



Examination of the Factors that Deteriorate the Quality of Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the Primary Level: A Qualitative Study Approach

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Abstract- This study aims to point out the factors that deteriorate quality of education in public and private primary schools in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. A qualitative research design was adopted and a self-developed, validated, and reliable semi-structured interview tool was administered. Interviews were conducted with 12 (6 public and 6 private) head-teachers of primary schools. The data were analyzed by thematic analysis. This study indicates that primary schools' head-teachers are facing three main deteriorating factors that badly affect the quality of education at the primary school level: the sudden change in curriculum, teachers' low qualification, and over-crowded classrooms.

Key Words: Deteriorating Factors, Quality of Education, Primary Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Overall development in the person brings by education, e.g., an educated person behaves well in all walks of life. If any country has a sound education system, it has a proper and healthy sociopolitical system. Further, only that country can play a successful leadership in world if a country has an excellent educational system (Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Khan & Khan, 2014). The excelled and educated nations become independent in their politics and economies and can fully enjoy their liberty. But when it comes to the Pakistani nation, it cannot afford to play an essential role because of the deteriorating factors that the Pakistani educational system has exposed to.

Because of this, Pakistani society, especially the education system, has become frustrated. Ahmad et al. (2014) further concluded that the Pakistani educational system has no direction due to the deteriorating factors, and it will have no value if the deteriorating factors were not removed.

Since education has a significant role in performing the nation's progress. Education is a fundamental human right of each individual. Technical and vocational education is the backbone of the economy of any country. After all, technical and vocational education provides skillful and trained persons to the country that hold the country among the world's top nations (Shami & Hussain, 2005). This type of education i.e., technical and vocational education gives proper employment to people. Suppose you want to meet the current conditions of today's market; in that case, you will need qualified graduates that are only possible by delivering quality education. The country's quality teachers will provide these types of graduates.

Further, the curriculum has also a strong correlation with the global economy because if the curriculum is creative, then it will give you creative teachers and students, which results in the creative economy, so the teachers' training institutes must ensure that their curriculum is creative so to give creative teachers. It is also mentioned by Kamran, Shah and Rao (2017) that creativity is essential to place it at the secondary level of education. The curriculum must be very skilled because you can only compete with today's world if you have skillful students and teachers. For this reason, you have to prepare the teachers intrinsically and extrinsically because most of the teachers select the teaching profession due to extrinsic and intrinsic bases (Kamran & Shahbaz, 2019).

Here the question arises of what the quality of education means. Here the quality of education refers to

that type of educational institution where today's global needs, e.g., the physical, social, mental and financial needs, could be fulfilled completely. Also, the students' required needs in their schools and home environment must be achieved fully. But if in contrary, the system is not fulfilling the expected needs like the delivery of quality knowledge, the usage of best teaching techniques, the teachers' performance, the financial needs of the society, managing the school rules, and the output of the students' learning then this system can deteriorate the educational quality. In today's world, various people face various issues; some have mental issues while the others have social issues, and some come with ethical and ethnic issues for which the researchers suggest peace education which promotes knowledge, skills and specific conceptions to minimize such kind of issues (Amin, Kamran & Altaf, 2020). Hence, this study focuses on the factors that deteriorate educational quality in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan at the primary school level in private and public schools.

Objective of the Study

1. To examine those factors that lead the quality of education to the deterioration at the primary school level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Research Question

1. What factors lead the quality of education to deteriorate at the primary school level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

II. RELATED LITERATURE

Shah, Haider and Taj (2019) investigated the causes of dropout rates at Pakistan's primary level education. The dropout rate is also an indicator of the deterioration of education quality in Pakistan. If the students' dropout increases, it means the educational system is not achieving its manifesto. Shah et al. (2019) took the views of the teachers, students, educational managers, and community members through which they concluded that low economy of the country and low income per house leads to the dropout of students from the school, which in turn can be said that it deteriorates the quality of education in Pakistan because dropout has a remarkable lead to the deterioration of the quality of education in Pakistan. Due to parents' low income, the children want to earn their livelihood. They cannot attend the classes regularly and failed to do the final examination or cannot appear in the final examination, so in this way, they dropped out of the class.

Javed, Ahmad and Iqbal (2016) analyzed the factors that deteriorate Pakistan's education system at the secondary level in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. They revealed that although well-trained and dedicated teachers are available to teach the students, still the education system at the secondary level is deteriorated and suffered to the top level. Due to overcrowded classes, the teachers cannot pay individual attention to the students in the classes, due to which the quality of education becomes deteriorated. So, it means that overcrowded classrooms and many students in one class are great trouble, leading to the deterioration of the quality of education at the secondary level in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This indicates that this can also be generalized to the other provinces of Pakistan at primary and tertiary levels in addition to secondary levels.

Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Ali, and Badshah (2013) found in the reviewed study that education in Pakistan is deteriorated because of the low budget for education. Teachers also don't show very strict motivation when it comes to teaching. Favoritism and nepotism are also found in the Pakistani system. The educational system in Pakistan has deteriorated because underqualified teachers are appointed that reflect students' poor performances and dissatisfaction in government schools. In addition to these deteriorating factors, one main factor is the political interference due to which teachers are not recruited on merit but recruited on favoritism and nepotism.

Deteriorating factor such as low qualification of teachers has a harmful impact on the quality of teaching. Since the teachers are under-qualified, they cannot deliver quality knowledge during their lectures, resulting in students' poor results and parents' dissatisfaction. Ahmad et al. (2013) further added that shortage of teaching staff in the schools is the special deteriorating factor due to which the classes are overcrowded, and the teachers are also overloaded with their classes; thus, they are unable to deliver quality education which leads to the deterioration of the education system in Pakistan.

Saeed, Ahmad, Salam, Badshah, Ali, and Haq (2013) did the broad view of past literature that exposes the factors leading to the deterioration of education quality in Pakistan. One of the most deteriorating factors is teacher's low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation towards the teaching profession due to favoritism,

nepotism, and political corruption involved in the recruitment, placement, and transfer of teachers. The altruistic and intrinsic reasons are significant for the teachers to keep because due to these reasons the students chose the teaching profession as a career for the whole life (Kamran & Shahbaz, 2019; Noor, Akram & Kamran, 2021).

The teachers are placed in remote areas where the teachers suffered a lot due to transportation and accommodation problems. This leads to the deterioration of the educational system in the country. Saeed et al. (2013) further revealed in their review study that in addition to the above-deteriorating factors, the shortage of teaching staff and overcrowded classrooms are also the most significant factors that deteriorate the quality of education in the country due to which the teaching-learning process cannot take place properly. It means that it is very despicable if we did not remove these deteriorating factors from our educational system. The political interference continued in the Pakistani educational system is shown by other studies (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2013) as well.

Abaalkhail and Irani (2012) discussed various factors that lead to the excellent quality of education. They listed the multiple factors due to which quality of education can be obtained, e.g., the professionally trained teachers and updated curriculum. These two are such factors that improve the quality of education in schools. Suppose the teachers are professionally well trained and equipped with the most updated knowledge. In that case, they can deliver a quality lecture in their classes, which will be an excellent mission for educational quality. A similar case is for the updated curricula in the education sector. If the curriculum is updated to the national standards and objectives, then that curriculum will be the pathway for quality education in the country.

Parveen, Iqbal and Shah (2012) attempted to formulate the strategy to progress the girls' school's status in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the secondary level. They examined some factors that become the barriers to school improvement. The deteriorating factors that are given by Parveen et al. (2012) are the pressures put by people on principle, political interference, and lack of infrastructure facilities. These are the factors that lead to the deterioration of the quality of education. Besides, some other factors, e.g., the commitment and attitudes of teachers that they show towards the teaching profession (Kamran, Abasimi & Congman, 2015), lack of relationship that school establishes with the community and absence of students' interest in education destroy the education system in any country.

Ghazi, Ali, Khan, Hussain and Fatima (2010) indicated several factors that deteriorate Pakistan's educational system. These factors are low literacy and delivering low quality of education. Ghazi et al. (2010) further stated that the high dropout rates and low enrollment of the children at the primary level of education in Pakistan are the essential factors that deteriorate the country's educational system. In the education sector, the high political interference and low budget in education show high hurdles for education. Poor Curricula and underqualified teachers also deteriorate the quality of education in Pakistan.

Chohan (2010) worked on the crucially necessary factors for the quality of education because the educational organization has to take these factors seriously if that very educational organization is devoted to delivering quality education. Various factors were listed, including its vision and mission, promoting an influential school culture, highly qualified management staff. Some other factors were also mentioned, e.g., establishing a quality control unit, quality measures of performance, and usage of processed-based approach.

Lodhi and Faizi (2009) described various factors at the secondary level in Pakistan, such as the outdated teaching methods teachers use in their classes, rigid curricula, and malpractice administration of top management in schools. Besides, Lodhi and Faizi (2009) also mentioned the other essential factors: poor evaluation and inspection. Poor infrastructure in terms of health, high political interference, rigid curricula, lack of scholarships to students and co-curricular activities also paved the way for the deterioration of the educational system in Pakistan.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was used for this study because qualitative research design has gained wider acceptance from various researchers (Chan, 2015, Fleith, 2000; Kamran & Shahbaz, 2019) by using interviews and observation checklists when teachers' beliefs and perceptions have to examine regarding any particular phenomenon. Further, qualitative research design provides insights into the problem. Also, a shift has been observed in terms of research methodology from extensive quantitative studies towards the qualitative (ethnographic) designs (Craft, 2003), therefore; the current researchers preferred to choose the qualitative research design as this design probes deeply into the problem. The qualitative research design is also becoming more and more famous for studying the views, perceptions and

conceptions (Cho, Chung, Choi, Suh, & Seo, 2011) regarding any phenomenon; thus, the current researchers followed the past researchers. When it comes to teachers' beliefs and attitudes about any particular phenomenon then qualitative research design was also used by various other researchers (e.g., Fleith, 2000; Akram, Kamran & Ahmad, 2020; Kamran et al., 2017; Kamran & Shahbaz, 2019), so, it means that qualitative research design seems quite suitable for the current study in which the deteriorating factors have been examined through interviews. Besides, since the qualitative design has greater flexibility (Punch, 1998), therefore, it has an advantage in using because it goes deep down into a person's life to explain their inner self about the problem under investigation and to find out their live experiences and their meanings (Punch, 1998).

Population and Sample

The population of the study was consisted of all the public and private school teachers at the primary school level in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Still, since the whole population was not possible, the current researchers selected the 12 head-teachers through the convenience sampling method. Among 12 head-teachers, 6 head-teachers were from public schools while the other 6 were from the private schools comprising equal gender-wise selection, i.e., from public schools 3 male head-teachers and 3 female head-teachers and same criteria was for the private schools regarding gender-wise selection. The participants' demographic characteristics are shown in table 1 below.

Table1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

S. N	Participants	Gender	School Type	Academic Qualification	Professional Qualification	Teaching Experience in Years
1	Respondent1	female	Public School	M.A. Urdu	B.Ed.	17
2	Respondent2	female		M.Sc. Biology	B.Ed.	01
3	Respondent3	female		MA Islamiyat	M.Ed.	19
4	Respondent4	male		MA Islamiyat	B.Ed.	21
5	Respondent5	male		M.A. Urdu	B.Ed.	13
6	Respondent6	male		MA Islamiyat	B.Ed.	16
7	Respondent7	female	Private School	MBA	M.Ed.	11
8	Respondent8	female		MA English	M.Ed.	17
9	Respondent9	female		MSc Biology	M.Ed.	19
10	Respondent10	male		MSc Biology	M.Ed.	19
11	Respondent11	male		MSc Math	M.Ed.	12
12	Respondent12	male		MSc Math	M.Ed.	08

Data Collection

The current researchers used the interview as a tool for the data collection. The interview guide was designed as semi-structured. All the questions were conducted individually with each teacher face-to-face. Past researchers have already used these types of semi-structured interviews (e.g., Fleith, 2000) where the teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs have been identified regarding various phenomena like a classroom environment. Some researchers also use focus group interviews, but in this study, no focus group interviews were conducted because the need was not felt for it. Further, the individual interviews were satisfactorily conducted and thus, a total of 12 head-teachers were interviewed individually.

Data Analysis

The current researcher in this study recorded all the interviews on her cell phone, and later they transcribed word-by-word for the analysis. After this, for validity purposes, all the recorded interviews were listened to more than twice, and their transcriptions were also checked to remove the mistakes. During checking and rechecking of this process, some of the interviews were revised, and mistakes were removed to prepare the final draft. When the final draft was ready, it went through the analysis process with the reference of Miles and Huberman (1994). One of the great qualities of the Miles and Huberman (1994) process is that it is a manual procedure, i.e., the researchers can manually analyze the qualitative data. Many past researchers (e.g., Chan, 2015; Kamran & Shahbaz, 2019) have used this manual process. The current researchers also preferred this process, the advantage of which is that it is manual and no software is required for it. Since the process of Miles and Huberman (1994) has a specific analysis cycle that is composed of three steps, i.e., the step of reduction of data, the step of display of data and step of

conclusion drawing and verification. The current researchers followed all the steps mentioned above to analyze the data, i.e., the whole data were reduced and then displayed. After displaying, the conclusion was drawn from the data with the help of themes and codes. After this, it was verified by fellow researchers. After verification, it was tabulated in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Theme, Sub-themes, Codes and Sub-themes' Frequency

S. N	Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Sub-themes' Frequency
1	Deteriorating Factors about Quality Education	Sudden change in curriculum	DFQE-SCC	6
		Teachers' low qualification	DFQE-TLQ	2
		Overcrowded classrooms	DFQE-OC	2

Major theme was drawn at the first step when the data were reduced. At the data displaying stage, the sub-themes were made based on major themes. In last, the codes were made based on the major themes and sub-themes and were represented by unique letters, as shown in Table 2 above.

IV. RESULTS AND ITS DISCUSSION

1. Views of the participants regarding sudden change in curriculum

The table 3 below shows the interview statements that were uttered by the participants.

Table3. *Interview statements regarding sudden change in curriculum*

Title of Study	Interview statements regarding sudden change in curriculum	Respondents
Deteriorating Factors about Quality Education	The curriculum should be changed in slow and gradual way because the sudden change in curriculum brings deterioration in the quality of education.	Respondent No 2
	When recurrent changes in curriculum occurs swiftly and with speed then it declines the quality of education.	Respondent No 3
	If the changes in the curriculum occurs frequently then it also declines the quality of education which is the deterioration of educational quality.	Respondent No 4
	Out of many deteriorating factors one of the main reasons to deteriorate the quality of education is the curriculum change very often.	Respondent No 5
	The curriculum should be changed with the passage of time because it upgrades the educational system. For the new curriculum new well qualified and trained teachers should be recruited.	Respondent No 6
	Change of curriculum sometimes creates problems for the teachers so workshops should be conducted for the teachers to overcome these problems.	Respondent No 7
	When you change the curriculum then it becomes new which is difficult to teach which worries the teachers so they so they don't perform better because of their low qualification.	Respondent No 8

This finding is consistent with the results of Shah et al. (2019) because Shah et al. (2019) indicated that some factors could be responsible for the decline of education, e.g., teacher-related factors and child-related factors. In the study of Shah et al. (2019), the factors like teacher-related and child-related factors address the sudden change in curriculum. If curriculum changes occur so suddenly without informing

teachers and children, it can cause seriously bad results for their personality and education. Although the findings of Shah et al. (2019) address the dropout causes, they can still help the present study's findings. The present study's findings are consistent with Ghazi et al. (2010), where they also stressed the curriculum. They stated that low-quality curricula and textbooks are factors that surely deteriorate the quality of education in any country because curricula and textbooks are reflections of the whole education system. Lodhi and Faizi (2009) also found that an inflexible curriculum is a factor that can decline and deteriorate the quality of education. Abaalkhail and Irani (2012) also discussed that an updated curriculum plays a vital role in education quality. They gave various factors that lead to the quality of education, including the updated curriculum. The current study is also agreeing with the views of Abaalkhail and Irani (2012) in terms of updated curriculum. It can be visioned that if any nation's curriculum is up-to-date and according to the national standards, it will improve education quality. So, we should give due importance to the updated curriculum if we want the quality of education in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, as the respondents stated in their interviews, the curriculum changes occur suddenly without teachers' information. The sudden change in curriculum is the deteriorating factor for the quality of education in Pakistan at the primary level, as expressed by the respondents in their interviews in this study.

2. Views of the participants regarding teachers' low qualification

The table 4 below shows the interview statements that were uttered by the participants.

Table4. Interview statements regarding teachers' low qualification

Title of Study	Interview statements regarding teachers' low qualification	Respondents
Deteriorating Factors about Quality Education	The reason is low qualification of old teachers	Respondent No 3
	When you introduce new teaching methodologies then it creates a problem from which teachers are not familiar with it.	Respondent No 5

This finding is congruent with the results of Javed et al. (2016); they dig out the declining causes of quality education in which one of the main reasons was a shortage of well-trained and qualified teaching staff. The current study also found that you can't deliver good knowledge if you don't have a good and well-trained teaching staff. You can't produce an educated youth if teachers are under-qualified; therefore, a sound teaching staff is necessary for Pakistan's quality education system. The findings of the current study are also in agreement with the results of Shah et al. (2019), where they stated that teacher-related factors like the low and meager qualification of teachers are the factors that can surely deteriorate the quality of education.

Consistent with the current study findings, Ghazi et al. (2010) also stated that poor teaching staff and the teachers' irrelevant duties are deteriorating factors that decline the quality of education. Ahmad et al. (2013) openly declared that the under-qualified teachers and shortage of teaching staff are deteriorating factors. Saeed et al. (2013) also hold the same opinion in their review study about low and shortage of teaching staff. The findings of the current study strongly agree with the declaration of Saeed et al. (2013) and other past researchers, e.g., Abaalkhail and Irani (2012). The professionally well-trained teacher is the most crucial factor in the quality of education because quality education mostly depends on educational training and qualifications. If the teachers are professionally well trained, they play a crucial role in the quality of education; otherwise, education may deteriorate.

3. Views of the participants regarding over-crowded classrooms

The table 5 below shows the interview statements that were uttered by the participants.

Table5. Interview statements regarding over-crowded classrooms

Title of Study	Interview statements regarding over-crowded classrooms	Respondents
Deteriorating Factors	One is overcrowded and high enrolled classrooms	Respondent No 3

about Quality Education	High enrollment in the classes	Respondent No 5
	The reasons are overcrowded classes etc.	Respondent No 12

This finding of the current study agrees with Shah et al. (2019) because they showered light on the various factors that deteriorate education quality in any system. Shah et al. (2019) indicated that school-related factors suggest that overcrowded classrooms deteriorate educational quality. Further, Javed et al. (2016) also substantiated current study findings and revealed that overcrowded classrooms are the significant challenges teachers face when providing quality education. When the classes are overcrowded, the teachers can't give proper attention to each student. If students don't get the teacher's attention in the study, then that student can't get a quality education. These overcrowded classes are a big challenge for the whole education system in Pakistan. Ahmad et al. (2013) also showed that sometimes the teachers couldn't deliver quality education in their classes because they are overburdened in their studies or their classes may be overcrowded. Saeed et al. (2013) also believed the same regarding overcrowded classrooms and indicated that teachers are overburdened in their classes or face overcrowded classrooms; therefore, they cannot deliver quality education.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study found three main deteriorating factors that deteriorate the quality of education in Pakistan. The respondents' views were quite heavy and stable about the curriculum change, teachers' low qualification, and overcrowded classrooms. The respondents had not good viewpoint about the education sector in Pakistan at the primary school level. The main reason for this is that the teachers were not considered the stakeholders. The teachers were never taken into confidence when the policymakers decided about education in Pakistan at the primary level. This study fails to acknowledge the importance of teachers that Pakistani teachers hold in their societies. Drastic and sudden changes in the curriculum frequently occur, so teachers never properly use the curriculum to benefit from it. Low qualifications of teachers are another deteriorating factor that the education system in Pakistan has to face. Quality education can't be obtained because lack of teachers' qualification is the obstacle for it. Due to limited knowledge, these teachers at the primary level in Pakistan may not deliver quality education properly. In contrast, very overcrowded classrooms were noted from the interviews of the respondents, which is the pathway to the deterioration of educational quality at the primary level in Pakistan. Due to the above-mentioned factors, the standard of education becomes very low. Finally, it is concluded that these deteriorating factors have a crucial role in degrading the teaching-learning process at the primary level.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regarding the sudden curriculum change, Pakistan's government, especially the curriculum wing, should take all the factors when they want to change or update the existing curriculum. The curriculum wing of Pakistan should not make sudden changes. They should inform the teachers about curriculum change at the national and local levels.
2. Regarding the teacher's low qualification, the education department should only select the teachers on a merit basis. During recruitment of the teachers, the competent authority must screen the applicant teachers. If their qualification is fulfilled, then only those teachers should be selected for vacant positions; otherwise, not.
3. Regarding the teachers' overburdening, the head-teachers must see if they have more classes than what he/ she usually has to teach. If the teachers are overburdened with their classes, the head-teachers should recruit as many teachers as they need to run the teaching-learning process smoothly.
4. Regarding over-crowded classrooms, the head-teacher must see that there should be a proper teacher-student ratio in their classes. For the quality of education, the class size should be kept at a minimum.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future researchers

This study is limited to only primary level education. Future researchers should extend the analysis to secondary and higher education levels when they embark on the same research problem. Further, since this study is a small-level study, only 12 head-teachers were recruited for the task using a qualitative study design. Simultaneously, the future researchers are suggested that they should extensively conduct

research using vast research methods like quantitative research methods through questionnaires by collecting big data from teachers and head-teachers. Besides, the current study's results are limited. Therefore, the current research does not generalize the results to the whole population. However, the results give serious indication and guidance about education quality at the primary level in Pakistan.

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