

Investigating the Challenges Faced by the Teacher Educators after Implementation of Pre-Service B.Ed (Hons.) Elementary Four-Year Program in Sindh

Abdul Sattar Gopang¹, Saleha Parveen², Muhammad Kamran³

Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to bring up the challenges faced by the teacher educators during the implementation of B.Ed (Hons.) elementary program initiated by the provincial governments and HEC in collaboration with United State Agency for International development (USAID) in Pakistan. In this study two general universities i.e., University of Sindh and Karachi University were included which received the funding from USAID for upliftment of Elementary Education in the Sindh province, where this teacher educators' program was piloted and later on fully implemented. In-depth semi-structured face to face interview schedule was developed to conduct the survey type qualitative research design. Five teacher educators from each university (N=10) through purposive sampling were selected and interviewed to collect the data. The gathered data were thematically analyzed on the pattern of Braun & Clarke (2006) approach. On the bases of the analyses, it was inferred that the program despite of its successful completion of first round faced many intrinsic problems such as the lack of trained human resources, lack of involvement of the concerned faculty in curriculum decisions, lack of implementation of the modern pedagogies for bringing quality into the program. Moreover, the external factors such as physical resources and the quality of the intake were also slanting the performance of the program to some extent. These finding are in alignment with the previous studies conducted in the similar context to assess the implementation of teacher education programs. However, the administration of the institutes of so far found playing active role in carrying on the program smoothly despite of the

¹ Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Sindh, Jamshoro
Email: sattar.gopang@usindh.edu.pk

² Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Sindh, Jamshoro
Email: saleha.parveen@usindh.edu.pk

³ Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Sindh, Jamshoro
Email: bbasikamran@usindh.edu.pk

challenges. In the light of the findings of the study, it is recommended that the intervention to provide the funds as well as physical facilities at this stage is inevitable.

Keywords: *B.Ed elementary teacher educator program, implementing program, challenges*

1. Introduction

Elementary Education (EE) is known to be the founding stone in the instructive structure of a nation (LaRocque & Sipahimalani, 2019). Research point out those western countries prioritized the EE enabling them to bring improvement in the education sector (Hughes & Hillebrand, 2015). However, here in Pakistan the significance of imparting of primary education in the country is ignored (Zafar, 2003).

Grades I to VIII are included in elementary education level in Pakistan, however in most of the research studies the data regarding the conditions and facts and figures pertaining to elementary level are divided into two categories i.e., grades I to V and grades VI to VIII, hence practically they are considered two separate levels (Murtaza & Khaleeq, 2016). Therefore, researchers confine themselves to either grade I to V or grades VI to VIII for the elementary level in order to investigate their pros and cons (Eshya, 2011). However, EE consists of grade I-VIII in the country as it is mentioned in the NEP (1998-2010), while before, the elementary education was counted from grade VI-VIII. As far as the function of the EE is concerned, it is a well-known fact that lack of attention on the quarter concerned and shortage of funds, make the primary schools of public sector non-functional and thereafter the administration of public sector schools does not utilize the given funds properly (Ashraf & Hafiza, 2016).

B.Ed. (Hons) Elementary 04-year program has been initiated in a number of the universities in the country (Munshi et al., 2013). In order to meet the future accommodation needs of this program, new buildings constructed at different USAID partner universities including course designs by NCRC (Munshi et al., 2013) for the successful and smooth function of the program. A number of experts and researchers both from Pakistan and America especially from the universities of the two countries i.e. Pakistan and USA have worked in collaboration to come up with a new scheme i.e. B.Ed (Hons.) elementary degree alongside ADE to cater to the needs of prospective teachers for the near future (Huma, 2013; USAID, 2007).

The scholars and educationists of both the countries collaboratively worked on to bring improvement in education sector in Pakistan which was believed to be deteriorated because of not adopting to the changes and

innovations in the elementary education sector (Begum, 2017). Recently the US authorities developed and approved a prestigious 5-year plan amounting to worth 75 million US dollars for the longer lasting reforms in teacher education sector in Pakistan. The project was successfully under way trying to achieve the target in the due course of time (Munshi et al., 2013; Huma, 2013; Hina, 2017).

In South Asia still a number of countries are struggling to bring forth sustainable reforms especially in their education system; Pakistan is also one of such struggling countries looking forward to paving the way of betterment in its educational institutions (Huma, 2013).

This B.Ed elementary program is still at its initial stage however working smoothly to achieve its goals as put forward by HEC, since it is longest duration teacher education program in terms of credit hours, thus, it is expected to bring out positive results in field of teacher education (Hina, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Looking at the design of the program it is very much hoped that it will positively affect various sectors of teacher education producing well equipped teachers for elementary level, who have advanced pedagogical skills and updated content knowledge. The insight and expertise put in the program will improve the quality and workability in curricula, syllabus, faculty, infrastructure, facilities for students, service structures, professionalism etc., (Gujjar, 2013; Mahmood, 2014).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the challenges came across the teacher educators during the execution of the B.Ed. (Hons.) elementary program.
2. To determine the suggestions in the light of the challenges.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study would be beneficial for the head of departments (HoDs), teacher educators (T.Es) and policy makers of the province to bring improvement in the institutes of teacher educators where BEd elementary four-year teacher educator program was implemented.

1.3 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the University of Sindh, University of Karachi, Faculty of Education and Teacher Educators of the faculties who were engaged in teaching in the B.Ed (Hons.) elementary program and had the USAID trainings.

2. Literature Review

Historically speaking, the issues and problems of especially elementary education are not new in Pakistan; they have been almost since birth of the

country (Ahmad, Rauf, Rashid, Rehman & Salam, 2013). Almost no or little serious efforts were taken to bring in solid and tangible reforms in the basic education (Sheikh & Rasool, 1998). The borrowed structure and management of the system in education system from Britishers were quite incapable to cope with the increasing needs of better education in the country (Ali, 2012) as to successfully cope with the upcoming demands of education sector in Pakistan of newly developing country. The reforms in this connection were inevitable in order to bring the system on the pathway for the basic education; as it is back bone of a nation to develop (Batool & Qureshi, 2007). The B.Ed (Hons.) elementary is a newly launched teacher educators' program in Pakistan (Fazal, Khan, & Majoka, 2014) initiated with great brainstorming on the part of the national as well international educationists; and with USAID funding almost all the required facilities were provided for the sake of successful implementation of the program (Munshi, et al., 2013).

It was observed that some of the teachers, teaching to the prospective teachers are struggling with identifying teaching resources due to the unavailability of the reference books and lack of Internet facility in their institutions (Ali & Parveen, 2013). Only, course guides were provided to the faculty through which they teach the prospective teachers (Mahmood, 2014). Whereas the education policy (2009) and Pangrazi & Beighle, (2019) state that the expanding education excellence, for B.Ed (Hons.) Elementary teacher education program hangs on the teachers' quality, curriculum and pedagogy, textbooks, assessment approaches, learning environment and physical facilities.

Prospective teachers are prepared with modern pedagogy to apply the same when recruited (Chai, Koh & Tsai, 2010). Collaborative learning, experimental learning, context-based learning, inquiry-based learning, research-oriented learning and personalized learning are kinds of the modern pedagogy that are applied in the institutes by the trained teachers to develop the skills as well as attitudes of the individuals (Javed, 2008; Masilo, 2018).

The National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE) has also been established currently at national level, which is working on development of specific standards and requirements for teacher education programs and institutions (Brandt, 2014). The recent development from the Council is formulation of "National Standards for Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs" which are related to following seven aspects: 'curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation system; physical infrastructure, academic facilities and learning resources; human resources; finance and

management; research and scholarship; and community links and outreach (NACTE, 2009; Dilshad & Iqbal, 2010; Shaukat & Chowdhury, 2020).

For preparing the elementary school teachers, the trained teachers as well as the required facilities are required to train the prospectus teachers. In this connection, the comprehensive infrastructure is required and the same was provided by the USAID for this particular BEd elementary program functioning at various institutes including the sample institutes of this study. But, unfortunately, the condition of teacher education programs in Pakistan is not satisfactory (Hussain, 2019).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study is survey type based upon the descriptive research design (Creswell, 2014), as the objective of this study was to explore the challenges faced by the teacher educators TEs during implementation of B.Ed (Hons.) 4-year program.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study was taken from the departments of education University of Sindh and University of Karachi respectively where B.Ed elementary program was implemented. There were total 22 teacher educators in the University of Sindh dealing with the BEd elementary program whereas in University of Karachi there were 12 teacher educators.

3.3 Sample of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of 10 Teacher Educators, 5 from each department of education, University of Sindh and University of Karachi were taken respectively, who had the USAID trainings and vast teaching experience in the field of teacher education especially in this BEd elementary program. Along with this, they engaged themselves with practicum process and remained part of curriculum development of the program during the initiation of the program. The sample, for the study, was selected by using purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 Instrument of the Study

In-depth semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to gather the data from the sample of the study. Along with this, the probing was also made from the sample during the interview wherever necessary.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Following themes generated from the collected data; the same were analyzed and interpreted by adopting the approach of six steps given by Braun & Clarke (2006). The first step to become familiar with the data, generate initial

codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes and finally, write-up were followed. For the sake of anonymity, the names of the participants were kept secret as per ethical considerations. Their names were kept in codes as TE-1, TE-2, TE-3 and so on.

4.1 Trainings to the Teacher Educators

Training for the teachers is an integral part of the institutes. If one has to develop quality of the institutes, he has to keep his faculty intact and updated from training point of view. In this connection the teacher educators were asked whether they have received the concerned training, all participants responded positively. TE-1, TE-2, TE-6 and TE-8 said that they constantly attended the USAID trainings and remained part of the curriculum development. Rest of the six faculty members said they also received the trainings but did not get opportunity to go constantly for them as they had their personal or official appointments so they were replaced by other faculty members. This has been an issue that some faculty could not complete the cycle of the trainings that caused the deficiency among the faculty. "I could not go twice as I was told at eleventh hour so one of my colleagues replaced me, from cycle two session I attended and two my colleague", told by TE-7.

On asking whether they received other trainings or have done refresher courses apart from USAID trainings. TE-1 and TE-4 said that at local level they once took refresher course from a local faculty. Whereas rest of the teachers denied saying that they did not receive any. Further they were asked whether they utilize the skills of received trainings. All of the teachers had a smile and said yes, they do. TE-3, TE-6 and TE-7 said that they apply these skills but not all the time. Similarly, all other said they also use the skills but sometimes they did not use. TE-1 said, "At the very beginning of the session I used the skills but after some time I did not apply". Likewise, other had almost the similar opinion that they utilized the skills but not in all the classes. The reason is still to be found out in this connection. As this program is new one thus the faculty need capacity building, but it was told that very few trainings or refresher courses were offered to the faculty.

The teacher educators need to be the more prepared to understand content knowledge, design various types of lessons and assessments, and consider student perspectives, the more confident they are as professionals and more successful their students become (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kind, 2009).

4.2 Curriculum Implementation and Course Outlines

Curriculum is said to be the soul of any educational institutes and the faculty need to be aware of the curriculum development and its implementation.

When enquired about this, the six faculty members said that they remained part of the curriculum development process and designed the courses with other national and international experts. “I do not feel any difficulty while implementing the curriculum in the class, as I remained part of it”, affirmed by TE-2. Another TE-5 told that she felt difficulty in implementing the curriculum, because she did not have the course outline in the beginning and students demanded it. The TE-3, TE-7 and TE-8 told that they felt difficulty while taking classes because they did not have the material handy to them. They felt trouble as they were not having the internet facility and personal computers. TE-1 and TE-4 told that they were aware of use of the computer thus they did not feel difficulty in acquiring the allied material from internet. Further TE-4 told that the developed curriculum was above the comprehension of the prospective teacher thus she repeated the topics several times for the prospective teachers. It was also told that the learners join the program from far flung rural areas as well, and they could not cope with the modern curriculum and its pedagogy, therefore the amendments in the curriculum particularly in science and computer courses may be made.

4.3 Instructional Material and Internet

For instructional material majority of the faculty had the similar opinions; they said that they did not have the instructional material handy with them at the initial stage but as soon as time passed the material was developed. They said that before it was a challenge for them to gather the material for instructions. Moreover, they said that internet was the main issue for them to download the instructional material. Now, they said that they had the internet but still its flow is hindered. TE-1 TE-4 and TE-7 claimed that they did not have any such issue while using the internet as they had their data cables and laptops. They got the material from that source and according to them they helped the colleagues in gathering the material too. The TE-3, TE-7 and TE-9 told that they had great difficulty in collecting the material. TE-9 told, “Since I did not have the laptop, I felt difficulty in searching the material”.

4.4 Use of ICT and Modern Pedagogy in the Class

On the query whether they use ICT and modern pedagogy in their classes; they said that they did. TE-1 TE-4 and TE-7 had the ICT background thus they used it during their classes. Rest of the teachers used multimedia and android cell phones in some classes. TE-8 said, “I go prepared in my class and ask my class to use the data cable and Google the topic that we have to discuss in the class”. This way they search, and I help them and then we discuss about the topic”. Further he mentioned that the majority of the students did not have either

android cell phones or cable net so it created some trouble in the class, but he managed it.

The majority did not use the ICT but those who had the concerned background, whereas others also strived but could not make best use of it in the classes. Majority used android and laptops, but multimedia was used by those who had ICT background.

4.5 Required Facilities in the Institutes

Human Resource: As far as physical facilities are concerned, they all unanimously said that they have but insufficient facilities. They were asked about human resource such as trained teaching faculty, supportive staff, security and personnel for cleanliness, they all said that all human resources lacked in their institutes. They said they have all such personnel but insufficient. The faculty was there but according to them they needed more training. Supportive staff was insufficient to fulfill the needs. At the same time, they cried for the security and cleanliness in the institutes. For all such facilities, they looked dissatisfied and demanded for more staff to meet the needs of their offices.

Infrastructure and Physical Facilities: As far as building, science labs, computer labs, library, classrooms and seminar halls are concerned; all participants looked disappointed in this regard except the building. According to them, they had a nice building with insufficient equipments in science labs, very few computers in the computer lab in working condition; as far as library is concerned, it had some concerned books, but reference books were not available for teachers as well as for students. They said that there were sufficient classrooms but still with insufficient furniture that was required according to the nature of the program. As far as seminar halls were concerned, in one institute they did not exist but in other institute they did exist but hardly used for the purpose. “We have learning environment in the institute but with very few facilities”, said by the TE-2, TE-9 and TE-10.”

Material Resources: In both the institutes, pure drinking water and electricity were available but not up to the mark. The TE-1, TE-3, TE-5, TE-7 and TE-8 told that they had little problem in drinking pure water that they could bear and afford but TE-1, TE-3, TE-5 were much annoyed with the supply of electricity in the institute, because of that they said that they could not do their best in research as well as in classes. This might be one of the reasons that keeps away the faculty to use multimedia and other ICT gadgets during classes, TE-6, TE-9 and TE-10 did not have such issue of electricity in the institute. Smart Boards are counted in the modern instructional technology that was available in one institute, but they were untouched. No one could apply them in the classes as

they told they did not know how to use, whereas it was not available in another institute.

4.6 Teaching Practice and its Mechanism

Teaching practice is one of the major components of the program that makes the program different one from other programs. TE-1, TE-3, TE-5 and TE-7 told that they had the mechanism for teaching practice but still things are vague. They told that still the stakeholders lack the cementing bond and did not have such coordination that it should have been developed so far. Further they said that every semester there they faced problems to accommodate the prospective teachers in cooperative schools and assign them the cooperative teachers. It was also told that the faculty avoid becoming the supervisors for teaching perhaps it is time taking and more laborious as compare to take the classes.

4.7 Coordination among Faculty and Administration

On asking whether you have harmony with the administration while working in the institute. The majority of the teachers responded positively and said that they were provided all the facilities required for the teaching learning and looked satisfied with the attitude of the administration. TE-1, TE-3, TE-6, TE-7 and TE-10 told that whenever they have any issue they discuss with the administration, the problem is resolved then and there. TE-2 and TE-8 told that they did not discuss any issue with the administration and try to resolve on their own because they said they did not expect that their problem will be resolved. TE-4 told, "I had an issue of electricity in the class, I went there for resolution, but the problem was not resolved for long time, since then I never went to indicate my issues with administration". TE-5 and TE-9 said that sometimes their problems are resolved and sometimes they remain unheard.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It was found that the program was initiated with very less facilitates that created hurdles for the teaching faculty. The stakeholders assumed that with the passage of time such hurdles and challenges will be overcome. But it was found contradictory to the assumption as the teacher educators still face the challenges in teaching as they needed the refresher courses to meet the needs and nature of the program. At the same time, they felt discomfort in implementing the curriculum though they remained part of curriculum development and suggested few amendments in it, but those suggestions were not incorporated. This finding is in alignment with the previous study such as Hussain, (2019) discovered similar challenges faced by the teacher educators. As far as use of ICT was concerned few teachers who had computer background, used it in their classes;

rest of the teacher did not use it constantly in the classes as pointed out earlier by Begum (2017). Smart boards were not used frequently in the classes as the TEs could not use it properly. Human resource, infrastructure and physical facilities and material resources were not found up to the mark and the teacher educators looked not much more satisfied with that this is in alignment with what previous researchers found (Huma, 2013; Begum, 2017 & Hina, 2017). The program is meant for modern pedagogy, but it was not practiced on regular bases in the classes. Some teachers used it but those who lacked computer skills used the traditional methods. It was also found that the teacher educators had some issues with administration, but simple majority was of the opinion that there was harmony among the teacher educators and administration these finding are in alignment with the previous studies (Dilshad, et.al., 2010 & Gujjar, 2013).

From the discussion, it can be concluded that the teacher educators involved in teaching the BEd elementary classes, still face the challenges to impart the knowledge as per requirement of the program, as they did not have the sufficient required facilities including the trained human resource, physical facilities, and material resources to utilize them during their teachings. Science and computer curriculum needed few amendments mentioned by the faculty. Though, the majority of the teacher educators had good working relations with the administration, but, at the same time strong coordination is still required between the faculty and the administration to overcome the challenges in order to run the program smoothly. Furthermore, no significance difference was found in the opinions of the teacher educators of both the institutes.

7. Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the refresher courses may be provided to the faculty to refresh their teaching skills.
2. Other requirements, such as human resource, physical facilities and material resources may be provided to the faculty so that they can teach effectively.
3. ICT awareness maybe provided to all the faculty members to utilize the same in their respective classes.
4. Particular training for the use of smart boards may be provided to all the faculty members to get benefit of it.
5. Reference books and other relevant material may be provided in the libraries so that the teachers as well as students can get benefit of it.
6. Administration need to pay heed to the issues of the faculty pertaining to the teaching learning and strive to create harmony to run the program smoothly.
7. Few amendments in developed curriculum of science and computer courses may be made with consultation of the subject concerned teachers.

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Citation of this Article:

Gopang, A.S., Parveen, S., & Kamran, M. (2020) Investigating the Challenges Faced By The Teacher Educators After Implementation Of Pre-Service B.Ed (Hons.) Elementary Four-Year Program in Sindh. *International Journal of Innovation in Teaching and Learning (IJITL), 6(2)*, 146-159.