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**Effectiveness of Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit
(External Monitoring) in Controlling Teachers'
Absenteeism in Punjab (Pakistan)**

Ziarab Mahmood, Saeed Anwar, Ph.D., Saeed Khan, Ph.D.

Abstract

The present research was conducted to know the effectiveness of external monitoring in controlling the teachers' absenteeism in Punjab (Pakistan). Among 36 districts, 4 districts of Punjab were selected randomly. All 4 DMOs and 4 DEOs secondary of selected districts were taken as sample. Ten Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants and 10 Head Teachers were selected randomly equally from urban and rural areas of each selected district of Punjab. 30 teachers (15 urban and 15 rural), were selected purposively, from each selected district so that the accurate data may be obtained. Data were collected through semi-structured interview managed by researchers through personal visits to the respondents. External monitoring was found regular and effective in controlling the teachers' absenteeism. The respondents propose to

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restructure the external monitoring mechanism with new posts and qualified and relevant staff.

Key Words: Monitoring, External monitoring and teachers' absenteeism

Introduction

Pakistan is an Islamic country, located in South Asia. With 160 million population and about eight hundred thousand square kilometer area, it has four provinces (Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw), a Capital (Islamabad Capital Territory), Federal Administrative Tribal Area and Federal Administrative Northern Area. With 90 million people, Punjab province is the largest in Pakistan (Government of Punjab, 2007).

Monitoring is a tool of management which provides the basic information about the implementation of program or project. To check the smooth running of the program, every organization developed its own monitoring mechanism. Some organizations rely on internal monitoring (conducted by officers of the organization as it is duty of every manager to monitor the activities of its subordinates and execution of the program) while others depend on external monitoring (a third party independent of organization, monitors the program).

Regulatory bodies of the states also monitor the concerned departments through some monitoring system. Education is the key area in this respect because it is agent of change and the future of the nation depends on its education. Historically, education was monitored through inspectors (senior officers of the department visit the school which was known as school inspection). Monitoring is refined form of inspection in which the functions of inspection and supervision are included.

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In education, Teachers' absenteeism is a serious problem in schools. Teachers' absenteeism is very harmful for future of nation. The findings of the research conducted by Mary (2009) indicate that higher teacher absenteeism lead low performance of the students. She also found that there is positive relationship between the teachers' absenteeism and students' absenteeism. Teachers' absenteeism also affects the other teachers as they feel that attendance is not important matter. She concludes that due to teachers' absenteeism, the pupils lose the desire to learn.

Unfortunately Pakistan is also included in the list of those countries that are facing the serious problem of teacher absenteeism. It leads the low quality education, negative motivation to students, high dropout rate and low retention rate. According to World Bank, Teachers' absenteeism is found even 30 % in some areas of Punjab (World Bank, 2004). In McCutcheon's report, twenty percent (20%) teachers were found absent (2007). In survey conducted by government of Pakistan, the teachers' absenteeism was up to 35 % in Northern Pakistan and 22 % in province of the Punjab (1997). Teachers' absenteeism is higher in girls' schools. These statistics shows the alarming situation of education of Pakistan. It can be compared with 5 % teachers' absenteeism in United States (World Bank, 2004).

The absenteeism of teachers can be stop through proper monitoring. That is why the government of Punjab had introduced the external monitoring system parallel to internal monitoring system in the name of Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU) in the largest province (Punjab) in 2003. Office of this PMIU was established in the capital of Punjab "Lahore". Head of this institution is director general and he/she is assisted by directors. It works under the supervision of chief minister of Punjab. It monitors education program along with other government programs and projects.

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This research was conducted to know the effectiveness of external monitoring system in controlling teachers' absenteeism either it is fruitful in this respect or not. If it is successful in controlling teachers' absenteeism then how much success was gain?

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit (external monitoring) in Punjab.
2. To obtain views of stakeholders about the effectiveness of external monitoring to control teacher absenteeism.
3. To recommend steps to the researcher for further researches.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited as follow.

1. The present study was delimited to Punjab province only.
2. Only opinions from male respondents were obtained.
3. The data were obtained through interview only.

Significance of the Study

This research will be helpful for government and policymaker to understand the role of external monitoring for controlling teacher absenteeism. Findings of this research will help them to make future decisions to meet the task.

It will also be beneficial for donor agencies like world bank and UNESCO. To provide them the true picture of the situation. Hence the donor agencies will be able to decide for further donation.

It will also help the chief monitoring force and education department by providing them the factual positions of the performance of external monitoring.

Review of Literature

Importance of Teacher

The founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Rahmtullah Aleh-e) said in his message to first educational conference held in Karachi that the future of Pakistan depends on education which we will provide to our younger generation (Government of Pakistan, 1947). Teacher is the most important person in teaching learning process. An effective learning cannot take place without the effective and efficient teacher. Teacher is also considered the most important indicator of quality of education. Basically teacher is implementer of educational policies (Government of Pakistan, 1998). If teacher is not competent and committed then no any policy can be fruitful. Competency of teacher depends on his qualification, teaching skill and effective motivational and communication skill (Government of US, 2010). These things can be improved with the help of in-service training. That is why refresher courses are arranged for teacher all over the world. Commitment is the factor which is difficult to improve. To create commitment in teacher, incentive in the shape of reward, performance certificate, advance increment and promotion may be helpful tools.

Teacher Absenteeism

Teachers' absenteeism is worldwide problem. It was found 16 percent in Bangladesh, 14 % in Ecuador, 25 % in India, 19 % in Indonesia, 11 % in Peru, 15 % in Papua New Guinea, 27 % in Uganda and 17 % in Zambia (World Bank, 2004, p.143). Like other parts of the world, teachers' absenteeism is crucial problem in Pakistan as well as in Punjab. It is found in Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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many shapes, as complete absent, on leave, late arrival, and early departure and present in school but absent in classroom. There are number of reasons of teachers' absenteeism. Bad health, insecurity of female teachers, long distance of duty station from residence, lack of commitment, low salary, lack of availability of transport, lack of motivation by seniors and political involvement are some of the reasons of teachers' absenteeism in Punjab (Haroon and Sabir, 2010). The study of the world bank shows that teacher absenteeism was found greater in numbers than in rural area than that of urban area, schools near the road than away from road, teacher got recent training than not got training within 5 years, low poverty area than high poverty area and school has good infrastructure than poor infrastructure etc. (World Bank, 2004; pp.145, 146).

Causes of Teacher Absenteeism

The main causes of teachers' absenteeism are as under.

1. According to World Bank (2004), Poor monitoring and supervision and lack of accountability is the major reason of teacher absenteeism in Punjab.
2. Political involvement in education sector is the second major reason of teachers absenteeism, like transfer, posting etc. (World Bank, 2004).
3. Civil Servant act is another reason of teachers' absenteeism in Pakistan as it protects the employee whenever the employee is struck off from services. It encourages the employee that higher authority cannot do anything against them except transfer (World Bank, 2004).
4. Pakistan is facing a number of diseases like T.B, Cholera, Typhoid, Cancer and many seasonal diseases. The ill teachers are unable to attend the school hence they remain absent from schools.

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5. Domestic Chores also become the reason of teacher absenteeism. As Pakistan comprises the 67 % of population in rural areas. In harvest seasons (twice in a year) the teachers also have to do work in field, hence mostly teachers remained absent from schools in May and November. Although female teachers are encouraged in Pakistan, they still form only 35% of the profession. Female teachers have many routine works to do. So they are found absent in first period of school timetable.
6. Due to little salary, the teachers are forced to do part time job to meet the economic needs. So they left the school before the school close time especially in urban areas. There is no one who checks them (Masooma, 1998).
7. Distance from home to duty station also reason of teachers absenteeism. Some teachers are appointed other than the area of their residence or the duty station is away from their home. So they remain absent due to long journey from home to school daily or weekly. Transport problem also disturb them to ill performance in duties.
8. Absence of motivation by the higher authority is also the cause of teachers' absenteeism. Unfortunately, teachers are behaved equally either their performance is 100 % or zero per cent. Practically there is no concept of punishment or reward.
9. Another reason of teacher absenteeism is poor training of teachers. The training of teachers in Pakistan is only one year, in which the teachers are taught some pedagogical skills and some knowledge of teaching, education and school administration. They are not motivated well to perform their duties.
10. Education is neglected sector in Pakistan. Only 2 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is consumed on education as a result, the salaries of teachers are very low and little facilities are available to

teachers. It causes teachers absenteeism. For example due to low salary, the teachers pass their time in hand to mouth position. Mostly teachers have to do part time job to meet the needs. The government has not provided the transport facilities to teachers, so it is very difficult for them to reach the schools in time (UNDP, 2009).

Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit

The Government of Punjab has set up a parallel system of monitoring to monitor the project and program by the name of Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU). Department of education is also in the jurisdiction of PMIU. Due to decentralization of power in 2001, the education is managed at district level. Hence to monitor the education department at district level, a separate cell of monitoring was created in each district headed by District Monitoring officer (DMO).

District Monitoring Officer

The District Monitoring Officer (DMO) is overall district head of external monitoring system in Punjab. He/she monitors the schools with the help of Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs). His/her office is responsible to collect the monitoring proforma from MEAs. The collected data is feed in computer software and processed on daily office. Hard and soft copies of information are sent to PMIU on monthly basis for consolidation at the provincial level. Copies of monthly assessment report are also sent to EDO-Education for taking necessary action (Shah, 2009).

Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant

Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) are recruited from retired Army Junior officers (JCOs) so that they can perform well external to education department. They have been provided motorcycles to visit at least

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three schools in a day. The data is collected on prescribed Proforma. The collected data is submitted to DMO's office.

Duties of Monitoring Evaluation Assistants (MEAs)

1. Visiting each government school of cluster at least once in a month.
2. Getting of required information through head of School or representative of head of school.
3. Restricting themselves to their monitoring Proforma.
4. Limiting themselves in girls' school due to Parda culture.
5. Should visit schools during the working hours of school suggested by Punjab Government.
6. Avoid writing anything in school record.
7. Confidentiality of information (they should not share information provided by head-teacher to any other person except related monitoring district officer or provincial officer of Chief Minister monitoring force).
8. Signing of the Performa by himself and from Head of school.
9. Submitting of the filled Performa to District Monitoring Office as per schedule (Government of Punjab, 2007).

Duties of Head Teachers in Monitoring Program

1. Provision of correct information to MEAs
2. Make available the record (teacher attendance register, funds record and School councils) to MEAs to fill the monitoring Proforma
3. The head-teachers are responsible to show record according to MEAs Proforma.
5. Signing on the filled proforma of MEAs

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6. To facilitate the field staff of external monitoring system (MEA)
(Government of Punjab, 2007).

Punjab Education Sector Reform Program

In 2003, education sector reforms were introduced in Pakistan. Access to school, equity and quality were the major areas of these reforms. Quality of education generally depends on quality of teachers, quality of educational officers and definitely on the quality environment of schools. Quality education cannot be achieved without quality of teachers and schools. Attendance of teachers is the basic need for the quality education in schools. Unluckily, the situation in this respect is not good. To control teachers' absenteeism, to increase students' attendance and enrolment and to minimize dropout ratio and to improve the quality of education, Punjab Education Sector Reforms were introduced in Punjab in 2003. To meet the targets of Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program, a monitoring mechanism was formulated in Punjab. It was named Program Monitoring and Implementation Units (PMIU).

Methodology

The research was conducted by applying the following procedure.

Population

All the secondary school teachers, head teachers, DEO secondary, DMOs, Monitoring and evaluation assistant.

Sampling

Multiple sampling stage technique was applied to take sample.

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1. Attock, Jehlm, Multan and Lodhran districts were selected randomly for sample. All four DMOs and 4 DEO secondary were taken in sample.
 2. Selected districts were divided into two parts (urban and rural).
 3. Ten Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant (5 urban and 5 rural) were selected randomly, from each selected district.
 4. Ten head teachers (5 urban and 5 rural) were taken as sample randomly form each selected district.
 5. Thirty secondary school teachers (15 urban and 15 rural) were selected purposively from each selected district.
- Hence total sample size was 208.

Research Instrument

Semi-structured interview technique was used to obtain views of stakeholders. This technique was applied because it is observed that the respondents hesitate to give response in black and white. Secondly it requires time to fill the questionnaire while it was easy for respondent to tell something orally. In interview the questions were asked about the school visit of field staff of external monitoring, their performance in controlling teachers' absenteeism, the need of external monitoring and need of restructuring the external monitoring mechanism.

Data Collection

For collecting data, the researcher visited to the respondents personally so the response rate was cent percent.

Results and Discussion

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1. Seventy (70) % teachers were found against the external monitoring. As the monitoring and evaluation assistant who visits schools are irrelevant person. The teachers consider them an extra check on them. According to views of 60 % teachers, head teacher is sufficient to monitor their performance. 65 % teachers think that attendance is not much matter on quality of education. Some teachers show nearly 100 percent attendance and they could not show the results while other show 90 % attendance but they show 100 % result. All DMOs, 80 % DEOs and 100 % MEAs are agreed that external monitoring is need of the time. 60% head teachers also favor the external monitoring.
2. Hundred percent (100 %) respondents agreed that field worker of external monitoring (MEAs) visit each school once in month. It shows that external monitoring is regular as well as more periodic. It is positive sign of the effectiveness of external monitoring in Punjab.
3. Cent percent (100 %) respondents of external monitoring (MEAs and DMOs), 63 % District Education Officers and 59 % Head Teachers are in favour of the external monitoring as it has minimized the teacher absenteeism by monthly monitoring visits in schools. DMOs and MEAs think that by their proper monitoring, it is feared among teachers that their absenteeism will be reported to higher authority and action may be taken place against them. So they remain present in schools. DEOs considers that due to the official burden and lack of transport facilities they cannot visit each school of their jurisdiction even once in a year so it is better that MEAs visits each school within month. According to head teachers, due to close relationship with teachers, they cannot take strict action against the teachers, hence it is good to be monitored the school by third party in regular interval. Due to fear of external monitoring visit, the teachers remain conscious about the attendance matter. It is also supported by the findings of World Bank's reports which indicate that monitoring

had also showed some positive results in Punjab (2004). It shows that external monitoring has positive impact on increasing teacher attendance as a result the quality of education has also improved due to better teacher attendance.

4. Seventy two percent (72%) respondents are in favour of restructuring of the external monitoring system. DMOs and MEAs are in favour of restructuring the monitoring system within PMIU with no major change while teachers, head teachers and DEOs are in favour of major changes, new recruited staff consisting on educationist and they also think that external monitoring cell should be the part of department of education but independent in responsibility and authority. These findings match with the findings of research conducted by UNDP. It is needed to strengthen the monitoring system to minimize the teacher absenteeism so that educational targets can be chased (2009).

Recommendations

1. External monitoring may be strengthen by providing them more facilities like cars and power like authority of dismissal of services of absent teacher.
2. External monitoring may be restructured and educationist may be appointed to monitor the schools. As District Monitoring Officers (DMO) may be highly qualified like Ph.D and M.Phil with specialization in educational leadership and management.
3. Posts of Deputy District Monitoring Officers (DDMOs) may be created in all sub-districts of the Punjab. Professional qualification of DDMO may be MA Education Planning and Management, MA Education and M.Ed.
4. Visits by MEAs in each school may be twice in month to get more results instead of once in month as practice today.

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5. Teachers may be given incentive to increase teachers' attendance and to motivate the teachers. Incentives may be in shape of cash prize, advance increment, service seniority transfer in choice station and performance award by the hand of prominent personality like prime minister and president. For incentive, there may be developed a criteria in which attendance of teacher may be added.
6. There may be applied any formula of punishment for educators like stop of the annual increment, stop of the promotion, transfer in less privilege areas and finally dismissal from service. These punishment may be done on the base of quality criteria of teachers in which teachers' attendance may be one variable.

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