

Educational Reforms in Pakistan: Challenges in the implementation of the Reformed English Courses in Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract:

The reforms in the education system in Pakistan that began in 2000s under the influence of Millennium Education Goals, covered two major aspects: initially, the reforms in the approach of National curriculum for Class I-XII, as the content-based curriculum (2003) was reformed into a Standard Based Curriculum in 2006. The requirements of the new Curriculum further triggered reforms in the curriculum of the Teachers' Education in 2010-12. The aim of these amendments was to produce Teachers who could implement the reformed curriculum 2006. As a result of these developments, the new degree programs, B.Ed Honors (Bachelors in Education) and ADE (Associate Degree in Education) with new English courses, have replaced the one year degree program B.Ed and certificate courses CT & PTC in Education. Collective efforts are being made to implement these reforms completely in order to achieve the standards set by National Professional Standards for the Teachers of Pakistan (NPSTP) regarding the teaching of English. Presently, data is required in order to take appropriate decisions and speed up the effective implementation of these courses. The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges in the field in the effective implementation of English courses taught at B.Ed (Hons)/ADE program. The design of this Phenomenal study is based on the detailed thematic analysis of the qualitative data. The sample comprised of three fundamental units of the population including Educational Managers who were selected through Simple Random Sampling technique. A set of questions was deployed as tools for In-depth Interview. It was explored that the delivery of these courses is hampered because of the lack of resources, lack of trained Teacher Educators in English, administrative disorders and the absence of a monitoring system. The findings are useful for the concerned government officials, policy makers and Apex bodies like BoC, STEDA, PITE, universities along with the syllabus designers, teachers and students.

Key Words: Curriculum reforms, Challenges, Teacher Education, Teaching of English, B.Ed (Hons)/ADE.

INTRODUCTION

An efficacious education system is comprised of various elements and felicitous execution of these elements makes it successful. Along with various factors, skills of workforce

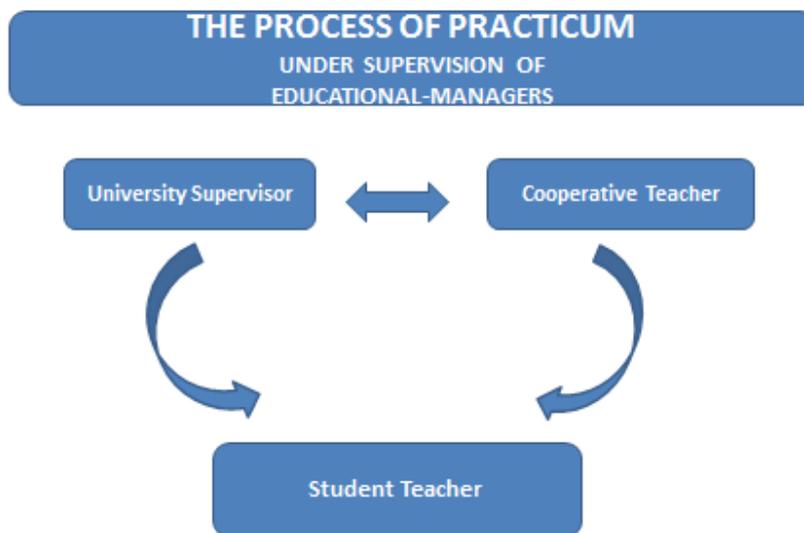
involved, availability or unavailability of resources and adhering to the procedure proposed, play a key role in effective implementation of the programs. 'Available resources and the way they are spent, influence students' learning opportunities.' (OECD, P.3). The backbone of the system of Education is Curriculum. Several needs are met through a curriculum such as molding the social behavior and inculcating required skills in the targeted individuals. The role of teachers is also considered to fall within the purview of curriculum design. As discussed by Ranjan, and Rehman (n.d.), 'the teacher is directly responsible for the learning achievement of the student'(p.3). Hence, teacher is considered as an important tool to execute the curriculum. This realization has opened new avenues for reforms in teacher education programs.

In the year 2000, Pakistan signed two declarations by UNESCO, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). Consequently, reforms were made in the Education sector. The curriculum 2003 was reformed into a Standard-based Curriculum in 2006 that promotes a Student-centered approach. As the Standards describe each level of competency for a particular class and age without restricting the pedagogy, the teacher has more liberty to mold his methods and strategies according to the contextual and indigenous needs of their pupils. This fact dictates the need for a teacher to be competent and trained enough in order to successfully deliver Standard-based curriculum in classrooms.

In 2009, *National Professional Standards for Teachers* established standards for teachers keeping special emphasis on teaching of English. Later on, The National Education Policy (2009) proposed, 'reform is required in all areas: pre-service training and standardization of qualifications' (p.42). A report, *Rationalization of pre-service Teacher Education programs in Pakistan* (2010) describes, 'many of the teacher preparation programs do not have capacity to meet the standards outlined by recent education policies'(p.19). The one year B.Ed program and certificate courses were incompatible with reforms. Hence the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan reformed the curriculum of Teachers' Education in 2010-12. Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) and Certificate in Teaching (CT) have been replaced by a two years' Associate Degree in Education (ADE) and four years' degree in Bachelors in Education (B. Ed). Bennie and Newstead (n.d) explains, 'The introduction of a new curriculum poses a range of challenges to teachers with regards to the underlying assumptions and goals, the subject demarcations, the content, the teaching approach and the methods of assessment.' (p.1).

The reformed courses in Education are designed on the Model of Teacher Education proposed by Teachers' College Columbia USA. This model proposes the concept of Practicum.

Figure:1



The process of Practicum under supervision of Educational Managers.

These courses are supposed to develop the content knowledge and pedagogical skills in Student-Teachers in order to train them accordingly to execute the reformed English curriculum (2006). The design of these courses cohere with SBC 2006, NPST 2009 and NEP 2009. They aim to educate prospective teacher who could implement the English curriculum 2006 in elementary classes.

In order to obtain better results, the reforms made in courses needs to be monitored so that the feedback would help the apex bodies in tailoring and revising the courses according to the needs of the local and cultural context. The principal benefit of inquiring about the effectiveness of an activity, course or program is the generation of valuable data that can be further used to improve the effectiveness of the course. 'All of today's students must have access to effective teaching—every day and in every classroom. Teacher preparation programs are evaluated—for the purposes of accountability and support'(Coggshall, Bivona, &Reschly, 2012,p.1).In the current local context of Pakistan, the success of the reforms made is largely dependent on the data and research conducted in the field that could provide feedback. Munshi and Bhatti (2009) also talks about the need and importance of the inquiries which should be made regarding the effectiveness of the teachers' education programs in order to address the issue of the deteriorating standards of

education at different levels in Pakistan. One of the main reasons in failing to address the issues in a timely manner, as well as sustaining or upgrading the education system in Pakistan, is the absence of research on course and program evaluation. Khan and Saeed (2009) claims that, ‘no adequate research is available to evaluate the B.Ed(Hons)programme’(p.86).The urgent need of data is felt at various levels, ‘in order to reform teacher education sector in Pakistan, there is a dire need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing teacher training programmes’ (Dilshad,& Muhammad,2010,p. 88).The value of teaching English as realized at government level, and as exhibited in NPST 2009 and NEP 2009, provokes the need to identify the obstacles in the execution of the English courses taught at B.Ed especially when these courses are peculiarly designed to train ELTs according to the criteria set by National Professional Standards for Teachers (2009) and to implement National Curriculum for English (2006), thus research based decisions can be taken to rectify the flaws and improve the quality of the program.

Hence,there is a need to collect data to identify the obstacles in the effective implantation of the reformed English courses in order to address the lacking, make research based decisions and speed up the process of implementation in the right direction. . This paper attempts to collect data in order to identify the obstacles faced by Educational Managers in the process of implementation of the English courses taught at B.Ed(Hons)and ADE so that the data could be used to improve the effectiveness of these courses.The findings will help in exploring the gaps and lacking so these shortcomings are addressed in order to establish the credibility of these courses in preparing Student-Teachers to implement the curriculum (2006) in elementary schools. Moreover, the findings will provide feedback to improve these courses, address the issues related to methodology and delivery, and further accelerate the process of evaluation within the Curriculum of Teachers Education 2012.

Research Question

Q.What are the challenges faced by Educational Managers in the effective delivery of the English courses taught at B.Ed/ ADE?

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the government institutes for Teachers’ Education which offers ADE/B.Ed(Hons) degree programs.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The process of effective language teaching comprises of three major components: appropriate content, need-driven methodology and a trained and skilled teacher. This implies that linguistic

content and teaching methodology, as proposed by the curriculum, are realized through a professionally educated language teacher. After reforms, trained teachers are required to teach the curriculum 2006 as, ‘there is a strict connection between teaching program and curriculum as they are within the other’ (Topkaya,&Küçük, 2010, p. 53). The revised Curriculum (2006) has stressed on language learning which focuses on setting certain achievable standards for students. The Standard –based reformed curriculum 2006 demands a set of qualities in teachers. ‘Educational literature, theory, and reform trends have long promoted putting teachers in a central role in curricular design.’ (Handler, 2010,p.1) . The reformed English courses included in curriculum of Education are designed on the same grounds. Therefore, a curriculum can be effective in realizing the desired standards of education only if the teachers’ education coheres with it and the courses effectively delivered in the proposed manner.

Collecting data regarding obstacles in effective implementation of these courses would provide support in sustaining and up-grading the courses. The Final Report on Quality Assurance of Teacher Training Programs Conducted by Directorate of Staff Development in 2007 suggests, ‘the GCETS are to provide revised and up-graded pre-service teacher education programs to prepare more effective teachers of elementary schools’(p. 5). Literature suggests that in most parts of the world, educationists, research scholars, academic institutions and government bodies put together their efforts to provide feedback in order to improve the teaching-learning process. In these circumstances, exploring the obstacles that hampers the effective execution of these courses becomes an important academic activity.

Yanik (2007) supports the idea of identifying obstacles and the process of evaluation as he discusses, ‘It gives feedback about how the planned curriculum is perceived and implemented by the teachers, and how the implemented curriculum is experienced by the students in the classroom. Thus, it helps the curriculum developers to visualize how their decisions are interpreted and practiced by the teachers in the classroom. It also helps the teachers to see how the curriculum implementation is experienced by the students. In turn, what is and is not implemented together with what is and is not experienced can be determined and the reasons for the differences among the intended, perceived, implemented and experienced curriculum can be recognized.’(p. 11)

Literature review brings in light various studies that were conducted to identify obstacles in the implementation of new courses or curriculum. (Berge &Muilenburg ,2011; Bingimlas, 2009) identified following obstacles that hinders the effective implementation of curriculum:

1. Lack of teachers confidence
2. Lack of teacher competence
3. Resistance to change & negative attitude
4. Lack of time

5. Lack of effective training
6. Lack of resources
7. Lack of technical support
8. Lack of research & monitoring
9. Lack of student support

The studies conducted to explore the obstacles in the implementation of courses and curriculum are quite useful in making decisions related to policy and practicality of the courses. Yanik (2001) describes, 'the findings related to the problems in curriculum implementation can also help teachers to improve their performance and instructional strategies and can be used as a reference study in not only English language teaching methods courses in universities but also pre-service and in-service training programs offered by the Ministry of Education.' (pg 11-12)

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a basic study that is qualitative in nature and uses Phenomenological design. The study aims to collect the facts about the challenges faced by Educational managers in implementing these courses through participant's experiences.

SAMPLE and SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Educational Managers including director of education department, focal person of the reformed program, principals of the colleges of Education, Head of Teachers Education departments of universities and others who worked in apex bodies were selected through Simple Random Sampling Technique.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The instrument used in the research, is In-depth Interview. The Tool was passed through Expert and face Validation. The instrument is comprised of a set of ten questions, besides having spontaneous probes and instantial questions.

PROCEDURE

All interviews were audio- recorded with the prior permission of the participants Interview protocol was observed. The data collected from participants is detailed, rich. Thematic analysis is used as a technique for data analysis. Data is mainly analyzed through three tier analysis and tracing out themes and patterns.

FINDINGS

The data revealed following obstacles that hinder the effective execution of the English courses;

1. The negative behavior of the Co-operative Teachers affects the conducive learning environment and demotivates Student-Teachers.
2. Lack of updated knowledge among in-service teachers.
3. Lack of resources in the Teachers' Education institutes.g infrastructure, libraries
4. Lack of training among in-service teachers.
5. Frequent Power failure in schools and institutes.
6. Lack of resources and poor working conditions in public schools where student teachers conduct their practicum.
7. Gap in standards among universities and the affiliated colleges of education.
8. Lack of alignment in the policies amongst all the apex bodies, universities and colleges.
9. Different institutions offer different set of subjects offered as optional subjects to Student-Teachers resulting in imbalance production of trained teachers for different subjects
10. Lack of technical support.g ICT equipment and training.
11. Imbalanced Teacher Educators' capacity to deliver these courses.
12. Traditional mode of assessment at Universities.
13. The course outline is not followed properly.
14. Non- existence of a Monitoring body.
15. The delay in the announcement by the government ,in the policy for hiring and the grades to be allotted to these graduates in public sector.

DISCUSSION

There are multiple factors affecting the execution of the courses in the proposed way. Problems related to the delivery of the courses can be divided into two categories. Category one is related to the administrative issues whereas category two is the availability of the resources in the field. These problems include: the lack of qualified and trained Teacher Educators to teach these English courses; inappropriate posting of trained Teacher Educators as per region; lack of resources in training institutes and elementary schools along with the poor working conditions;

Unsatisfactory performance of Teacher Educators; Lack of coordination among stakeholders; administrative flaws at universities, colleges and schools and the lack of coordination among apex bodies, policy makers, universities and colleges. Thus most of the identified obstacles are similar to the obstacles discovered by Berge & Muilenburg, 2011; Bingimlas, 2009.

Discussing the problems that they faced during the implementation phase and even afterwards, the Educational Managers agreed that the greatest problem is the rationalized deployment of the faculty. It means posting the trained teachers at appropriated places, according to the need of the region and their expertise. Because of political interference, there has been a great difficulty in posting the faculty appropriately. Currently, some teachers are bound to teach a subject which is not their expertise and others have been posted not according to the need of the region. Because of this, there are some regions where there are four or five trained teachers educators of the same subject working together and at other places not a single Teacher Educator of a particular subject has been posted. Conclusions also point to the problem of the training of in-service teachers. In-service teachers fail to exhibit professionalism. There is hindrance from their side as they are not willing to take ownership of the newly introduced degree programs. There is need for a great effort on their part to up-date themselves in terms of the latest content knowledge, especially the methodology. As one of the participants said, "senior teachers also need to go through literature and plus the new content and pedagogy...a lot of effort was required for them to be up dated... but most of them didn't reach that level." hence, we conclude that it has been challenging to arrange for the training for the in-service teachers and motivating them to bring improvement in themselves and in their environment. Abbas and Lu (2013) discusses that there is a lack of co-ordination between university and school management, 'one of the results of co-ordination gap is school faculty's apathetic attitude towards practicum. The school faculty, including mentors and heads undervalue or don't value the practicum' (p. 388).

As the literature review suggests that the change in the teachers' education curriculum has upgraded the system. These courses are being run through Universities which receive direct instructions from the Higher Education Commission. As a result, there is a gap among the standards of universities and the affiliated colleges of education. College teachers need to improve their capacity. Currently, exams are conducted by universities and students face problems. Then, there is also a lack of alignment in the policies amongst all the apex bodies, university and colleges. They are not following the same policies in two aspects; (a) different institutions offer different set of subjects as optional subjects to Student-Teachers, and (b) the courses are delivered with variety of standards but exams are conducted by a university. At times, colleges are not able to complete credit hours or fail to cover the syllabus but since the examination is conducted by universities, the students suffer. It implies a lack of coordination.

Universities and colleges have also limited the options available for the Student-Teachers to select the subject area according to their own will. They force the Student-Teacher to choose a particular combination of subjects. This is because they lack trained faculty for all subjects. This practice could create problems in future.

According to the Educational Managers, another problem which has demotivated Student-Teachers to a great extent, is the delay in the announcement in the policy for hiring and the grades to be allotted to these graduates in public sector. Participants agreed that once these graduates are hired in the public sector, it will automatically bring improvement in the classrooms and will also clear up a lot of confusion regarding the worth and importance of these degree programs.

Secondly, the participants insisted that there was a lack of resources for the Student-Teachers in their own institutions and in public schools as well. The lack of resources include; lack of infrastructure, libraries and resources related to ICT. One of the participants disclosed that there are only a few libraries in teacher's education colleges and these libraries are also not up to date. In public schools, there are no libraries throughout the province of Sindh. The Student-Teachers have problems in the field because of the lack of technical support. Along with this, there is limited resource available for digital assistance. The greatest problem identified by the participants, is the shortage of power both in colleges and in the field too. Participant no. 1 said, "a huge problem was of shortage of power. There was no power in working hours." Participant no. 2 also insisted that power failure is a fundamental problem.

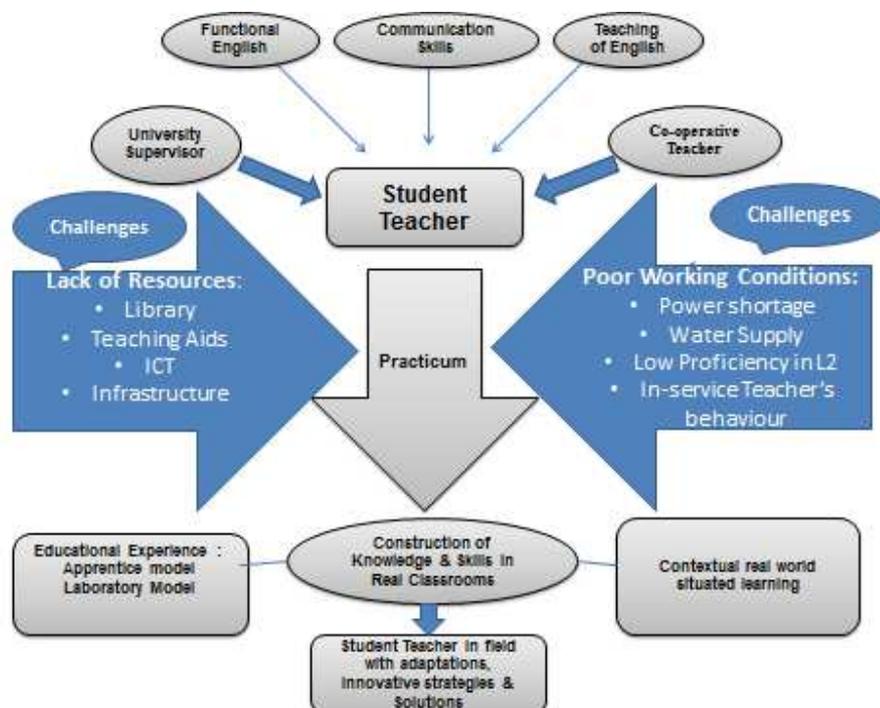
Hence, the lack of trained Teacher Educators is the greatest hurdle in the proper delivery of the courses. The participants of the study were graduates of science, economics and education but none had a degree with major in English; even so, they were being forced to teach English courses. The reformed curriculum of teacher education has not yet completely replaced the one year B.Ed program and one of the main reasons is the lack of trained faculty. As mentioned by an Educational Manager, there is a lack of trained faculty and moreover, due to political interference, these teachers are not posted according the needs of the region. As a result, there are some places in Sindh where not a single trained Teacher Educator is available in colleges of education to conduct these three courses. Therefore these courses are conducted by Teacher Educators who hold a degree in a field other than English.

There is a misalignment in the policies and schedule followed among the universities and colleges. Teacher Educators do not follow the given timeline and prescribed course outline and, as a result, only Student-Teachers suffer during exams. The educational manager proposes that there should be at least three meetings during the semester; one at the beginning of the semester to set the targets and discuss theoretical examination paper pattern, another one in the middle of

the semester to align the pace of all institutions, and then a final meeting before the end of the semester, in order to handle related issues before the exams.

The main factor is the lack of resources, both in the institutes providing teachers education and in the public schools. These courses can be effectively delivered to the Student-Teachers only if libraries, ICT and other teaching resources are available at particular institutes. There are only a few libraries in colleges of education and these libraries do not have a wide and updated collection of books regarding teacher education, especially in English language teaching. Computers and internet facilities are also not readily available in colleges. Most of the time, teaching aids are arranged by the Student-Teachers themselves. This fact discloses a reality of the classroom. Student-Teachers face severe difficulties during practicum because of poor working conditions at elementary schools. Participants mentioned that they cannot complain about lack of educational resources when basic necessities like drinking water, blackboard, toilets, lights, fan and power supply are not available. Bringing any academic reform under these poor working conditions is simply more than a challenge. How the obstacles affect the process of Practicum and implementation of these courses is evident from the following figure;

Figure:2



The challenges in the process of implementation of reformed English courses in B.Ed/ADE

Though the factors mentioned above hinder the effective implementation of these courses but they prepare Student Teachers for real classroom situations. In this way they move close to the target of the reforms.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there are several obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of English courses taught at B.Ed and ADE including Lack of resources, lack of trained ELTs, frequent power failures etc. AS Bennie & Newstead (n.d) discuss, "Many of the issues discussed apply to curriculum reform in general. We feel that the obstacles identified are not specific to new content, but also apply to traditional content being taught within a new approach." (p. 8). The Course outline has not been followed by Teacher Educators at some places. There are hindrances because of administrative issues and lack of coordination between universities and colleges as well as between College/University Supervisor, Teacher Educator and Student-Teacher. Lack of Trained ELT and Teacher Educators, Lack of resources, negative attitude of in-service teachers are the major issues which hinder the effective execution of reformed English courses in B.Ed/ADE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educational institutes should be provided with required resources.
2. Trained faculty should be rationally and appropriately posted in every region.
3. More Teacher Educators should be trained to teach English courses.
4. The coordination should be improved between the Apex bodies, universities and colleges through meetings regarding administrative and academic issues.
5. Teacher Educators must be bound by the universities and colleges to complete the courses.
6. There should be a support body in order to facilitate Teacher-Educators in teaching.
7. The capacity of the Co-operative Teacher can also be improved through practicum by asking them to deliver a few lessons using modern teaching methodologies.
8. All three English courses must be reviewed in the light of the reviewed curriculum and the latest research based information available in the field.
9. More master trainers must be trained and deputed to train more teachers.
10. Universities should align the set of options amongst the subjects offered to Student-Teachers.
11. No institution should restrict the options of subjects offered to the students.
12. The government should recruit fresh graduates of ADE and B.Ed to speed up the process of implementation of curriculum (2006) in the classrooms.

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