



School Teachers' Promotion Policy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: Observations of School Heads, Union Leaders and School Teachers

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Abstract- Recruitment and promotions of quality teachers is a key factor in improving academic outcomes of schools. School teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan are promoted to higher grades on the basis of their experience in years beside the level of their academic and professional qualifications. The current qualitative study aimed at an evaluation of the current promotion criteria included in the 2012 provincial government education policy for the in-service school teachers. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with school heads and leaders of the school teachers' unions and through focus group discussions with school teachers. Data so obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that the criteria in the current school teachers' promotion policy is not adequate and so the process is in need of a more comprehensive criteria. Such criteria shall not only take into account seniority in school teaching, academic and professional qualifications but a well-structured and competitive-promotion-mechanism. In this way quality teachers may be promoted to higher teaching cadres that may have a positive impact on the quality of education in public sector schools. The study has important implications for policy makers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in devising competitive-promotion mechanism that is likely to improve the professional competence of teachers and school leaders.

Key Words: Teachers' promotion policy, in-service school teachers, subject command, quality of teaching, competitive-promotion-mechanism

I. INTRODUCTION

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government promoted a large number of school teachers under the 2012 school teachers' promotion policy. Under this policy 'quota system' was introduced for different teaching cadres for promotion on the basis of teaching experience in number of years, and along with academic and professional qualification (Elementary & Secondary Education Department, 2016). According to an official estimate about one hundred and fifty thousand school teachers from different cadres have been promoted under the 2012 Education Policy till 2019 and this policy has still been in effect for in-service school teachers' promotion. Before 2012 the school teachers' promotion policy, there was the 2003 school teachers' promotion policy in place, under which promotions were based on the open competition through Public Service Commission of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and there was no 'quota system' for promotion.

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been spending huge amount of money on the improvement of quality of school education, a number of studies have been carried out in higher education to propose reforms in the existing in-service teachers' promotion mechanism (Rasheed, Aslam, Yousaf, & Noor, 2011; Tanoli, Khan, & Akbar, 2015). This current study was aimed to evaluate the present promotion criteria mentioned in the 2012 provincial government education policy for the in-service school teachers from the perspectives of school heads, school teachers and leaders of school teachers' unions with the framework of its implications for the quality of teaching.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jaffer (2010) argued that the role of teacher and the quality of teaching has direct bearing upon the social, physical and intellectual development of the students. Likewise, in earlier studies, Hanushek (1992), and Goyal and Pandey (2013) found that if the socio-economic influences of learners are held constant learners with quality teachers gain better academic level as compare to low-quality teachers. School

heads are important stakeholders in quality education in schools (Jaffer, 2010, Weinstein, Raczynski, & Pena, 2018). Weinstein, Raczynski, and Pena (2018) also concluded that the teachers who lack subject command and related professional competencies are the main concern of school heads. Similarly, Harris and Sass (2009) found that school heads give more weightage to teachers' subject command and teaching skills as requisite characteristics for effective teaching (Cited in Master, 2014).

According to Rizvi (2008) important factors in school improvement include school heads' leadership styles and teachers' cooperation. On the contrary, teachers' limited subject command and lack of professional training have been associated with lower quality of education and poor students' academic outcomes (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Mukeredzi, 2016). Overall, these results indicate that successful and effective schools are associated with the collaboration of school heads and teachers to provide quality education (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004; Silva, Amante, & Morgado, 2017).

For the quality education, there is a need for the placement of rationalized school teachers' promotion criteria. In a study conducted by Wong and Wong (2005) in the secondary school system in Hong Kong, concluded that in order to have teachers' commitment to the profession of teaching, quality education and their schools, there has to be a well-structured and transparent human resource policy especially in the promotional procedure. In order to evaluate the school teachers' performance appraisal system in Botswana, Monyatsi, Steyn and Kamper (2006) concluded that in molding the attitude of school teachers' towards their professional role, a well-structured appraisal mechanism has to be placed so as to bring positive effects upon the quality of education. Likewise, Muller, Alliata and Benninghoff (2009) studied the role of motivation in attracting and retaining school teachers in the profession argued that along various determinants the role of reward for the teachers and quality education is important and promotion in one of that determinants.

In the view of the above review of the relevant literature, it is explicit that quality education and human resource are closely associated with the placement of well-structured management and promotion mechanism for teaching force. Despite the importance of promotional mechanism for the teachers at school level, the issue of school teachers' promotion along the criteria under which these promotions are granted has not been sufficiently researched in the Pakistani context. It is, therefore, important to identify the newly promoted in-service school teachers' level of subject command and their professional competencies from the perspectives of school heads, colleague-teachers and leaders of school teachers' unions so as to improve the selection and promotion of quality teachers through evidence based study in future.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative research design for exploring respondents' perceptions regarding the topic in detail. Data was collected through individual interviews and focus groups. Individual interviews were carried out with five school heads and five leaders of school teachers' unions and three focus group discussions were conducted with school teachers.

The selection of the respondents for interviews and focus groups was done using purposive sampling technique (Wengraf, 2001). In the selection of school heads care was taken to choose those school heads who had considerable experience in leading their schools and a reputation for understanding of school reforms and policy implications. For selection of respondents for focus groups attention was paid to select teachers who were selected through competitive-induction-mechanism; in this case selected by KP-Public Service Commission (KP-PSC), a constitutionally mandated public body that recommends personnel to be appointed in public sector departments after tests and interviews; and tests conducted by the National Testing Service (NTS) followed by interviews in the education department.

Triangulation of data sources is an important step in the process of authentication of the research process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007, p. 143) triangulation helps in developing a 'holistic view of educational outcomes is sought' or a multifaceted fact or event needs clarification. Keeping ethical considerations in mind, informed consent was taken from the respondents especially in regard to hiding their real identity; this attempt made each respondent feel as comfortable as possible to express his views freely (Renold, Holland, Ross, & Hillman, 2008) and agreed to audio recording of the interviews. In order to hide the identity of the respondents, pseudonyms were used SH for school head, FG for focus group and UL for union leader.

Data was analyzed using Ryan and Bernard (2003) techniques including: i) repetition and ii) similarities and differences. In the repetition technique themes were easily identified on the basis of constant recurring of topics and ideas. Likewise, in the similarities and differences technique, themes were identified by constantly comparing similarities and differences across the data from school heads, focus groups and leaders of school teachers' unions. These two techniques added rigors to the analysis process.

IV. FINDINGS

The following came out as the over-arching themes during data analysis.

Theme 1 – Limited subject command of the newly promoted in-service teachers

Newly promoted in-service Most respondents argued that most of the newly promoted in-service teachers (especially whose teaching cadre has been changed) under the 2012 education policy did not have the required level of subject command.

A one of the school heads said:

In my experience, in rare cases newly promoted in-service teachers have command on the subject(s) that are taught at a particular level, but most of them are not competent enough to teach in the promoted cadres. (SH-01)

Similarly when an experienced school head was asked about the level of subject command of the newly promoted in-service teachers he told:

In the past few years what I have experienced with the newly in-service promoted teachers is that hardly 5% of them can teach to higher classes and the rest of 95% are not in a position to teach. I have under-reported a few teachers of my school to the education office for their lack of teaching capacity.

He sadly added: *this is the tragedy-how this policy created havoc in the school education system. (SH-03)*

One of the school heads shared his experience about his personal experience with the newly promoted in-service teachers whose teaching cadres had been changed. He stated:

As a school head I got three in-service promoted teachers who had master degrees and about 15 to 20 years teaching experience at Primary level. But when they got promoted to high school, they were unable to teach even simple and easiest subjects. That was really a strange situation for me. I do not understand the logic of such kind of promotion. I often tell the newly promoted teachers to arrange for themselves tuition classes in summer vacations to get minimum level of command on their respective subjects so they could easily teach them, but they do not pay any heed to it. (SH-05)

Commenting on this situation that has arisen from the implementation of the current teachers' promotion policy, a school head replied:

In my experience the newly promoted in-service teachers' socialization in their new cadre is difficult one or it might take longer time to socialize. This situation has brought negative impacts on the quality of education at school level. (SH-07)

When the issue of newly promoted in-service teachers' subject command was put before FG-01, most respondents in the focus group agreed that these teachers did not have subject command. As one respondent argued: *'my colleagues who has been promoted from lower cadre to upper cadre do not know even simple definitions of the terms of his subject.'* Another teacher shared his views: *the newly promoted teachers do not have that level of subjects command as needed to teach higher classes, this has badly affected the quality of teaching in schools.*

One union leaders for instance said:

Though teachers have qualification such as masters in different subjects, but their level of understanding and teaching is below the requisite standard. The current policy leads to the recruitment of incompetent teachers. (UL-01)

Another union leaders said:

I have personally observed that the teachers who have been promoted from lower cadres to higher cadres, have poor subject command which has been negatively affecting the quality of teaching. (UL-03)

Theme 2 – Negative Impacts on the Quality of Teaching at School Level

Most respondents argued that the low level of subject command of newly promoted in-service teachers' has negatively affected the quality of teaching at school level. As a school head argued:

The present promotion system is leading us to low level of quality teaching in the public sector schools. This is really a sad situation. (SH-04)

Another experienced school heads said:

I was an instructor in Regional Institute of Teachers' Education (RITE) in 2014, I told the then education minister before a gathering of teachers and instructors that the current in-service teachers' promotion policy would be leading us to the destruction of quality education in public sector schooling. Now we have been experiencing that situation in our public sector schools. (SH-03)

Likewise another experienced school head replied:

At a time when this policy was likely to be approved and implemented, I told different leaders of school teachers' unions that this policy would be detrimental to the already devastated public schooling. Now we have been experiencing that harmful side effects of this policy on the quality of education. (SH-08)

This concern was also shown by a school head when the teaching competency came in the discussion. He responded:

What I have been experiencing and observing in my school is that constant complaints are coming from students and teachers that the newly promoted teachers whose cadres have been changed are facing problems to teach in their new cadres. This is a strange situation for me, how a person having masters is unable to teach at school level. (SH-02)

As one of the school heads stated:

I think the only and major beneficiary of current school teachers' promotion policy is the teacher, who is getting allowances and benefits at the expense of quality education for the poor segment of the country. It seems rather nobody have a slight concern for the quality teacher and teaching. He also added: this policy has directly harmed the students in terms of imparting quality education. (SH-05)

The issue of quality of teaching also emerged among the focus groups discussion. The respondents shared their experiences that the current in-service teachers' promotion policy was going to lead us to harmful effect on the quality teaching and which ultimately effects students' level of understanding and academic achievement. A respondent in a focus group held a view: *the current promotion policy has corrupted different teaching cadres and now the result is low level of quality education and less satisfaction of school heads and students.* When other respondents in the same focus group were asked to comment on this statement, all agreed to this statement. As a responded expressed his view: *quality of education is closely associated with the quality of teacher, we under the current promotion policy are not getting quality teachers, in majority cases.*

The same theme appeared in the third focus group discussion also. All the participants in this focus group agreed that the current teachers' promotion policy has been harming the quality of education at grass root level that is the schooling of our younger generation.

In the same way, one of the most active and dedicated school teachers' union leaders claimed:

This policy has destroyed the quality of education and will have severe negative impacts in the future. For the sake of promotions, quality of education has been compromised. (UL-02)

This claim was also supported by the statement of another union leader:

One of the major defects in the present promotion policy is the promotion of low-quality teachers. (UL-05)

Quality teaching in terms of students' academic achievement is the most central concern of the parents and often public sectors schools are performing low in this regard. One of the reasons of this situation that emerged from this study is the lack of human resource planning and futurist thinking.

Theme 3 – Need for a New Promotion Mechanism: Seniority versus Open Competitive Mechanism

A number of suggestions were put forward by respondents regarding the need for a better and more merit-based promotion mechanism.

According to one of the school heads in this study:

We have to review this policy and amend it in accord with the ground realities in the best interest of the quality education. The education policy should be made and implemented with farsightedness and the focus must be on students and especially the poor ones.

(SH-0)

There was uniformity of responses regarding a mechanism for the promotion of school teachers. As a school head argued:

Seniority has its own value in a professional field which cannot be negated, but promotion wholly and solely on seniority basis is not the right criteria. A teacher should be promoted to next cadre on the basis of seniority plus a subject and professional test. This is how, we will have more competent teachers. (SH-09)

As another experienced school head stated:

Every teaching cadre has its own requirements and competencies. Only on the basis of seniority and academic qualifications promotion is not good (in our present scenario). I think cadre to cadre promotion should be competition-based and there should be written test and interview for selecting candidates for promotions. (SH-01)

Highlighting the current seniority and academic and professional qualification based promotion mechanism one of the school heads who led a big school in the district of Peshawar suggested:

There has to be change in the present in-service school teachers' promotion policy. There has to be competitive mechanism. Currently we just check the file of a candidate not the person himself or herself. (SH-05)

Similar views were also expressed by the focus groups respondents in regard to current school teachers' promotion policy. Respondents in all focus groups agreed that the promotion, especially from one cadre of teaching to another one has to be on the basis of competitive mechanism. As one of the focus group respondents said: *I am not in favor of change of teaching cadre simply on the basis of seniority and masters, but for change of teaching cadre there has to be competitive mechanism, that may be subject and professional tests. (FG-03).*

Likewise, a respondent in focus group (FG-02) argued:

Promotion is to be given on the basis of seniority, but that promotion is to be in the own cadre of teaching. If you want to change the cadre of candidate's teaching cadre so there has to be professional and academic test, after proper evaluation of the promotees the promotion is to be given to them.

The teacher leaders were also in favor of reforms in the current teachers' promotion policy. In this regard an influential union leader whose union was instrumental in the approval and implementation of the current school teachers' promotion policy, when asked about the reforms in the current policy he expressed:

Yes. There should be reform and amendments in the current policy. Since there has been constant complains related to the promoted teachers' difficulties in socialization in their new teaching role and especially lack of subject command. The best solution is time scale policy. In time

scale policy a teacher will be promoted in the same cadre after a certain time period to the next grade. (UL-04)

In regard to the cadre change, UL-04 added:

I have been constantly telling the education ministers and higher officials that change of teaching cadre must be on the basis of open competitive mechanism if time scale policy is implemented. Time scale has already been approved by the provincial cabinet of KP, but it is not implemented.

Over all, the most striking observations that emerged from the responses of the school heads, leaders of school teachers' unions and school teachers were that the current promotion policy was promoting the teachers who did not have the teaching competencies in the higher cadres at school level. Most of the respondents favored reform in the current promotion policy and the devising of a policy based not only on seniority, academic and professional qualifications but on the basis of open competitive mechanism where subject command and professional competencies are tested. It also came out that for the implementation of time scale policy where teachers will be promoted in their own cadre and if they want to change their teaching cadre they have to pass through a system based on open competition.

V. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was an evaluation of the current promotion criteria mentioned in the 2012 provincial government education policy for the in-service school teachers. This study found that the current promotion criteria of in-service school teachers needs revision. The study also indicated that there is need for a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional promotion policy. Although respondents highlighted the value of seniority in the promotion of the in-service school teachers they also emphasized that seniority should not be the only criteria.

According to UNESCO (2008) quality in education is the heart of any educational system. In this regard the role of a quality teacher is significant to impart quality education (Gibbs, 1995; Asiago & Gathii, 2014). Research suggests that the quality of the teacher is one of the most significant school-based factors in the academic quality of the students (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Helfeldt, Caprao, Caprao, Foster, & Carter, 2009). However, the absence of in-service school teachers' competitive-promotion-mechanism often leads to the dissatisfaction of the school heads, teachers and the leaders of school teachers' unions about the quality of teaching in schools. This study are in line with the findings of Wadesango (2013) who argued that with the promotion of low quality teachers, schools may not provide quality education.

This study also indicated support for a more comprehensive and competitive-promotion-mechanism against the present policy where only seniority and academic and professional qualifications are taken into consideration. Since the academic outcomes of public sector schools are not satisfactory, there is need for competitive-promotion-mechanism. As reported in a study of Truss (2008) attention may be paid to reform the human resource in public administration in order to select and promote quality personnel.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The current study has a number of important implications for policy makers regarding the in-service promotion mechanism of school teachers in Pakistan. One implication is that the policy of in-service school teachers' promotion needs revision. Promotion decisions may not to be made on the basis of only seniority and academic and professional qualifications. Instead, there may be a combination of these qualifications with a well-structured and mandatory competitive induction and promotion mechanism for new and in-service school teachers. Such competition may include an evaluation of the teachers' subject command and other professional competencies on more authentic, objective basis. This measure may result in the induction, retention and promotion of quality teachers which will consequently have a positive impact on the quality of education at school level. Further this study implies that in-service senior school teachers who fail to quality in the proposed competitive-promotion-mechanism may be promoted in their own teaching cadres through the implementation of time scale promotion policy. In this proposed time scale policy a school teacher will be promoted in the existing teaching cadre, after a certain period of time, to the next grade. The study, therefore, has important implications for policy

makers, education officials, school heads, and leaders of school teachers' unions who may make more informed changes to the current policy of teachers' promotion towards a more just and efficient end.

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