

THE IMPACT OF CLUSTER BASED MENTORING SYSTEM ON THE PERFORMANCE OF TEACHERS AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN SINDH

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ABSTRACT

The impact of the cluster based mentoring system on the performance of teachers is the central theme of the research. For this study a sample of 30 officers, 60 head teachers and 500 teachers was randomly selected. The primary data were collected from officers, head teachers and teachers through survey method, questionnaire and observation tools, while the literature was reviewed for the collection of secondary data. It was found that there is a significant impact of cluster based mentoring on the performance of primary school teachers. Cluster based mentoring has modified and brought positive changes in the attitude, skills and teaching methods of primary teachers. It has enhanced the learning of students. A significant difference between cluster based mentoring trained and untrained primary school teachers was observed. The performance of trained teachers was better than untrained teachers. No significant difference between male and female cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers was observed. No significant difference between rural and urban area cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers was observed. The problems faced by teacher under cluster based mentoring program were relating to lack of planning, no advance announcement of complete schedule of cluster based mentoring workshops and the prevailing uncertainty.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is simply an association of people that enables them to contribute and exchange their professional experience, skill and expertise for the benefit of each other. It is process of helping the other in which one professional comparatively senior oversees, encourages and helps the junior for the rapid progression (Ken, 1994:1). It is an affiliation between two professionals - one more and the other less experienced. There is a mutual respect, trust, encouragement and willingness share experience for the

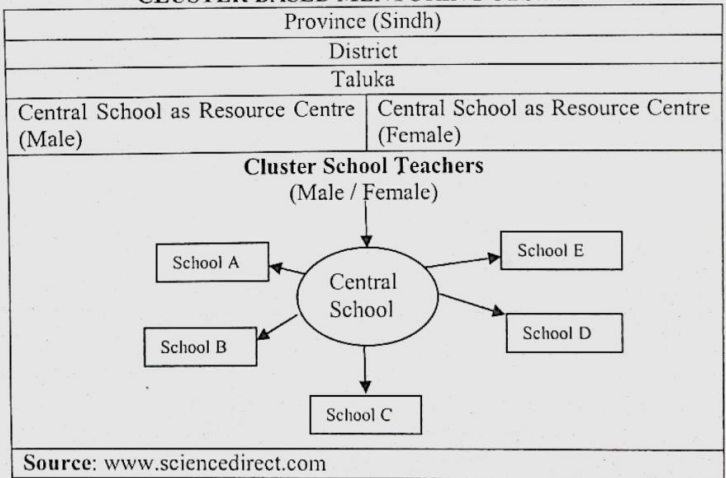
enhancement of learning. It is a method, activity or procedure through which more qualified helps the less qualified in the career development of one another (Government report, 2005:1). It is a process in which well-informed and skillful person helps a less-informed and less-skilful person. It is joint venture through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else. Mentoring is a very purposeful and powerful tool of personal professional development. It bridges the gap and creates a partnership between mentee and mentor to work and share similar experiences. It is used to make career development in an effective way. A mentor is a professional counselor, guide and helper. He directs and enables mentee to move in the right direction and progress in a proper way. He helps mentee in finding the solution of career issues (www.mentorset.org.uk). Megginson (2000:1) stated that Mentor mostly is very experienced and intelligent person and makes the use of his wisdom professionally for the help of the mentee.

The cluster based mentoring is a shared adventure for mentor and the mentee, empowering the professional to work individually and with others towards more perspective and effective practice. It is a relationship in which mentor helps a protégé in bringing out hidden potentials. The analysis of documents shows that cluster based mentoring program aim to develop teachers' content knowledge and pedagogy and improves their relationship with the students. It impacts teachers' perceptions and attitudes through clearly outlined curricula and instructional plan (Rizvi, 2010:655). The cluster based mentoring is a best way for enhancing standard of education. It is used to reduce the cost of education and promote human learning. It is used to assess critically the conventional modes of teacher education. The classical teacher training programs are less standardized with very slow change. They are unsustainable with no instructional gains. Whereas Cluster based mentoring shows potential and promising alternatives. It provides curriculum representing school level goals, local conditions and claims to be cost effective (Mac Neil, 2004). The ultimate aim of any educational planning is to develop students in various cognitive, individual and socials skills and knowledge necessary to function occupationally and socio-politically in society (Fullan,

2001). The role of the teacher is undeniable for the successful preparation of students. It depends on the knowledge, education, training and skill of teachers whether they develop students to be good and enlightened citizens of tomorrow or narrow minded members of society. Cluster based mentoring is the best way to equips teachers with modern technologies and skills.

The cluster based mentoring model of teacher development reflects the contextual realities and the mix of different needs and priorities of the individual, school and system. Ten Certificates in Primary Education Mentoring programs of 10 weeks duration in improving classroom practice were conducted for a total of 307 participants. These graduates or Mentors in turn conducted training programs for teachers or Mentees within their clusters at the district level, creating a multiplier effect in improving classroom practice. Each mentor worked with schools within their clusters and trained approximately 20 Mentees from those clusters each year. A total of 7,504 teachers were trained by the mentors (<http://www.sciencedirect.com>).

CLUSTER BASED MENTORING SYSTEM



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Cluster Based Monitoring Program

Aga Khan University Karachi (AKU-IED) was given a target of 8100 teachers in the nine districts to be trained. AKU-IED used the mentoring model since this model had already been tried in Balochistan in 1993 and was found successful. AKU-IED has developed cluster based mentoring program. It was supervised by Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA). The funds were provided by United State Agency for International Development (USAID) for the enhancement of primary teachers' professional and technical skills. The main purpose of cluster based mentoring program was to enhance and modify the classroom practices.

Cluster based mentoring program promotes learner-centered teaching and creates awareness around child-friendly school environment (Education for All, 2008:6).

One of the greatest services that cluster based mentoring provides is to enable the school teachers to gain the knowledge through research and ensure its application for the promotion of school environment. It helps the teachers to find the solutions of their professional problems and facilitates teachers to gain broader skills and knowledge for the implementation of school-wide changes (Louis, 1981). The mentoring professionals enable schools to generate and make the maximum use of available school resources and expertise (Tajik, 2008:259).

There are three distinguished approaches to cluster based mentoring that include (Poulsen 2005:2):

1. Stage on the Stage
2. Guide on the Side
3. Learning Alliance

Cluster Based Mentoring Program aims to develop the following skills (unesdoc.unesco.org):

- **The abilities to think:** These abilities are concerned with mind and thinking process. They change according to situation and location. These include the ability to think critically, solve problems, make systematic decisions and understand the results.
- **The abilities to be:** These abilities are concerned with a behavior of individual in different situation. These are

individual abilities and include self confidence, awareness, feeling tension and stress.

- **The abilities to live collectively:** These abilities are concerned with group behavior of individuals. These are social abilities and include, team work, cooperation sympathy, communication, assertiveness and solidarity.
- **The abilities to do:** These abilities are concerned with the performance of individuals. These are manual abilities and include doing, knowing and learning.

Aims of Cluster Based Monitoring Program

Cluster Based Mentoring Program is very beneficial for both mentee and educational institutions as a whole. This program is mostly designed to uplift the morale and skills of primary teachers in the region. The most important aim of cluster based mentoring program is the skill development of teachers through the use of modern techniques. However, after completion of cluster based mentoring program, the primary school teachers of cluster schools will be capable (Gregor 2000:244):

1. To evaluate their professional attitudes, duties and responsibilities and accordingly bring positive changes in their character and behavior.
2. To enhance critical thinking and teaching process by adapting latest teaching techniques and methods.
3. To analyze critically the primary level text books and suggest for the improvement of books.
4. To organize and update the books with latest knowledge and skills.
5. To coordinate, discuss and counsel colleagues for the lesson plan considering the rapid changes in the knowledge.
6. To promote the curriculum teaching learning in the multiple classes.
7. To plan the child evaluation process and stages.
8. To prepare lesson plan with the help of free or less costly things
9. To support and look after staff.
10. To make Professional development.
11. To enhance career and succession planning.
12. To development leadership and management.

The Benefits of Cluster Based Mentoring

There is a famous quotation that 'mentoring maketh man (or woman). Historically Mentoring encompasses a large indefinite number of activities like advising, counseling, sponsorship, coaching and guiding. Its multiple usages have made it very important and potential in almost all organizations (Conway, 1995:27). Mentoring is said to be fruitful and effective, when mentors become familiar and design training programs for their own school. As a result of that trainees recognize the importance of education and schools and they become the part of schools for their whole life (MacNeil, 2004). The most of the people all over the world are of the opinion that mentoring programs promotes the well-being of the organization. There are many benefits for the mentor and protégé. These benefits are not accidental but they are the result of continuous efforts and relationship between mentor and mentee. This has been illustrated by an anonymous Fortune 500 computer company, Texaco Trading and Transportation, Hallmark Cards, Shell Oil Company and Imperial Oil Ltd (Forret, Turban, & Dougherty, 1997:1).

The mentoring plays a very important role in the career development of people. The employees in every organization can get a lot benefit from mentoring program. Mentoring makes the equal professional training of all individuals. It enables all the teachers to make professional development equally in all areas of teaching learning. The most important advantages of cluster based mentoring program include:

- Cluster Based Mentoring Program raises the self-esteem, competition in job and self confidence among all the individuals.
- Cluster Based Mentoring Program is the best way used to transfer technical, administrative and professional skills and awareness.
- Cluster Based Mentoring Program enhances the professional variety of the workforce to fulfill the needs of an organization.
- Diversity of the workforce is equally beneficial for mentor, mentee, every employee and employer and organization as whole that modifies and shapes the skills, understanding and

knowledge according need, situation and timing of the organization (Government report, 2005:2).

METHODOLOGY

Strategy

The mixed approach is adopted. It includes quantitative & qualitative paradigms.

Method

The method used in this study is Survey.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The officers, head teachers and teachers represented the population of the study. The data were collected from the sample through stratified random sampling technique. A sample of 30 officers (Supervisors, ADOs, Dos, Director), 60 head teachers (Head masters, In charge heads) and 500 teachers was obtained from 200 primary schools of Sindh.

SAMPLE

S.No.	Category	Size of sample
1	Organization	200
2	Teachers	500
3	Head teachers	60
4	Officers	30

VARIABLES

Independent Variable: Cluster Based Mentoring

Dependent Variable: Performance of primary school teachers

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The questionnaire, interview and observation instruments were used for the collection of data.

PROCEDURE

The researcher has personally administered the interview and questionnaire tools to the respondents. The time and meeting place was fixed in advance through telephonic communication. The use and objectives of research were clearly mentioned to participants

and they were assured of their name secrecy. This had enabled the respondents to feel free of hesitation to express their views openly on sensitive issues.

PLAN OF DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were first classified and grouped according to objectives and hypotheses and then they were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Chi-Square was used for testing hypothesis.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Questions	Teachers (%)			Head Teachers (%)			Officers (%)		
	Yes	No	UD	Yes	No	UD	Yes	No	UD
Do you think that there is a significant impact of cluster based mentoring on the performance of primary school teachers?	90	10	--	77	20	3	61	39	--
Is cluster based mentoring program necessary for professional development of teachers?	99	1	--	89	11	--	67	23	10
Are you satisfied with the objectives of Cluster Based Mentoring program?	77	33	--	78	32	--	66	30	4
Do you think that cluster based mentoring has brought any change in the character of teachers?	92	8	--	71	25	4	56	44	--
Do you think that cluster based mentoring has brought any change in the attitude of teachers?	92	8	--	71	25	4	56	44	--
Do you think that cluster based mentoring has brought any change in the skills of teachers?	92	8	--	71	25	4	56	44	--
Do the cluster based mentoring trained teachers prepare daily lesson plan?	70	20	10	60	35	5	58	40	2
Do you think that cluster based mentoring has brought any change in the teaching methods of primary teachers?	92	8	--	71	25	4	56	44	--

Does the cluster base mentoring trained teacher's use roll play activity in the class room?	85	15	--	70	20	10	56	40	4
Do the cluster based mentoring trained teachers provide appropriate teaching aids in the class?	90	5	5	80	15	5	65	25	5
Do the cluster based mentoring trained teachers use appropriate time allocated for the session?	80	15	5	79	15	6	77	25	8
Do the clusters base mentoring trained teachers conduct class discussion during the session?	82	15	3	66	20	14	77	20	3
Do the cluster based mentoring trained teachers organize group work in the class?	88	10	2	77	23	--	68	20	12
Do you think that cluster based mentoring has enhanced the learning of students?	70	28	2	66	30	4	60	30	10
Do you think that there is a significant difference between cluster based mentoring trained and untrained primary school teachers?	95	5	--	82	18	--	78	15	7
Do you think that the performance of trained teachers is better than untrained teachers?	95	5	--	82	18	--	78	15	7
Do you think that there is significant difference between male and female cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers?	66	30	4	70	20	10	67	23	10
Do you think that there is a significant difference between rural and urban area cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers?	22	78	--	34	66	--	25	70	5
Do you think that a proper planning is made about cluster based mentoring?	45	55	--	48	52	--	49	51	--
Do you think that complete schedule of cluster based mentoring workshops is announced in advance?	11	89	--	10	90	--	15	85	--

DISCUSSION

It has been observed and analyzed that there is a significant impact of cluster based mentoring on the performance of primary school teachers. The performance of cluster based mentoring trained teachers is comparatively better than that of other teachers. The stakeholders are of the opinion that cluster based mentoring program is necessary for professional development of teachers. The most of the stakeholders are satisfied with the objectives and implementation process of the program. They urged that a proper schedule of the program should be prepared and announced in advance so that all the teachers may get preparation in advance to have the maximum utilization of the program.

The cluster based mentoring has brought a lot of change in the character of teachers. It has refined the attitude, skills and behavior of teachers. It has provided an opportunity to teachers to remain in the company of skilled and experienced persons and seek help at any time. The teachers after attending training program used to prepare daily lesson plans, promote teaching methods, use roll play activities in the class room, provide appropriate teaching aids, conduct classroom discussions, organize group work and make the full utilization of time allocated for the session. They have satisfied the students with their personality, skills, teaching methods and enhanced the learning of students.

A significant difference between cluster based mentoring trained and untrained primary school teachers has been observed while no significant difference between male and female and rural and urban area cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers is found. The performance of cluster based mentoring trained teachers is better than untrained teachers because training has improved the performance of teachers.

RESULTS

1. There is a significant impact of cluster based mentoring on the performance of primary school teachers.
2. Cluster based mentoring has modified and brought positive changes in the attitude, skills and teaching methods of primary teachers.
3. Cluster based mentoring has enhanced the learning of students.

4. A significant difference between cluster based mentoring trained and untrained primary school teachers was observed. The performance of trained teachers was better.
5. No significant difference between male and female cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers was observed.
6. No significant difference between rural and urban area cluster based mentoring trained primary school teachers was observed.
7. The problems were relating to lack of planning, no advance announcement of complete schedule of cluster based mentoring workshops and the prevailing uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

Cluster Based Mentoring program has been found very beneficial for teachers, students, school and teaching learning as a whole. It has modified teachers' skills, knowledge, techniques, body language, interest, attitude and confidence. Under the shadow of cluster based mentoring, teachers use appropriate new methodology, prepare daily lesson plan, use roll play activity, provide appropriate teaching aids, conduct class discussion, organize group work, evaluate the current practices and generates interest of students. The overall performance of teachers and students has been observed satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cluster based mentoring program is not introduced all over Pakistan. Looking at its fruitful results, Government should introduce it in every district of Pakistan.
2. Cluster based mentoring program should be a continuous process working round the year. There should be no gap.
3. Every teacher should attend / undergo cluster based mentoring training. No teacher should be left untrained.
4. The complete schedule of workshops is not announced in advance. There is uncertainty and lack of planning. Therefore schedule of all workshops should be announced at the start of academic year. The uncertainty should be eliminated and planning process should be improved.
5. A system should be designed in which there should be follow visits of mentors.

6. The refresher courses should properly be designed on permanent basis.

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