

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF TEACHERS IN PAKISTAN

Ajiaz Ali Wajani

Abstract

Teacher is considered the most crucial factor in implementing all educational reforms at the grassroot level. This article has been written in honour of TEACHER in Pakistan. It pays tribute to the good work the teachers do undertake under difficult circumstances. This article is a reminder that education is an art, which demands multi-faceted skills, attitudes and knowledge. It is a reminder that teachers' commitment to their work is so essential besides their commitment to children, to culture, to their subjects and curricula, to traditions and new knowledge, and to tolerance and peace. This article provides information about teacher's status, role and working conditions, to identify and strengthen the process as to how the reality 'gap' is to be overcome between the national and international policies which consider the teachers as pillars of the educational system on one hand and the teachers' actual and full participation in the given process on the other hand.

Introduction

Teaching (and learning) is a fundamental characteristic of human beings. The desire and necessity to teach and learn are inherent in all human beings. All human beings, including children, are teachers. In fact, the very survival of humanity depends on this ancient and noble undertaking.

When we speak about the number of teachers in any particular country or worldwide, the emphasis is, however, on the teaching profession. Teachers constitute the largest single group of highly skilled professionals in the world. In 1990, there were 52 million teachers worldwide. By 1997, the number had risen to nearly 60 million, with the developing world accounting for more than two thirds.

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

The challenges confronting the teachers and the expectations placed on them are many and formidable. Teachers are constantly asked to help transform the lives and livelihoods of individuals and societies in the context of a rapidly changing world and growing uncertainties. They are being asked to radically transform and constantly upgrade their knowledge base and pedagogical know-how, to help implement reforms in education system and schools that are not performing well, and to inspire individuals and communities and help equip them with capacity, motivation and tools required for life-long learning. Teachers are often expected to be tireless and selfless agents of change and innovation as well as keepers of tradition. Unswerving professional commitment and love and care for children are also qualities we like to associate with teachers.

A concrete example of the challenges facing teachers and expectations placed on them relate to the formidable task of translating into reality the vision outlined in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990) and reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action (Dakar 2000). Teachers are at the forefront in the struggle aimed at achieving EF A goals. The Constitution of UNESCO adopted in London on 16 November 1945 begins with these words: "*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed*". Simply stated this underlines the importance of teaching the values of peace as well as the importance for fostering a competent and motivated teaching force.

Today we live in a world overwhelmed by multiple and complex challenges. The threat of war is still with us. We are also facing a host of other ills with catastrophic consequences. Once again teachers are called upon to rise to the occasion. More than ever, teachers are expected to respond to an increasing range of societal demands, and are asked to help human beings steer clear of the scourges of the 21st century: war, illiteracy, poverty, HIV / AIDS, social injustice, and intolerance.

Yet rarely are teachers provided with the resources they need to meet the high demands and expectations placed on them on a daily basis. In many parts of the world, teachers are working in environments characterized by diminishing resources, limited opportunities, unsatisfactory remuneration, marginalization, ill-perceived and at times contradictory policies and mismanagement. Primary teachers often bear the brunt of problems confronting the teachers. Teachers working in rural areas lag behind their counterparts in the urban areas vis-a-vis opportunities for self-development and professional enhancement. Female

teachers, particularly those in the rural areas, may face additional difficulties linked to the generally low status of women.

In Pakistan, according to the Government of Pakistan's Economic Survey (2002-2003), there are currently 653,275 teachers in the country, primary 335,100, middle 101,200, high 165,000, secondary/vocational 9,611, and tertiary 42,364. Teachers in Pakistan share many problems with their counterparts in other countries, particularly those in the developing countries. They also face severe constraints that are country and culture-specific.

The role, status and competence of teachers and the demands and expectations placed on them are inseparably linked with the nature and dynamics of Pakistani society. A number of factors can be underlined: high population growth rate, poverty, widespread illiteracy, deep-rooted gender inequality, persistent rural-urban gap, limited capacity and capability in matters relating to the formulation, execution and evaluation of public policy and as well as mobilization of effective use of available resources. Most of the problems confronting Pakistani teachers should be seen in the context of these debilitating constraints.

Despite these difficulties, the teaching profession has made significant progress in recent years. Efforts are also underway to put in place a series of legal and policy measures aimed at improving the role, status and competence of teachers, female teachers in particular, and at creating an environment in which teachers can discharge their duties with dedication and confidence. These include the Government of Pakistan's (GOP) initiative for improving service structure, the Education Sector Reform (ESR) Action Plan (2001-2005), particularly with regard to teacher training, The National Plan of Action for Education for All (2002-2015), the Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011), crash training programs recently launched by provincial governments, and a series of policy measures in support of girls' education in Pakistan.

Social Status of Teachers

Though social status is a complex phenomenon, the following elements, when combined, may result in determining the social status of teachers in Pakistan:

- a) **Professional Pride:** Above all else, it is the pride with which teachers regard their own profession that helps raise their status:

- i) A profession is what its members make of it. If they hold it in high esteem and are proud of belonging to it, they will guard its interests and standards.
 - ii) It is the authority and the power of profession, which counts for the social status.
 - iii) In Pakistan the teachers are perceived to have less authority and power as compared to other professions such as Police, Customs Department, Revenue Department, Central Superior Services (CSS) Officers, etc.
 - iv) As far as academic authority and freedom is concerned it depends upon the extent to which teachers can influence policies and programs of education in the country.
- b) Professional Commitment:** Teacher's commitment to their work is also a major factor in determining the social status of teachers ascribed to them by the community, parents and students. Some of the teachers of rural schools do not attend school regularly. As a result, the students and the community do not accept them as good teachers. A number of factors can be attributed to the syndrome of teachers' absenteeism.
- c) Degree of public recognition:** Public recognition of the service rendered by teachers is reflected, among other things, by national awards and by teachers being invited to serve on national committees and commissions. Teachers in Pakistan are hardly given representation in administrative, developmental or legislative bodies.

The teacher's social status is not something which can be enhanced solely through legislation. What is needed is a two-track approach which provides teachers with effective training, decent working conditions and remuneration and which at the same time demands unswerving commitment and dedication from them.

Economic Status of Teachers

Income or salary clearly forms a very important aspect of economic status:

- Although the salary structure for various categories of public sector teachers is commensurate with that of other professions, the teachers, due to their unique role and responsibilities in shaping Pakistani's future, deserve to be given a special consideration with regard to remuneration.
- There are reports that female teachers employed by small scale private primary schools are notoriously under paid.

- The remuneration paid to teachers serving in Non-formal Basic Education (NBE) schools, Mosque Schools or Adult Literacy Centres is generally very low and there is hardly any job security.
- Although many teachers living in urban areas have to travel to and work in rural areas, they are normally not offered any monetary incentive or hardship allowance.

Responsibilities of Teachers

- **Quality and Standards:** Recognizing that the status of their profession depends to a considerable extent upon teachers themselves, all teachers should seek to achieve the highest possible standards in all their professional work.
- **Participation:** Professional standards relating to teacher's performance should be defined and maintained with the participation of the teachers' organizations:
- **Cooperation:** Teachers and teachers' organizations should seek to cooperate fully with authorities in the interests of the pupils, of the education service and of society generally.
- **Ethics:** Codes of ethics or of conduct should be established by the teachers' organizations, since such codes greatly contribute to ensuring the prestige of the profession and the exercise of professional duties in accordance with agreed principles.
- **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Teachers should be prepared to take part in extra-curricular activities for the benefit of pupils and adults.

Rights and Responsibilities of Higher Education Teaching Personnel

UNESCO approved a set of Recommendations concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel on 11th November, 1997. In these Recommendations, a strong emphasis was put on institutional autonomy and institutional accountability. A summary of major rights and responsibilities of Higher Education teaching personnel is given below:

Rights and Freedoms

- Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion,
- Freedom of expression,
- Freedom of assembly and association,
- Academic freedom,
- Freedom in carrying out research,

- Freedom from institutional censorship,
- Freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies,
- The right to teach without any interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual vigour with regard to standards and methods of teaching,
- Right to undertake professional work outside their employment,
- Right to take part in the governing bodies and to criticize the functioning of higher education institutions.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Teach students effectively,
- To be fair and equitable to male and female students and treat those of all races and religions, as well as those with disabilities equally,
- To be fair and impartial when presenting a professional appraisal of academic colloquies and students,
- Obligation to respect the academic freedom of other members of academic community,
- Use academic freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base research on an honest search for truth,
- To observe the ethics of research involving humans, animals, the heritage or the environment,
- To respect and to acknowledge the scholarly work of academic colleagues and students,
- To ensure that research is conducted according to the laws and regulations of the state in which the research is carried out,
- To avoid conflicts of interest,
- To avoid misleading the public on the nature of their professional expertise.

Problems of Teachers in Pakistan

The following have been identified as major problems of teachers in Pakistan:

- ***Lack of availability of transport, security and residential facilities in remote rural areas:*** This has emerged as one of the important problems, especially for female teachers.
- ***Non Transparent Appointment practices:*** It is often observed that appointment of teachers is based on discretionary considerations.
- ***Poor management and evaluation practices:*** Performance reports are not always based on actual performance.

- **Politicization:** Frequent transfers of teachers for subjective or political considerations frustrate many teachers. This is of special concern and hardship for female teachers and rural school teachers.
- **Student Teacher Ratio:** Over-crowded classes and a high student-teacher ratio, especially in the urban schools, is a perennial problem. It not only creates disciplinary problems but also affects the quality of education.
- **Corruption in connection with retirement pension payment and medical bills.** At times, teachers are subjected to undue tensions regarding the disbursement against their claims for pensions or medical bills.
- **Additional Assignments:** Duties on national tasks like census, elections etc. have emerged as a problem as they result in the loss of instructional time for children.
- **Contractual Appointments:** Teachers are being given contractual appointments which lack job security.
- **Schools Without Walls:** Teachers sometimes have to teach in schools without walls and without rooms in extreme weather conditions in rural areas.

Conclusion

I have come to a frightening conclusion that the teacher is an autocratic and decisive element in the class room. It is teacher's personal approach that creates the climate. It is teacher's daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, he has tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. Teacher can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. Teacher can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is teacher's response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated and a child humanized or dehumanized. But all the same, in every situation, teacher is facing so many difficulties and problems too and spending miserable life in our society where he has socio- economic and psychological problems. It is therefore the state and the society that should make all out efforts to provide real status to the teacher and also prepare him and also monitor his work as a teacher.

Recommendations

- The selection procedures, training system and salary package for persons related to teaching profession should be improved.

- To achieve the goal of nation building, the system of teachers' appointment on contract and adhoc basis should be stopped.
- All teachers should be given the facility of travel allowance and hardship area allowance.
- Children of serving teacher and even of the retired teacher should be allowed facility of admission and free education in public institutions.
- To solve teachers residential problems. Teachers' Residential Colonies should be established as is done for officials of other departments and professions.

References

1. Al-Afendi, Milt and N.A, Balouch (1980): *Curriculum and Teacher Education*, Hodder and Stoughton, Jeddah.
2. Fatima Jinnah Women University (2001): *Problems of Working Women*, Rawalpindi.
3. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education (2001): *Code of Professional Ethics and the General Rules for the Federal Government Educational Institutions*, Islamabad.
4. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education (1998): *National Education Policy 1998-2010*, Islamabad.
5. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Women's Development and Youth Affairs (1995): *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing*.
6. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education (2001): *Education Sector Reforms*, Islamabad.
7. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education (2001): *Education For All (EFA)*, Islamabad.
8. Government of Pakistan, Economic Adviser's Wing (2002): *Economic Survey 2001-2002*, Islamabad.
9. ILO /UNESCO (1966): *The 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers*.
10. Iqbal Muhammad Zafar, "Teachers Training: The Islamic Perspective".
11. Ministry of Education, Academy of Educational Planning and Management (1999): *Pakistan Education Statistics 1997-98*, Islamabad.
12. Mahbub ul Haq, Human Development in South Asia (2000): *The Gender Question*.
13. Multi-donor Support Unit (2002): *Primary Education in Pakistan: Contribution of Public and Private Sectors*, Islamabad.
14. Pakistan Education Foundation (1998): *Evaluation of Present-in-Service Training Programmes for Teachers and Development of More Cost Effective Methods of INSET at Various Levels*, Islamabad.
15. UNESCO (2000): *Female Teachers in Rural Schools*, Islamabad.

16. UNESCO, Islamabad and Ministry of Education, Curriculum Wing, Government of Pakistan (2001): *Learning Achievement in Primary Schools of Pakistan: A Quest for Quality Education*, Islamabad.
 17. UNESCO (1966): *Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers*, Paris.
 18. UNESCO (2000): *Women as Educators and Women's Education in E-9 Countries*, Paris.
 19. UNESCO, ILO, UNDEP, UNICEF World Teacher's Day, *Joint Message* (2001).
 20. Working Women Association (1989): *The Education and Retention of Rural Primary Women Teachers*, Islamabad.
-