

Developing a strategy for promoting government school teachers' commitment to profession

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Abstract: The study attempted to examine Principals' and Teachers' perceptions of teaching as a profession and to develop a viable strategy on the basis of review of global literature and opinions of respondents for promoting their commitment to the teaching profession. The objectives of the study were to explore the perceptions of Principals' and Teachers' about teaching profession, to identify factors that influence teachers' commitment towards teaching and to develop an implementable strategy for promoting Government school teachers' commitment to teaching profession. The population of the study included 261 Headmasters/Principals, 3524 teachers of Government boys' high schools both in urban and rural areas of four targeted districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The sample of the study included 42 Headmasters/Principals, 535 teachers of Government boys' high schools both in urban and rural areas of four targeted districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Primary data were collected from Headmasters/ Principals and teachers while secondary data were obtained from school records, study of documents and related literature. The analysis facilitated the process of organizing, verifying and interpreting data, which provided perspective and a conceptual framework to the study that supported conclusions. Questionnaire was used during the collection of the data from Headmasters/ Principals and teachers. The responses of key informants were obtained and converted into Frequency, Percentage (%), Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and Rank (R) for meaningful interpretation. The results revealed that teachers' commitment to teaching profession was satisfactory in general. In order to further enhance commitment of teachers towards teaching profession, Government will have to contribute to the attractiveness of the teaching profession, for example, working on level of recruitment, initial education of teachers, early career support and continuous professional development, and a strategic internal and external communication promoting professionalism of teachers playing a crucial role in a fast changing society.

Key words: *Teachers' commitment; Strategy; Promoting; Commitment; Profession*

1. Introduction

There remained much focus on the quality and performance of teachers. While academic qualification, subject matter knowledge, pedagogy and teaching skills are important factors in determining teachers' competency and teaching efficacy, a knowledgeable teacher without motivation and commitment to teaching profession may not sustain quality education. The quality of teaching is not only dependent on the knowledge and skills of teachers but also on their enthusiasm and commitment towards teaching profession. When a teacher is motivated and committed to teaching profession, students also become keen to learn what they are taught. Teachers, who are dedicated and committed to teaching profession, are capable to implement school-based innovations or reforms that are meant to benefit students' learning and development. In fact, teachers' commitment and engagement has been identified as one of the most critical factors in teaching-learning process. Thus,

the recruitment and retention of capable and committed teachers is a crucial issue in education.

There is a general complaint that teachers frequently leave the teaching profession for lucrative jobs. This trend suggests that teaching is not an attractive career to prospective and in-service teachers. High proportions of in-service teachers leave the teaching profession in the early years of their service while some potential persons do not join the teaching profession at all. Recently, there has been an increasing tendency of school teachers asking for early retirement to leave the teaching profession. Many of them are well experienced. This phenomenon has caused much concern in the public education sector. There are many reasons accounting for the turnover of teachers. For some people, salary, status and working conditions may not be determining reasons to stay in the teaching profession. While some of these may leave the profession with disappointment and a sense of deprivation. Even worse, sad news about teachers' anxieties due to high stress are repeatedly heard. This has been raising alarm and concern to the public about teachers' working conditions that may

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affect their motives and commitment to teaching profession.

1.1. Statement of problem

The public education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) is in bad repute because of poor quality of teachers. It is due to their lack of commitment towards the teaching profession, which badly reflects on the performance of schools. A lot of efforts had been made by Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to improve their performance but no systematic study was made to know causes for the lack of their commitment towards teaching profession. That is why the entire education system is in shambles and parents are constrained to send their children to private schools.

In these circumstances the quality of public education system cannot be ignored since Government allocates substantial budget for salaries of teachers and infrastructure. The education system has to be cured by taking all possible measures. This consideration has prompted the current investigation to develop a strategy for promoting teachers' commitment to their profession. The study is needed on priority because research in both local and global perspectives is scarce in this area.

1.2. Research questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of principals and teachers about teaching profession?
2. What are the factors that influence teachers' commitment towards teaching profession?
3. What implementable strategy this study can recommend for promoting teachers' commitment towards teaching profession?

1.3. Objectives of study

1. To explore the perceptions of principals and teachers about teaching profession.
2. To identify factors that influence teachers' commitment towards teaching.
3. To develop an implementable strategy for promoting Government school teachers' commitment to teaching profession.

2. Literature review

Manning et al. (2005) suggested that institutional support for the person in the profession is an essential contributory factor to sustaining commitment. Nevertheless, with the frequent and enormous educational reforms and changes, the school with the principal stand alone will find it hard to cope with all the problems and constraints, and will inevitably need the adjustment and support from the faculty and school administration. In education, it has been too common to say that a top

down policy mechanism is ineffective, and that consultation and collaboration with schools, teachers and other parties are essential, yet it is surprising to find flaws and problems which previously happened are repeating. While keeping education ideals important, it is hoped that we are not going to give in to overwhelming anxiety and eventually lose the teachers' passion, motive and their commitment to profession.

Day (2004) stated, "The performance and commitment of teachers in teaching are influenced by their motives in taking up teaching as a career, their confidence level, efficacy and concerns in teaching. Teachers' commitment may be enhanced or diminished by factors such as student behavior, collegial and administrative support, parental demands, national education policies, and their own professional histories and career phase"

Chan (2003) stated, "School characteristics and organizational conditions, including lack of administrative support, salary, student discipline and motivation, class size, inadequate planning, time, and lack of opportunity for advancement, have significant effects on teacher turnover, even after controlling for the characteristics of both teachers and schools. Connected with the above, stress and turnout resulting from the teaching tasks and environment (e.g. constant changes in educational policy, school and curriculum reforms, class management problems, etc) may cause teachers to feel physically and emotionally exhausted and subsequently diminish their enthusiasm and commitment to teach. Eventually, some of them leave the teaching team with disappointment and a sense of helplessness".

According to Joffres & Haughey (2001) teachers' commitment was associated with teachers' sense of efficacy. The teachers' commitment shifted and/or declined when they felt unsuccessful and felt unable to influence the students' learning and/or the other community members. They also studied the associations between teachers' characteristics (age, education, gender, experience, organizational tenure, and career stages) and commitment; they found varied and inconsistent findings suggesting that there are still many unanswered questions about the factors that influence teachers' commitments.

Bennell & Akyeampong (2007) viewed, "The broad consensus among occupational psychologists in developed country contexts is that pay on its own does not increase motivation. However, pecuniary motives are likely to be dominant among teachers in those countries where pay and other material benefits are too low for individual and household survival needs to be met. Only when these basic needs have been met, is it possible for "higher-order" needs, which are the basis of true job satisfaction, to be realized."

Kyriacou & Coulthard (2000) viewed, "Qualified teachers lacking the motivation to teach often have little enthusiasm and driving force in their work. When a teacher has taught for some time, work may become as a routine matter. Consequently, interest

decreases and the teacher fails to work to his/her full capacity and becomes less effective. In concrete terms, the result is lack of planning, resistance towards change, and general negligence. Thus; understanding the motives of teachers in choosing teaching as a career and maintaining teacher's motivation in the teaching profession are important issues if we are concerned about teachers' commitment and quality of education. Numerous studies have been conducted on the motives of senior secondary students, university undergraduates and teachers entering the teaching profession in the United States, Britain and Asian countries".

Watt & Richardson (2008) have systematically provided evidence for links between teachers'

motivation and their engagement, commitment and persistence in teaching and their inclination to become involved in professional development. There is considerable agreement that teachers' efficacy and skepticism about affecting students is associated with enthusiasm, job commitment, and instructional behavior. Teachers' work has yet to focus extensively on professional development. Nevertheless, their work provides a framework for the assessment of value that is of particular relevance for professional development. The combination of value in addition to efficacy can provide information for the predicted likelihood that teachers will opt to become involved in professional development, profit from it, and be motivated to change their practices as recommended by professional development interventions.

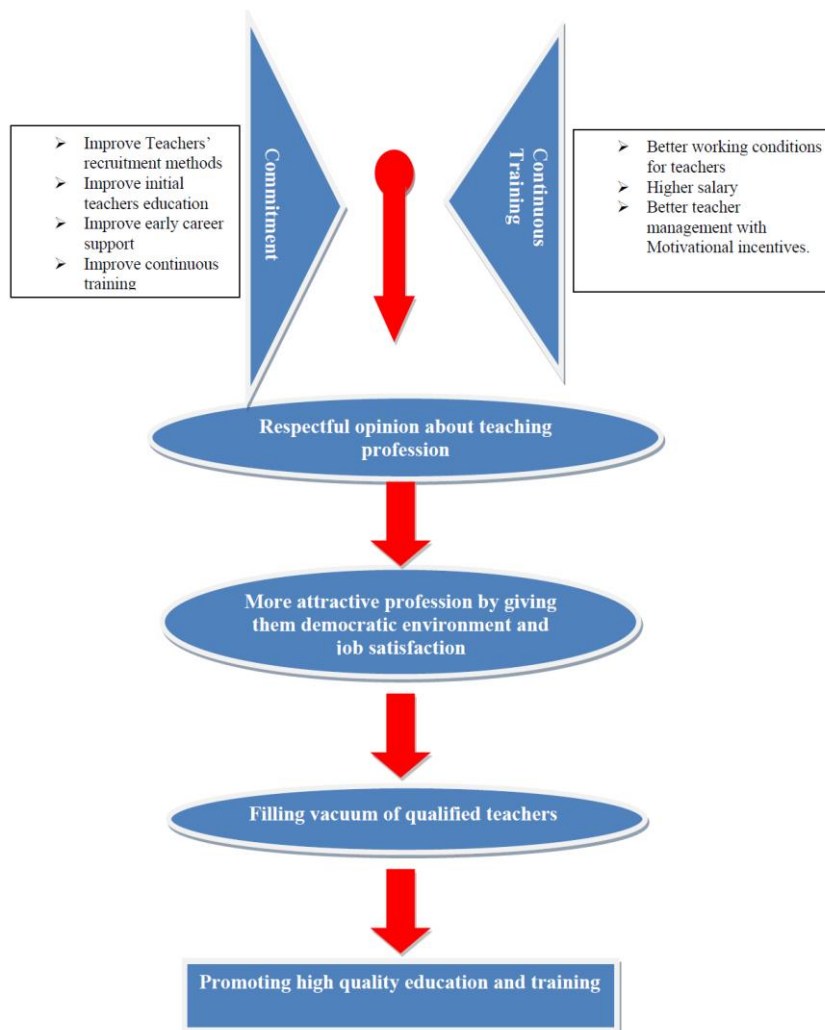


Fig. 1: Proposed Strategy for Developing Government school teachers' Commitment to Profession

3. Research methodology

The study was descriptive in nature and survey method was used.

3.1. Population

The population of the study included 261 Government boys' high schools, their Headmasters/ Principals and 3524 teachers. The

population was taken from four targeted districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan namely Abbotabad, Kohat, Mardan, and Peshawar.

3.2. Sample

The sample of study included 42 Headmasters/ Principals and 535 teachers of Government high schools for boys selected from the population.

3.3. Pilot study

Questionnaires and other tools developed for the study were tested by small number of respondents, who were not included in actual study. The questionnaires were modified in the light of suggestions and made workable.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Primary data were collected from Headmasters/ Principals' and teachers while secondary data were obtained from school records, study of documents and related literature.

The data were treated quantitatively. The quantitative data were tabulated and converted into Frequency, Percentage (%), Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and Rank.

4. Results and discussions

The key issue that affected teachers' commitment to teaching profession was that they struggled to understand and implement the education policies such as the introduction of new curricula. The lack of support and monitoring by the administrative authorities and society was also an issue to those respondents who joined teaching as a respectable profession. This was more serious to them because they wanted to be teachers by choice. They love their job; assistance was strongly needed for them in order not to doubt the value and worthiness of the profession but make teacher a satisfied and honorable person in society.

It was deduced from the findings and documentary analysis that when teachers felt distress in the work place it leads to the lack of commitment and motivation towards teaching profession while working in school. These findings were in agreement with the findings of Day et al. (2007). The same was reported by Zembylas (2003) who argued that teachers' personal and professional commitment was mainly affected by the school climate in positive and negative directions.

The study revealed that in-service teacher training was important for the professional commitment and development of teachers. It was explained by Sparks et al. (1989) who stressed that teacher training "involves teachers in acquiring knowledge and skills through appropriate individual or group instruction". In-service training institute was closely connected with the improvement of teachers' professionalism and commitment. Teachers' knowledge and skills as well as their willingness to keep up with the current educational issues were promising factors for professionalism and professional commitment to teaching.

It was clear from the findings of the study that teachers did not often discuss their commitment towards Teaching Profession in their staff meetings and when they met with their colleagues in breaks/recess. They were aware and observed that

this attitude had a negative impact on their commitment. The issue that discarded the teacher profession from the list of the other profession was mainly due the attitude and faithfulness of the teachers themselves. These included low moral behaviours, coming late to class and try to escape early from class, not finishing the course in due time and not being regular in their attendance. The respondents accepted that some teachers were behaving in an unacceptable manner due to lack of commitment to teaching profession and were aware of it. This view was also supported by Sadker & Sadker (1991) who stressed that teachers should accept responsibility to be a role model for the students and to show the highest ethical standards. The study found that teachers blamed and did not respect those teachers who showed low moral and ethical values. The society and colleagues did not value them as good teachers.

The sample teachers were aware of the importance attributed to commitment to teaching profession. It might be deduced from the documentary analysis and discussion that teacher's positive attitude to become teachers might not be a claim for commitment to teaching profession, but it seemed to remain an important motivation to overcome the everyday difficulties in their work and improve their commitment to teaching profession. Campbell (2003) stressed that concept of professionalism and professional commitment was inherent in the teaching profession.

An important point raised in the current study, that working as teamwork with colleagues was one of the important factors for the improvement and betterment of school and satisfaction in their work place. These were found statistically significant and important. Working as team with colleagues appeared as a powerful force within the teaching profession which greatly affected teachers' professionalism and professional commitment.

5. Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made for the improvement of Government school teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

1. Headmasters'/ Principals' intervention to encourage collegial relationship and discourage adversarial relations among teachers is required for professional norms.

2. There is a need for creating democratic environment for teachers enabling them to freely express their views along educating purposes and activities.

3. Teacher Associations should be harnessed to play their role in improving the professional development and commitment of teachers.

4. The induction of persons in teaching profession should be in early age and for longer period so that they own their profession.

5. In-service training programmes may be designed in such a way that they lay more emphasis on performance rather than on other subject matter.

6. Teachers' concerns must be promoted to discuss teaching learning problems in school and staffroom rather than politics or other non school issues.

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