



Exploratory Study about the Challenges and Opportunities of Teacher Unions in Punjab

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Abstract- Teacher unions are the platform for the voice of teaching community. Teacher unions are working around the world. In Pakistan there are many teacher unions working for the protection of rights of teachers. Present study is the part of my PhD dissertation on the role of teacher unions in addressing educational problems in Punjab. Purpose of the qualitative study was to understand and explore the challenges and opportunities of teacher unions in addressing educational problems. The study was conducted in Punjab, Pakistan. Theoretical framework of Murray and Wood was followed in this study which was consisted on four theories addressing structure and functions of unionization. These theories are Unitarism, Pluralism, Radical or Class Conflict and Trade Unions as Social Movements. Constructivist paradigms followed in this study. The study was qualitative in nature and Narrative Design was used. Present study was delimited to Punjab Teacher Union one of the largest union in Pakistan in last ten years. Participant for the study are the members of Punjab Teacher Union (PTU). Semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions was used to collect data from the participants. Narrative analysis approach was used for data analysis. The current study contributed to the existing literature in many ways by examining current challenges faced by of the teacher unions as polarization, communication gap, gap between objectives and practices and discontinuation of union elections. The study will be helpful for teacher unions to meet these challenges for an effective role. It was resulted from the study that teacher unions have many opportunities like pressure groups, collective bargaining and a definite platform for the teaching community. They can use these opportunities in development of education. The study will also provide an opportunity to policy makers and other stake holders of education system to have an insight to education problems which are faced by teachers and highlighted in this study.

Key Words: Teacher Unions, Punjab Teacher Union, Opportunities, Challenges, Educational Problems

I. INTRODUCTION

Unions, which were emerged in the initial phase of modern industries, are organizations aimed to correct the imbalance of power between employees and employers. Early on, unions gave importance to defense functions, offering tools to eliminate the vast effects of employers on the life of employees (Giddens, 2009). Teacher unions are engaged in professionalism and role of teacher unions are not limited to working and living conditions like traditional trade or labor unions. Teacher unions play their significant role in education protecting rights for teachers and school employees. Teacher unions have representation of the teachers for collective bargain with educational authorities (Bascia, 2005). Teacher unions are quite powerful in schools because of their ability to represent and organize teachers at the time of bargaining to meet their demands and to protect basic rights of teachers. Kallaway (2007) described that inputs of teacher unions are not always considered in the process of policy making. He argued that both teachers and teacher unions are not allowed to be involved in policy making and setting goals but they got blamed when things go wrong.

According to Grindle (2004) and Murillo (1999) teacher unions in Latin America participates in policy making. Unfortunately very few studies have focused that. Teacher unions have their renowned participation in different aspects of policy making. Some of the teacher unions in United States of America have a different perception about the policy making and reforms procedure in education sector. According to Moe (2003, 2005, 2011) some teacher unions in USA taking education reforms as threats to the benefits of teachers and they try to block this process through lobbying and campaigning. A study of (Anzia 2011; Ballou 2001; Hartney and Flavin 2009) revealed that teacher unions in USA have an impact on educational policies as they use their formidable capabilities of the union. Teachers' unions fight education reforms based on the accountability. Patillo (2012) described in a study that teacher union's strikes in South Africa have adverse impact on education sector in terms of school closures, disruption of exam schedules and teaching programs. Bascia, (2005) explored in her research that mostly news media and policy researchers have generally labeled teacher unions as lacking legitimate authority and out of

touch with what matters, making it difficult for them to establish credibility and work proactively within the education policy system. Geingob (2004) observes that teacher unions were involved in the struggle for independence, fighting against inequalities in education, and promoting for social equality. Participation of teacher union in the process of educational reforms depends on the organizational structure of the teacher unions and their professional capacities as well as expertise of their leaders and members to engage in complex education reform processes (Fataar, 2006; Bascia, 2005; Buhlungu, 1999). Draxler (2008) and Marope & Sack (2007) insist that expertise should exist in teacher unions in order to engage them effectively in educational reforms. Education planning is not in line with needs and implementation is often overlooked, so in this way the system will be more corrupt than thriving. Our universities have failed to produce editors, developers, staff, and decision makers. Instead of income being a misconception about material things, the people who support us produce nothing to help us. The students we meet seek qualifications rather than knowledge. The increase in the number of colleges and universities does not mean that we are moving at a higher rate but this is increasing, simple evidence that no Pakistani university can find a place among the top 1000 universities in the world. The socio-economic situation is directly related to the state of Education in the country. The developed world has been able to expand their education to meet the needs and requirements of the market. According to Shen and Wong (2006), apart from the recent gains, much remains to be done as the world continues to face many challenges that lead to the decline. We are under obligation to elevate democracy to the level of our South Asian neighbors, to fight our social and economic levels to a satisfactory level. Masila, V. (2014) emphasizes this view, and points out that the inclusion of teacher unions during the transformation of education is not always taken into account when considering policies. He points out those teachers and teachers' unions are not even given a chance to be heard when it comes to prioritizing and setting education goals, but they are blamed when things go wrong. In the 2009 session of the Joint International Labor

(UNESCO), the Expert Advisory Committee on Human Resource Recommendations found that the benefits of public consultation have not yet been greatly appreciated. The Committee noted that "there is a tendency to blame teacher unions for blocking changes in the education system, without full appreciation for the contributions teachers make to education, including their frequent practice in their professional work (UNESCO, 2009). The education system in Pakistan is actually in a bad state at the moment. There is no doubt in accepting the fact that education represents the backbone of international development. If we look at the history of nations, we can safely conclude that the most developed countries in the world can achieve the momentum of respect and power that takes education support. The allocation of education is insufficient, and even though it is allocated, the money is not used for its intended purpose as fraud is found in all education teams and due to the same delivery from public institutions which is largely below desirable and desirable standards. As Hrebenar and Thomas (2004) and Moe (2006, 2009) have demonstrated empirically, teacher unions are among the most politically active interests in state and local elections. Private education in Pakistan extends far beyond the poor and the emergence of this quality education does not serve the country as expected. In Pakistan many teacher unions are working to address issues in education. Punjab Teacher Union is one of the main bodies which are working for resolving educational problems and protection of teachers rights in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. Punjab Teachers Union (PTU) is an organized union having thousands of representative members across the Punjab. It is arguable that the role of teachers' associations in the Ivory Coast, as was the case in other African states during the fight for independence and democratization, expanded beyond the narrow self-interests of the teachers. Many researchers have described the role of teacher unions in the role of policy making. Some of the studies have evaluated about the influence of teacher unions and their bargaining procedures. Teacher unions have been very effective in many countries. In Pakistan there are many teacher unions. Some teacher unions are working before the independence. Punjab teacher union (PTU) is one of the leading teacher unions in Punjab province of Pakistan. In Pakistan no study has been conducted to explore the role of teacher unions in Pakistani context. Like many other countries teacher unions exist in Pakistan, but researchers have not investigated their role in education reforms, policy making, curriculum development and solving educational problems. This study is to bridge the gap about role of teacher unions in Pakistan as there is no research conducted on this so far. Studies have been conducted around the world but in Pakistani context it is needed to explore about teacher unions. This research paper about the challenges and opportunities is the part of my PhD thesis on the role of teacher unions in addressing educational problems in Punjab. This study will be a key to highlight the teacher unions in Punjab and Pakistan and it will be an opening for the researchers to investigate more about these phenomena in education sector.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Theoretical framework offers several benefits to research work. It provides a structure that shows how a researcher describes his or her subject (Grant & Osnaaloo, 2014). Ravitch & Carl (2016) agree that independent theoretical work assists researchers in identifying and harmonizing formal concepts in their studies as a guide. Marius Kudumo (2011) in his research on the involvement and influence of teacher unions in education reform used the Murray and Wood (1997) theoretical framework in which there are four theories that define the roles and responsibilities of trade unions. I will follow up with a list of ideas with explanations for the practical reasons for each idea, as described by Murray and Wood. I agree that the contents of the summaries are not mine, but those of Murray and Wood. These theories were the background of the studies about trade unions, but due to similarities of the structure and functions of trade unions with teacher unions these theories provided a solid background about teacher unions.

The theories are:

Unitarism

Unitarism theorists draw their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of trade unions from a functionalist culture. They base their definitions on the roles and responsibilities of trade unions on the basic assumptions of social cohesion. They suggested that employers and employees share common values and values, and that they be united as one team in the workplace. Given this unity and shared goals and values, the global view of unitarism argues for the possibility of unchallenged workplaces. Unitarism theorists suggest that there should be no need for unions in the workplace to represent the interests of workers. Disputes, if arising, are the result of a lack of communication and disagreement between employers and employees or the work of intermediaries. Unitarists say conflicts can be resolved without the involvement of strikes. My criticism of this view of the world asks whether the idea of social cohesion remains real or imagined, and whether it is true that society always works in harmony.

Pluralists

Pluralists view the role of trade unions as fulfilling tasks to balance conflicts of interest between employers and workers in the workplace. The idea of pluralism is supported by the idea that the relationship between employers and employees is marked by their conflicting opinions. Environmentalists say conflicts between employers and workers are commonplace, and are expected in labor relations. They have argued that what is needed is the skills and abilities to control conflicting relationships in order to reduce conflicts in the workplace. Environmentalists advocate the formation of trade unions and employers' organizations to operate as centers of conflict between employers and workers.

Purpose of Study

Teachers' unions and associations are the organized voice of the teaching profession in Pakistan. The socio-historical landscape they comprise, however, is far from unitary. The purpose of the qualitative study was to understand and explore the opportunities and challenges of teacher unions in addressing educational problems. The study was conducted in public sector schools of Pakistan. This study focused on to explore the opportunities which teacher unions have to play their role in education system and to investigate the challenges which they have to face while struggling for addressing educational problems to their struggle for reforms.

Research Questions

- i. What are support and opportunities teacher unions have for addressing educational problems?
- ii. What are the for challenges teacher unions?

Significance of the Study

Teachers' unions play a vital role in the teaching process, although not all countries have them. In some countries the union is legal and illegal in others. According to Kerchner (2004) the teachers' union was neglected in many ways by negligence in educational research. Interest is shown only in recent years. The interest is very much focused on their role in accessing education. The question of how much unions play a role in achieving quality through education policy negotiations in recent years has become increasingly apparent. This is important in the relationship between teacher union relations and education authorities (Kerchner 2004). In the Punjab, after the start of a contract for the hiring of 'Teachers' working in primary, elementary and secondary schools in 2003, contract-based teachers fought political and legal battles to achieve their goals (the most important under which was the aegis of the Punjab Educators Association, which resulted in a Supreme Court decision allowing them in 2007). No studies have been conducted in Pakistan on the role of the teachers' union in dealing with education problems and educational reform. There are 25-30 teacher unions in all provinces of Pakistan working to protect their members and bring about change in the education sector. After the 18th

amendment, education is the provincial theme. All teachers' unions operate in different provinces of Pakistan. The current study explored the opportunities and challenges of these unions in solving education problems and how they played their part with the Provincial Government to transform the education sector.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was qualitative in nature and a narrative design was used. Both qualitative studies and narrative research design require exploration, understanding, representation and explanation from the perspectives of the participants who experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). The opportunities and challenges teacher unions have in addressing educational problems was the focus of the key questions of the study, and this explains why researcher opted for a qualitative study and a narrative design characterized by exploration and the search for a deeper understanding. This study was about gaining a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of teacher unions in addressing educational problems and experiences of the people associated with unionization. So researcher can only gain such an understanding if a research design used which allowed interactions with the participants who were involved in the phenomena being investigated. In this case, the research design provides appropriate interaction, to gain deeper understanding, and offer explanations. According to Creswell (2005), narrative researchers collaborate with participants throughout the process of the research, and the inquirer actively involves the participants in the inquiry as it unfolds. As Creswell (2005) suggests, narrative researchers collaborates with the participants throughout the process of research. He explains that the collaboration may include explaining the purpose of the research, and deciding which types of field texts will yield helpful information. There are currently 25-30 teacher unions operating in Pakistan. The Punjab Teacher Union (PTU) is Pakistan's largest and oldest teachers' union with a membership of between 150000 and 200000 (Ammar Rashid MosharrafZaidi, 2015). Therefore, the current study was delimited to explore opportunities and challenges of the Punjab Teacher Union in addressing educational problems in the Punjab. Teachers working with the Punjab Teacher Union were the part of this study. They were identified on the basis of their role which they played a direct role in the Punjab Teacher Union (PTU) and worked in solidarity from a long time ago to solving educational problems as they have lived experience to share with researcher about the opportunities of teacher unions in Punjab. The names of the participants of the study were replaced with covering names of "U, V, W, X, Y & Z". Researcher conducted semi structured interviewed from the respondents to explore the opportunities and challenges of the teacherunions.

Analysis of Interviews

Narrative inquiry is a means by which we systematically gather, analyze, and represent people's stories as told by them, which challenges traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood. Shape of a story helps to organize information about how people have interpreted events, the values, beliefs and experiences that guide those interpretations and their hopes, intentions and plans for the future. Analysis (meaning making) occurs throughout the research process rather than being a separate activity carried out after data collection (Gehart, 2007). First of all researcher transcribed the interviews. After transcribing coding of the text was completed and as a result different themes were emerged. These themes reflects the true picture of the lived experiences of the members of the teacher unions about opportunities and challenges of the teacherunions.

Support and Opportunities

Union is a collective thinking of people. Each organization has its own union which works for the members of that organization. Teacher unions are working not only for the rights of teachers but they are also struggling for bring innovations in education. Researcher interviewed the representatives and leaders of the unions and following themes were emerged from the support and opportunities which they have for their members and for the betterment of educationsystem.

1- TeachersWelfare

Teacher unions are constituted for the welfare of teachers and this is one of the major objectives of teacher unions. A respondent "Y" described that in school education department teachers have to struggle for their rights, if they don't struggle they would not get thing which they want. "You can say along aside with other aspects of teachers unions are there to help and support their members". There are many issues which are faced by teacher during the different stages of their service even some of them they have to face after the retirement like their promotions, pay protections, retirement procedures and some others. These issues cannot be resolved without a solid platform from where they can raise their voice. A respondent "W" explained this situation as teacher unions are existed all over the world and they work not only for the rights of teachers but for the overall improvement of the system as well. They give great

importance to their teachers. That's why their teachers did not protest for their rights. They get all their rights without any demonstration. Respondent sharing his experience:

"Mentally and financially they should be free. They should not be worried about the incentives. They should be free from the thinking that what to eat and how to get clothes for children. When they will be free mentally and financially, they will teach your children with more commitment and dedication."

Another respondent "X" sharing experience that, more than 50 thousand cases of promotion are pending. School education department did not promote teachers since last seven years. If we bring it into their notice their only answer is why you did not talk on other issues. Recently E-transfer policy has been introduced by the department and they claimed transparency in transfer-postings of teachers but in spite of that there are hundreds of teachers who did not meet the merit criteria of STR (Student-Teacher Ratio) but they transferred with their approach described as:

"Unions are engaged in both roles as in unionism and professionalism. Role of teacher unions are not limited to traditional responsibilities of improving living and working conditions in schools but it has been expanded to participate in policy making as well. In Pakistan teachers unions are working on same pattern but they have focused more on teachers' welfare. If your teachers are secure and in good living conditions they can deliver better otherwise they will just spend their time to get salary."

Active teacher unions play a meaningful and key role to save the teachers community from the issues they faced during the service. Another respondent "Z" highlighted it as if our teachers get all their rights without any struggle and involvement of the unions than we can play more significant role to resolve other educational problems as curriculum reforms, policy making, and improvement of infrastructure in schools etc. But unfortunately we have been struggling for the basic rights of teachers as their transfer-postings, salary issues, promotion cases and regularization etc. If we compare our self with teacher unions working in other countries, they are working for the reforms and policy making because their teachers are getting everything without protesting.

2- Protection of the Rights of Teaching Community

Education is important in all round development of the individuals. In a broader perspective, teaching is a process which facilitates the learning to fulfill the educational requirements of the learners. A respondent "U" described that teachers are key factors and main stakeholders in the process of teaching and learning. A teacher always provides personal caring to the students through assessing their needs.

"Teachers are professionals and teacher unions are professional organizations. It is supposed to be the major purpose of teacher unions to protect the rights of the teachers like as freedom of expression, academics, privacy, religion and to protect them from any discrimination of race, sex and nationality".

In an interview a respondent "V" described that in Pakistan; perception about the role of teacher unions has diversity. Some people think that those who occupying the key posts in teachers unions and playing leading roles like presidents and secretaries have their own personal benefits. They just use us whenever they needed us to build a pressure on authorities. Describing further it was brought into consideration that:

"There are different groups in teacher unions which are working for the same purpose of the protection of rights of teachers. But in some groups union leaders prioritize their personal benefits over collective".

A respondent "Z" who was working as president of a teacher union shared his feelings as, I have asked many people that while I am working as president of the teacher union in return what I have got so far besides this I was sent to jail and I have to face inquiries against me. Mostly teachers used to say that union leaders are working for their own benefits but I could not understand what benefits I have received.

"We are working for the protection of rights of our teachers. They have to face many problems during the service. We are here to fight for their professional and constitutional rights".

A respondent "Y" shared his experience that teachers have to work against their job descriptions. Their prime job is to teach children and to create conducive learning environment in classroom. It is not the responsibility of teachers to ensure 90% attendance of the children. Similarly teachers were held responsible for PEC result of 5th and 8th grades. They were transferred to far and remote areas as punishment of producing poor result. We raised the voice against this injustice with teachers and due to which their transferred orders were cancelled. A respondent "W" explained this situation that most of the times this happens that government make policies and they did not consider the ground realities which put teachers into trouble. Then on the awareness of teacher unions and resulting of some pressure of strikes they reconsider policies. In recent past, school educators which were recruited through a proper recruitment process including test and interview. They were selected on meeting the merit. Later on government amended 2018 act and asked them to appear in Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) for regularization. Even this should have been for new recruitments. Educators did not know anything regarding this; we raised the voice and provided awareness through campaigns. A respondent "V" who

has been a member and divisional leader of teacher union remarked that: "Teacher unions are fighting on the common issues which creates disturbance for the teachers and as result of that they did not focus on their teaching". In recent past primary school teachers in Punjab has basic pay scale 09 which was not up to the status of teacher. We struggled for the up gradation of basic scales of PST teachers. After a long struggle we were successful and they have been given basic pay scale 14 in Punjab which is now comparatively better from the other provinces. As a result of this movement EST teachers were given scale 15 and two increments were given to SSTs. We always raise our voice against the injustice particularly with teaching community.

3- Pressure Groups

Teacher unions exist in all over the world. Talking about the influence of teacher unions a respondent "V" who is an active member and Divisional President of the teacher union since long time shared his feelings as:

"Teacher unions are basically pressure groups; if you did not build pressure you cannot be successful neither in your demands for the welfare of teachers nor for the reforms in the education system. You must have to put pressure on them (authorities)".

All teacher unions working in the province put pressure on the government and on the school education department to meet their demands. In this way they easily get whatever they want. If they fail to build pressure authorities did not take them seriously. A respondent "W" described about pressure building that in 2017-18 some employees were recruited in school education department through Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC). As per policy they should be regularized after three years of their service, but they did not regularize them in time. We have to protest for pressure building after that they have to do work because unions pressurized them. So basically teacher unions are there to put them under pressure for their rights. A respondent "Y" stated that:

"Whenever we have to raise our voice against any issue either that is personal, collective or departmental or we have to be on table for policy making, they (authorities) will only listening us if we have some pressure on them".

Sharing his experience he explained that government was working on the privatization of public schools. Schools were supposed to be work under an organization Punjab Education Foundation (PEF). We protested against it and they have now assured us to reconsider to this policy. Now we are working to launch another teacher union consisting of science teachers only. This teacher union will be different in its functions as compared to traditional teacher unions working presently. They will look at the academic issues in particular whereas mostly teacher unions work for the welfare of teachers and ignore the academic issues. This union will put pressure on the government for curriculum reforms and participation of teachers in policy making as well. One of the participants of the study "U" explained about the tactics to build the pressure. Sharing his experience explained that:

"It's a wrong perception that whenever you will protest, government will run after you for dialogue. Sometimes you protest but no body contact to you, but do not mean that your effort has been wasted".

When teacher unions have some demands and they have to protest for that, government agencies report that protest. If you have a good protest or your strength has been good your protest will be reported strongly. Your pressure depends how strongly you have been protested and they have reported your protest. Some time you have protested in good numbers but nobody invites you for talking on the issues even your protest has good reporting as well. Then it will create great influence when you give next call for protest. Your previous protest will increase your ratings. A participant of the study "X" who has been the part of a protest in Lahore shared his feelings, we protested on 5th August in Lahore. People working for agencies were there for reporting. Before the protest it was reported to the School Education Department (SED) that hardly two hundred to three hundred people will participate in protest. This was reported by the people who were against us (other groups of unions). When we gathered for protest we were 2500 to 3000. It was reported that people are in great numbers. He further explained that:

"When we called for next protest, they (authorities) take us on board for dialogues even we did not started protest. It was because we build a good pressure in previous protest".

It is not necessary that when teacher union protests they got success on same day. Sometime your previous protest helps you in future to meet your demands only because you have put a good pressure on them. A respondent "Z" described his experience when he was the part of the protest. He explained that, public schools were given to Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) and some public schools were given to Danish Authority on the name of center of excellence. We were against the privatization of public sector schools. We have to protest against it and they have to withdraw from handing over schools to Danish Authority. Similarly they did with case of PEF schools. It was due to pressure of teacher unions because teachers were not happy with this policy of government. Another respondent "Y" explained similar situation that, we protested against the new policies of school education

department. We asked them to eliminate fake reporting system from school education department. We protested in Lahore. We have to sit in there for eight days continuously. We were arrested and FIRs were registered against us even we were not demanding for the salaries or promotions of teachers we were asking them for eliminating the fake reporting system from school education. Fake reporting was that we have to send 99% attendance where as everyone knows it was not possible to produce 99% attendance of students. It was not good that 10 students were sitting in the class and attendance was marked of 40 students. School visitors including MEAs (Monitoring & Evaluation Assistants) also presents fake reports of their visit. Further all the indicators of PMIU (Project Management Implementation Unit) are based on fake reporting. We demanded that it was all fake reporting and just a paper work to show numbers, so it should be eliminated. Because on the base of this fake reporting school education department assess the performance of school heads and teachers and they got punished if they do not meet these indicators. It creates stress for teachers and they did not focus on teaching. Similarly it was an issue to get c-leave (casual leave). We raised the voice and build some pressure that c-leave should not be conditioned with the visit of MEAs. Now they have changed it on our demand and teachers can get c-leave anytime through online application.

4- Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is always been important for teacher unions. It's time to be on the board with educational authorities to resolve the issues for which they are fighting. A respondent of the study "V" who has been the part of collective bargaining with government shared his experiences:

"It all depends on the pressure we have created. More pressure on the authorities always makes it easy for us to put our demands on table".

Prior to the final call of protest teachers unions have to work hard. First of all we bring it into the notice of authorities that these issues should be resolved immediately. We write letters to ministers, secretaries, education officers and other stake holders and explain the issue and request them to take notice. After that we keep sending reminders to them that issues have not been resolved. If they don't give any response then we call for protest from the platform of the union. A respondent "U" explained it further that when union calls for protest our work starts immediately. We run an awareness campaign in all districts and at division level. We motivate our members that we have to fight for our rights. We conduct conventions, seminars and corner meetings in each district. When they got motivated and charged then we give final call for the protest. A respondent "W" added further about this, when union calls for protest agencies of the state start reporting from all the districts. Agencies report about the expected gathering of protestors. This builds up pressure on the authorities. If it came into notice of the authorities that protestors would in large numbers they called us for table talk. They dialogue us on the issues for which we conducted protest. In this way first of all we put our main demands and after that those which are less preferred. Through negotiating some of our demands are considered and immediate resolved. For some other they form a committee to keep us on board. Some time agencies report that expected protest may create any trouble for administration, therefore they ask the concerned authorities to start dialogue and they don't wait for any demonstration. "It all depends on the reports which agencies provide that how much pressure have been built on them". In recent past government was planning to run schools under the administration of local bodies system. Teachers have some serious reservations on this. In their perception local bodies system in Pakistan is not capable of running educational institutions. On this issue we are on board with the authorities to resolve this issue. Collective bargaining is a bilateral process. Both stakeholders try to resolve the issues on table. In shape of collective bargaining, teacher unions always have an option of their involvement in policy making and reforms process. A respondent "V" described his experience of negotiating with educational authorities and explained that we have very old and outdated curriculum of computer science for secondary classes. We asked them for curriculum reforms in that particular subject. It was first time when a teacher union forced them for curriculum reforms because prior to this teacher union just demand about the rights and issues faced by teachers. We were on protest in Lahore. Nominees from the Govt. of the Punjab and school education department contacted us. We placed our genuine issues regarding curriculum and they accepted that current curriculum is needed to be changed. A committee was decided to be established for this particular purpose. Nominees from the teacher union, Punjab Text Book Board, Subject Specialist and nominees from the government were included in committee. Committee presented report with recommendations that curriculum is outdated and needed to be changed. Committee also suggested curriculum changes which were endorsed by the subject specialists. It was revealed that some pressure is always useful to have a dialogue with authorities and teacher unions always have this advantage that they can put some pressure for collective bargaining.

Challenges

There are many challenges teacher unions facing around the country as they work to support teaching community and education system. These challenges some time create disturbance for the union and they

could not perform up to the marks. Major challenges revealed in this study are, “communication gap, polarization, gap between objectives and practices and election of the unions”. The important thing about the unions is that they are resilient organizations because despite of the magnitude of the challenges they do necessary for teachers and education system.

1- Communication Gap

Communication is always important for any organization. If the communication is ineffective or absent from the organization it creates communication gap. Communication gap is misinterpretation of the information or complete lack of communication in the teacher unions. Communication gap usually occur between union leaders and members. When a respondent of the study “U” was asked “Do you think that communication gap in teacher unions is a major challenge and a reason of failure to build a pressure?” he replied: yes it is one of the main challenges we are facing. Communication gap between union leaders and members existing and may eventually sabotage the purpose of teacher union. Sharing his experience a participant “V” explained that due to a gap in young and old generation a gap in unions have emerged. In 2002 a new recruitment of teachers was started and they were given the name of educators. They were more qualified as compared to old teachers because they were master degree holders. They also have professional qualification about teaching. Most of these newly recruited people belong to science groups. This generation and those who were already in service (old teachers) created a gap. Old teachers did not accept the new ones and even they didn’t involve them in the school environment. A respondent of study “Y” explained further about the gap and shared his feelings, he said: “new teachers are working with their own style and they have innovative thinking whereas old teachers have old approaches and their traditional styles of working, that’s why they did not accept new ones”. Now the teachers of new generation (recruited after 2002) are dominant as their number raised up to more than two hundred thousand. If unions are not successful today, its reason is the gap which have been created between new and old teachers. Another participant of the study “X” shared his experience and described that: 25 years ago when I was I joined teaching profession, it was trend that seniors welcome to the new comers. They involve them so that new peoples may learn and adjust quickly. Seniors always get them involved in meetings and other activities so that there should not be any space or gap between seniors and juniors. This is basically a gap of generation, but it is the responsibility of seniors to join hand with junior teachers. Communication gap between new and old teachers still exists. It is the job of teacher unions to develop a culture in which new comers have a chance of grooming and active participation in union activities. A respondent “V” who has been an active member of the teacher union and belongs to young generation explained that most of the union leaders are old teachers even some of the have been retired from the services. They don’t want the juniors or new comers to be involved in leadership roles of the union. In fact they have some fear and hesitation to promote young teachers. They have been afraid that if we promote them, they may get key post in the union. Another respondent “Z” described that one of my friend was trying to get approved documents of the union which is consisting on objective, hierarchy and election process of the teacher union but he could not get because nobody was willing to get copy of that document. Communication gap is so high that common members of the teacher union did not know about the objectives and responsibilities of the union. They think that it’s a pressure group which union leaders use for their own benefits.

2- Polarization in Teacher Unions

Grouping in any organization may lead to weaken that organization in no days. Teacher unions working in Punjab have been affected by polarization. Though there are many reasons behind it but the thing is that teacher unions at present are not much effective as they were in past. A respondent “Y” who is secretary of Punjab teacher union shared his experience about polarization in teacher unions and said: It is very common and difference of opinion is right of everyone. We all know in our politics there are many small groups which have their own pressure and political identity. Similar situation exists in teacher unions in Punjab. Some of them are very productive and useful whereas some groups just have their personal agendas behind this platform. There are ten groups of Punjab Teacher Union (PTU) in Punjab and each of them claims that they are genuinely working according to the objectives of Punjab Teacher Union. Same polarization is exists in other unions like college teachers association and all Pakistan clerks association (APCA). A participant of the study “Z” explained the situation of grouping in teacher unions that when Punjab Teacher Union was the only representative union of teachers. It was stronger as compared to present situation and fulfilled the purpose in true sense. Due to access polarization in teacher unions, perception of members and common school teachers has been changed. They think that people who are leading teacher unions at Provincial, Divisional and District level have their personal benefits and they just use members of the unions as pressure tactic to get their personal aims. Another respondent of the study “U” sharing his experience and described that: some groups of the teacher unions may have their hidden or personal agenda but overall it’s not true. I have been leading teacher union since long time; I

have called for many strikes for the protection of rights of teachers. My question is what I have gained? Nothing but I have to go jail and my explanation has been called many times. I have to face disciplinary inquiries against me. I don't think I have any benefit from this or I have been promoted earlier. A participant of the study "X" added that I have been contacted by many so called leaders of the teacher unions at District level. Everyone asked that he belongs to the original group of Punjab Teacher Union.

They never asked me to vote them neither they told me about the constitution of the teacher union but they forced me to join their group. There are so many groups of teacher unions that it's hard to believe which one is working selflessly and only for the true purpose. Sharing his experience about the grouping in teacher unions a participant "Y" explained that interesting thing is that Punjab Teacher Union is only single union in Punjab having written and approved manifesto. There are ten groups within Punjab Teacher Union and they all have similar copy of that manifesto. They all claim that they belong to original group of PTU. Describing about the polarization in teacher union a respondent "V" said that despite of unity in all groups of teacher unions they work against each other and try to fail the opponent. I remember that we were on strike against the policies of school education department. We have given sit in Lahore. Our demand was to eliminate fake reporting system from school education department. At that time our opponents were in contact with authorities and were complaining against us. Some of their people were working to make them happy. A person who was a leader of the teacher union of another group hold a press talk and told the media personnel that protestors are not teacher they are labor workers and they have been brought here to build a pressure on the authorities. It was quite painful for all the teachers who were protesting for their rights. Same person was visiting the protest site in very next day. Some teachers got anger after seeing him and beat him on the spot. "No doubt it has been one of the major challenges we are facing since long time. So many groups have been emerged that it is difficult to recognize right and wrong". Polarization is making us weak day by day. When we have an agenda to talk with authorities or try to put some pressure our opposite groups try to sabotage that. It always hurt the cause. If there will be a single representative union of teachers that will be more effective. In past there were two teacher unions one was Punjab Teacher Union and the other was Senior Staff Association. They were very strong that time and effective as well.

3- Gap between Objectives & Practices

Teacher unions are supposed to be an effective body for the protection of teacher's rights and to bring reforms in education sector. In the light of manifesto of teacher unions it looks very clear that they are established for both professional and unionization purposes. A participant of the study "V" described that: "everything has been very clear in the manifesto we have approved from the authorities while registering teacher union. We are not only supposed to work for protection of the rights of the teachers but we also have the responsibility to be in line with authorities for educational reforms and policy making process. We should give input in curriculum development process". At present we are diverting from the objectives of the teacher unions. Polarization is one of the reasons we are not focusing on the job we should do. Now each group of the teacher union is working on the different parameters even some of them do not have approved policy of their union. A respondent "W" sharing his experience about the gap and said: "teacher union is a body which represents collective approach of the teaching community, therefore union should struggle and fight for common and collective issues. Unions should not be allowed for individual and personal gains, if it happens it will definitely hurt the cause of union". Some so called leaders of the teacher union have occupied key posts only for their personal gains. They work for the people and demand money in return. They have no interest in common issues of the education system. A man who is a head teacher in a public school in Lahore is leading a group of teachers only because he did not want to be transferred out of Lahore city. So he has a pressure group for making himself more secure. Similarly some people make a group at local level only for getting some benefits in transfer-posting of teachers and try to adjust their group fellows in suitable or desired schools. A participant "Z" of the study explained that: "we have everything in manifesto like as the protection of the rights of teachers, reforms in education system, curriculum reforms and improvement of infrastructure etc, but we are 99% only for the rights of teachers. Though we should have raised voice for all educational problems but we have been failed to do so". Polarization and struggle for personal gains creates a gap between the objectives and practices of the union. It gives a wrong message to the members and teaching community that teacher unions have been no more suitable platform for addressing educational problems. Teacher unions should be on the same page for common and collective issues. A senior member of the union "Y" explained and said that there should be a mutual trust of the union leaders and members. They should care about the people who always have been on standby for their call. Similarly they should focus on the objectives of the teacher union and should work in true spirit. If they do so the gap between objectives and practices will be bridged. A respondent of the study "Z" elaborated that: "authorities should take notice about the unions which are not registered and which do not have a written manifesto about the objectives of the

union". It has been observed that many groups of the teacher unions which have not been registered by government are active and their so called leaders are straggling for only personal benefits. These should be asked for registration as per rules and should have to produce a written script about the objectives and hierarchy of the teacher union.

4- Election versus Selection

Teacher unions have a formal hierarchy to smoothly perform different tasks. It includes members of the union and then Tehsil level leadership right at the bottom. Similarly District and Divisional level workers and then central union leaders who represent the union at provincial or state level including presidents and secretaries. Talking about the hierarchy and structure of the teacher union a respondent "U" shared his feelings as: teacher unions should conduct transparent elections each year so that a true representation may lead right from the front. But it is very unfortunate that elections have not been conducted since long time. It is one of the reasons that polarization is increasing in teacher unions. If they conduct election properly grouping in teacher union may be reduced. If you try to enlist the different groups of teacher unions it will be difficult to recognize the actual. Punjab teacher union has ten groups with same name and same manifesto but leaders are separate. Similarly there are many others like Headmasters Association, Senior Staff Association, English Teachers Association, Science Teachers Association, Punjab Association of Computer Teachers and Educators Association etc. None of these teacher associations have been registered except Punjab Teacher Union. Punjab teacher union is only recognized union which has its written manifesto. A participant of the study "Y" described that: Elections are not being conducted by any teacher union and it has been causing polarization in teacher unions. There are many so called leaders of the teacher unions which have not been elected but they selected themselves and issued a so called notification". Factor for grouping in teacher union is that elections are not conducted and there is no proper mechanism which should be replaced by the elections. Representatives of teacher unions at District level collect funds from the members and some time from the non-members as well on the name of registration fee and election fund. But it has been observed that no elections held despite of fund raising. Another respondent "Z" described that if unions could not conduct elections it leads to mismanagement and communication gap which weaken teacher unions. Everyone who is attached with teacher union will consider him a leader of the union. Stoppage of election process blocks the democratic ways of leadership in teacher unions. There will be no democracy in unions. Even they will not follow union disciplines and will prefer for personal benefits. Teacher unions should consider it seriously so that smooth functions of the teacher union according to the manifesto may be performed. A respondent "W" described that if selection of the union representatives and leaders is made without elections or without following merit then unions will be purposeless. Because everyone will go out of way for his personal benefits and true aims of teacher union will be ignored completely. It should be the responsibility of educational authorities and election commission to organize a transparent election for the true representation of teachers in unions.

IV. DISCUSSION

It is clear that teacher unions have to face different challenges when they address the educational problems. The teacher unions in Punjab have different challenges as compared to the sister unions around the globe. Polarization is one of the major challenges for the teacher unions in Punjab. There are many groups of teacher unions in Punjab. Teacher unions working in Punjab have been affected by polarization. Though there are many reasons behind it but the thing is that teacher unions at present are not much effective as they were in past. Another challenge which is hurting the objectives of teacher unions is communication gap. Communication gap is misinterpretation of the information or complete lack of communication in the teacher unions. Communication gap usually occur between union leaders and members. Similarly gap between the objectives and practices is another which teacher unions in Pakistan are facing. They have to be in line with their objectives so that they can create a positive impact. Another issue which causes the polarization is not conduction union elections in time. It makes a way towards so called union leaders to make new groups for their own benefits. Teacher unions have some great opportunities to express their strength and to make their contribution in education sector. Active teacher unions play a meaningful and key role to save the teachers community from the issues they faced during the service. They have an opportunity to protect the rights of teaching community and to work for their welfare. Teacher unions are pressure groups and they have some pressure on educational authorities to meet demands. All teacher unions working in the province put pressure on the government and on the school education department to meet their demands. In this way they easily get whatever they want. Collective bargaining is always been important for teacher unions. It's time to be on the board with educational authorities to resolve the issues for which they are fighting. It was revealed that some

pressure is always useful to have a dialogue with authorities and teacher unions always have this advantage that they can put some pressure for collective bargaining.

Implications

Present study is significant as it makes a base for contribution in policy making and it encourages teacher unions to play their part in the process. The emerging themes have provided a fresh perspective on the lived experience of members of teacher unions about the opportunities and challenges of teacher unions in addressing educational problems. This type of learning has the potential to generate valuable information that can be used in the work of educational reforms, policy making and to provide insight into teacher unions so that they can overcome the challenges can serve the needs of the unions with true spirit. Some implication of this study could be the creation of a strategic union for the pursuit of exploring the challenges in the teacher unions. This will help teacher unions to bridge these gaps in the organization and improve the opportunities for their role in addressing educational problems at higher level. This study will provide a base for teacher unions to play their significant role in protecting the rights of the teachers, education reforms, curriculum development and policymaking.

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