these basic facilities quality education is very difficult and almost impossible. For quality education, these facilities are compulsory and mandatory. Inadequate facilities are one of major challenge and hurdle in the way of quality education. Well organized and fully equipped institutions smoothen the way of quality education.

Gronlund and Linn, (1990) describes that "Evaluation of student achievement has been an integral part of the teaching learning process. Educators are well aware of the fact that the nature of evaluation given to the students determines what students read, when they read it & how they read? Evaluation determines whether students are making adequate progress towards the targeted objectives which the teacher aimed to achieve. Evaluation data is used to communicate students, parents & education authorities about the level achieved individually and /collectively" (Gronlund and Linn, 1990).

Educational system is like a body, which consists of different parts, and all these parts perform their functions as a system. Curriculum, teacher, students, Assessment and Evaluation are its major parts. From ancient times till date Assessment and Evaluation have remained a part of the educational system. It is the only source of measuring the abilities of the students. Actually it can be said that educational system is an empty vase without Assessment and Evaluation. It is the process of analysis, identification, and evaluations, interpretation in any type of academic evaluation conducted to measure and assess the students' academic performance". The term Assessment and Evaluation cannot be differentiated from Testing. "Test is a set of questions, problems or exercises to which the students are asked to respond to obtain an appraisal of designated characteristics of the students such as specific kind of knowledge, aptitude, abilities and skills; in education used interchangeably with Assessment and Evaluation" (Ahmad, 2001).

Assessment and Evaluation plays very vital role in order to assess the abilities of students. Through Assessment and Evaluation, teachers can also analyzed strengths and weaknesses of students. It is the only tool for the evaluation of different aspects related to teaching learning process. It is a source of inspiration for students to do well in it and get praise from their teachers and parents as well. Through evaluations, the effectiveness of curriculum and performance of teacher can be judged. "Assessment and Evaluation are employed to bring about qualitative improvement in education" (Qurashi, 1996).

Research Procedure

The major purpose of the study was to investigate the quality of education at Primary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study was descriptive / survey type in nature. All the head teachers and teachers of Government Primary Schools of the five southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted as the population of the study. The sample of the study consisted of 100 heads teachers, 300 teachers from the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who were randomly selected, as a research instrument for collection of data, researcher personally developed two questionnaires. The questionnaires were validated through pilot testing before administering to the sample; the data were collected through administering the questionnaires through pilot testing. For this purpose the researcher personally visited the sample institutions and respondents. Data collected through the above mentioned

research instruments was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using inferential statistics in the light of the objectives of the study. Responses of the respondents were coded as 1-Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3- Undecided 4- Disagree and 5- strongly disagree.

Looking at mean rating score of respondents it is observed that activity based method is used in the class rooms by the teacher, because the mean 2.11 lie in the agree row. On the other hand A.V.aids are present in enough number and are well utilized by professionally equipped teachers. Similarly teachers prepare lesson plans regularly, the teachers are provided equal opportunities by the Govt: their mean lie in the strongly agree and agree rows as the table clearly indicates the fact. The only thing which is the most alarming is that of questioning of the students which is discouraged by the teachers, in this regards the table clearly demonstrate the fact the here the mean ranges from 2.48 to 2.73 which falls in the undecided row, so the result is quite obvious.

Having a close look at the responses of the respondents it is noticed that curriculum is according to the learners need and fully matches society needs because both their mean lie in the agree row, also curriculum is comprehensive and interesting and can be well managed in the due course of time which clearly can be seen from the fact that their mean lie in the agree and strongly agree rows respectively having 2.26 & 2.31 mean targeting agree row, sufficient books along with supplementary materials are in not present in the institutions, in this regards their rating scores shows the fact that respondents remain undecided as the table mention the mean ranges too. Also the separate staff rooms facilities are also legging of as the respondents were undecided about this as can be seen from the mean range.

As the table reveals that A.V aid like teaching kits are available which is the mist necessary thing in teaching as the mean of the responding falls in the agree row, also the basic facilities like water ,boundary walls toilets ,proper school building were available in their respective institutions as the means clearly indicates the facts. Most of the respondents unanimously declared that separate staff rooms for the teachers were not present as the ranged in the undecided row which can be observed from the mean position too.

The above table clearly shows the fact that Annual evaluation system is used at primary level as the pointing the fact. The teachers use assessment procedure and verbal evaluation too as the mean rating score guiding towards the fact but, the only thing which is unanimously declared undecided by the majority of the respondents is that of the transparency of the assessment & evaluation system whose mean falls in the undecided category i.e. 2.41—2.65. Besides this daily class room and other assessment activities are fairly arranged by the teachers on regular basis.

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following Conclusions were made:

1. According to the views of the teachers and head teachers' activity based methods were being used in the classes. It may be due to the reason that majority of teachers were professionally equipped and having sound teaching skills but questioning of the learners were not encouraged.
2. In-service training opportunities were equally provided by the Government to all teachers and head teachers as well.
3. Majority of respondents reported that curriculum is according to the learners and societal needs consisting of attractive content materials which is regularly refined and revised by the Govt. and can be well managed and covered in the prescribed interval of

time, but books & supplementary materials were not present in enough number.

4. Teaching kits were provided by the Govt. to majority of the schools, water, toilet facilities were present and proper protection was given to the institution by boundary walls as revealed by majority respondent's opinions, but separate staff room were not present for the teachers for mini break recreations..

5. Majority of the respondents opined that enough play grounds facilities for co-curricular activities were present.

6. Majority of the respondents opined that annual evaluation system was used to improve reading and writing skills of the learners but they remained undecided about the transparency of the examination system.

7. Majority of the respondents viewed that buildings, rooms, trained teaching staff and basic physical facilities were present sufficiently but furniture, office staff, staff rooms, library and books in library were present to some extent, although majority of the respondents unanimously opined that computer and dispensary facilities were not present in nearly all the primary schools.

Recommendations

In the light of findings and conclusions the following recommendations were made by the researcher.

1. It was seen from the opinions that curriculum is not as much comprehensive as need to be. So it is recommended that curriculum at primary level must be comprehensive including all necessary life related skills, religion oriented, and practicably applicable and well manageable in the limited course of time.
2. It was found in the study that Examination and Assessment systems are not impartial and transparent. This issue needs to reorganized and overhauled comprehensively. Examining authorities must be appointed on merit basis, papers or assessment work must be done by expert teachers, supervisory staff must necessarily be nominated on best performance basis, evaluation process ought to be administered by skilled personals.
3. Findings revealed that Computer facility is not present in majority of our schools. It is recommended that this issue should be tackled on emergency priority basis, and special funds must be allocated to provide at least a single computer set to each and every school so that every child can acquire necessary computer skills. In this regard local community and other donating agencies can be mobilized for funding purposes.
4. The result of the study revealed that basic health facilities were not available in most of our schools so this is another alarming issue which needs to be resolved as a special case. Although, we have lack of financial resources and cannot afford extra burden on the exchequer, yet this can be acquired with the help of prosperous community members' participations so that first aid can be supplied if some unpleasant happens seldom.
5. The findings revealed too that teachers should be given special refresher courses in which special stressed be given on them to arrange question answer session during the lesson in which students should be encouraged to ask questions rather than discouraging them.
6. Findings showed that separate staff rooms were not present for the teachers. In this connection it is recommended that in each school a staff room should be constructed, so that in the spire times the teachers take some rest & make preparation for the next periods afterwards.

Table 1. Aspect of Teaching Methodologies used at primary level

| Statement | $SE_{\bar{x}}$ | μ | SA | A | UD | DA | SDA | M | SD |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|------|
| Activity based method | .054 | 1.99—2.20 | 150 | 123 | 73 | 45 | 9 | 2.11 | 1.09 |
| A.V.aids are available | .047 | 1.69—1.88 | 197 | 122 | 55 | 21 | 5 | 1.78 | 0.95 |
| Use of A.V aids effectively. | .052 | 1.89—2.10 | 176 | 86 | 105 | 27 | 6 | 2.00 | 1.53 |
| Teachers are professionally equipped | .037 | 1.35—1.48 | 269 | 97 | 30 | 2 | 1 | 1.41 | 0.67 |
| Teachers prepare lesson plan regularly | .050 | 1.95—2.14 | 154 | 109 | 105 | 27 | 5 | 2.05 | 1.01 |
| Refresher courses improve teachers teaching skills | .031 | 1.29—1.41 | 288 | 85 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 1.35 | 0.63 |
| Teacher has command over subject matter | .028 | 1.27—1.38 | 288 | 93 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 1.33 | 0.57 |
| In-service training is provided to the teachers | .036 | 1.36—1.51 | 270 | 92 | 31 | 6 | 1 | 1.44 | 0.72 |
| Questioning is encouraged by the teachers in the class | .064 | 2.48—2.73 | 106 | 84 | 102 | 73 | 34 | 2.60 | 1.28 |
| Mother tongue as a medium of instruction is useful when used in the class | .045 | 1.55—1.73 | 235 | 93 | 56 | 11 | 5 | 1.64 | 0.90 |

Table 2. Aspect of Curriculum used at Primary Level

| Statement | $SE_{\bar{x}}$ | μ | SA | A | UD | DA | SDA | M | SD |
|--|----------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|------|
| Curriculum is according to the learner's needs. | .057 | 1.99—2.22 | 153 | 122 | 72 | 33 | 20 | 2.11 | 1.15 |
| Existing curriculum matches society needs. | .055 | 2.03—2.25 | 142 | 126 | 76 | 43 | 13 | 2.14 | 1.11 |
| Teaching material is adequate and attractive. | .055 | 2.10—2.32 | 138 | 104 | 103 | 45 | 10 | 2.21 | 1.11 |
| Curriculum is comprehensive and interesting. | .055 | 2.15—2.37 | 122 | 123 | 95 | 46 | 14 | 2.26 | 1.11 |
| Curriculum is well managed | .059 | 2.20—2.43 | 132 | 95 | 106 | 48 | 19 | 2.31 | 1.18 |
| Sufficient books are available in the library. | .072 | 2.49-2.78 | 129 | 75 | 65 | 74 | 57 | 2.63 | 1.45 |
| Supplementary materials with text books are available in the school. | .073 | 2.50—2.79 | 129 | 77 | 63 | 68 | 26 | 2.64 | 1.47 |
| Course content is according to mental level of the learners. | .061 | 2.09-2.34 | 149 | 105 | 81 | 39 | 26 | 2.22 | 1.22 |
| Curriculum reflects cultural values | .052 | 1.94—2.15 | 157 | 112 | 92 | 31 | 8 | 2.05 | 1.05 |
| Course content is regularly revised and refined. | .052 | 1.71—1.92 | 212 | 90 | 67 | 20 | 11 | 1.82 | 1.05 |

Table 3. Aspect of physical facilities available at Primary Level

| Statement | $SE_{\bar{x}}$ | μ | SA | A | UD | DA | SDA | M | SD |
|--|----------------|-----------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|------|------|
| Teaching kits are available in the school. | .033 | 1.33—1.46 | 272 | 105 | 16 | 5 | 2 | 1.40 | 0.67 |
| Water facility is available in the school. | .027 | 1.19—1.30 | 318 | 69 | 8 | 5 | 23 | 1.25 | 0.55 |
| School is protected by enough boundary walls. | .031 | 1.24—1.37 | 302 | 81 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 1.31 | 0.62 |
| Toilet facility is available for students | .020 | 1.10—1.18 | 348 | 49 | 35 | 13 | 6 | 1.14 | 0.41 |
| Furniture is available in the class for students. | .058 | 1.70-1.92 | 245 | 52 | 38 | 62 | 3 | 1.81 | 1.16 |
| Proper school building is available | .029 | 1.23-1.34 | 307 | 67 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 1.28 | 0.58 |
| Enough class rooms are available. | .048 | 1.51—1.71 | 256 | 79 | 28 | 34 | 2 | 1.61 | 0.97 |
| Class rooms are well furnished and airy. | .035 | 1.32—1.45 | 283 | 90 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 1.39 | 0.71 |
| Play ground is available for students. | .056 | 1.94—2.16 | 162 | 116 | 74 | 33 | 15 | 2.05 | 1.12 |
| Separate staff room is available for teachers in the school. | .076 | 2.70—3.00 | 128 | 42 | 67 | 85 | 78 | 2.85 | 1.53 |

Table 4. Aspect of evaluation and assessment system used at Primary Level

| Statement | $SE_{\bar{x}}$ | μ | SA | A | UD | DA | SDA | M | SD |
|--|----------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|------|
| Annual evaluation system is used at primary level. | .021 | 1.15—1.24 | 326 | 70 | 36 | 3 | 1 | 1.19 | 0.43 |
| Teachers use assessment procedures to enhance student's learning. | .024 | 1.19—1.28 | 312 | 83 | 45 | 4 | 1 | 1.23 | 0.48 |
| Teachers regularly assess performance. | .032 | 1.32--1.45 | 276 | 98 | 22 | 3 | 1 | 1.38 | 0.65 |
| Monthly written tests are used to judge the knowledge and skills of the students | .035 | 1.35—1.49 | 273 | 93 | 27 | 6 | 1 | 1.42 | 0.70 |
| Annual evaluation system is transparent. | .062 | 2.41—2.65 | 112 | 69 | 148 | 34 | 37 | 2.53 | 1.23 |
| Verbal assessment system is used to increase students reading skills. | .033 | 1.34—1.47 | 272 | 98 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 1.40 | 0.66 |
| Assessment system is used to improve writing skills of the students. | .032 | 1.36—1.49 | 220 | 115 | 47 | 14 | 4 | 1.66 | 0.88 |
| Evaluations and assessments are used to measure the level of achievement of students in a precise way. | .034 | 1.33--1.47 | 273 | 99 | 23 | 2 | 3 | 1.40 | 0.69 |

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