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Investigating the Status of Multi-Grade Teaching at Elementary Level in the Province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (Pakistan)

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the status of Multi-grade teaching at elementary level in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa. The researcher used a three points rating scale Questionnaire for data collection from the Professional Support Staff (District Education Officers, Deputy District Education Officers, and Assistant Education Officers). The objectives of the study were; (i) To find out whether Multi-grade schools prevailed in this district, (ii) to explore whether the teachers teaching in these Multi-grade schools were properly trained for Multi-grade Teaching, and (iii) to investigate whether Multi-grade schools were officially recognized for Multi-grade Teaching. Twenty five District Education Officers (Male), twenty five Deputy District Education Officers (Male), 150 Assistant

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District Education Officers, and 20,032 Multi-grade Schools and 18, 85,298 students of multi-graded government primary schools in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa contituted population of the study. Thirty of the Professional Support Staff, six each from district Nowshera, Peshawar, Mardan, D.I.Khan, and Abbotabad were selected through purposive sampling. The collected data through Questionnaire from the Professional Support Staff was analyzed with the statistical tools of percentage and Chi-Square. In the light of data analysis the following major findings were found; (i) Multi-grade Teaching was not officially recognized in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (ii) Teachers were mostly not trained for teaching Multi-grade in Multi-grade situation.

Introduction

In Pakistan literacy rate is very low as compared to South Asian countries like India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh etc, which is very alarming and opens door towards terrorism and extremism. Lack of basic education is a silent killer in the less developed countries (Gene, 2005). According to UNESCO (2003) all nations should ensure that education is a right for their entire citizens. Pakistan has also signed Jomtien declaration on education for all (EFA) in September 1990. Pakistan has to make sure to give access to all children to education and fulfill the promise in eradication of illiteracy by 2015. To do so the development of multi-grade teaching is one of the best strategies that will improve access to education particularly in rural areas where there are few teachers who handle all the grades. Multi-grade teaching is an educational setting (Prep – Fifth) classes where, a single

teacher teaches more than one grades at the same time in a single classroom (Veenman, 1995). Berry & Little (2006) state that in multi-grade teaching one teacher, in the same classroom at the same time, takes responsibility for more than one grades. A number of terms such as combination class, vertical grouping, mixed years, family grouping, composite class, split class, double graded, and unitary schools in the case of one teacher teaching from Nursery to grade V. However, in many schools there are two or three teacher schools that are responsible for teaching across two/three grades (Little, 2006). There are many schools all over the world which have multi-grade teaching. Multi-grade teaching is prevailing in about 30% of the schools worldwide and more than 50% in South African schools. Multi-grade teaching is not limited to developing countries only but many developed countries like USA, France, Canada, UK, Nether Lands, China Australia, Finland and Sweden have also this type of teaching (Veenman, 1995). According to Little (2006) multi-grade teaching takes place either by choice or by necessity. It is adapted by choice when the teachers decide to take it as pedagogic technique to organize their students in multi-grade setting. In India, China, Sri Lanka, Colombia and some developed countries multi-grade teaching is adopted as an effective teaching strategy. Mason and Burns (1997) are of the view that apart from this, there are certain conditions, where multi-grade teaching becomes necessity. According to Mansoor, (2011) multi-grade teaching in itself is an effective teaching strategy used in areas of low population density like Gilgat, Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Chitral where 80% of primary schools are under the supervision of Professional Development Centre Chitral (PDCC) the branch of Agha Khan

University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) working effectively and successfully in multi-grade setting. In Australia, UK, Sweden and Finland multi-grade teaching is adapted by choice and is in practice effectively. Apart from above mentioned countries, there are several countries the worldwide which have not achieved the full target of student's participations in primary school because of insufficient resources allocation for infrastructure development, unwillingness of teachers to teach in distant areas, lack of teachers, inadequate number of schools etc, in such scenario some educationists suggest that multi-grade teaching can play an important role in fulfilling Education for all (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals commitments (Little, 2006). Multi-grade schools need favor of teachers and classrooms as compared to conventional schools. Multi-grade school can be built cheaply and can be established in large number and can be easily located in rural areas (Mansoor, 2011). According to UNESCO (2003) report, in Pakistan there is no concept of this phenomenon. Little or no attention is paid to multi-grade teaching. A specific number of teachers are posted in a school and if the number of teachers is insufficient for the requirement of the school multi-grade teaching occurs. In some cases only one teacher is appointed for many students and the teacher is compelled to teach them. Another cause of multi-grade teaching is that teachers do not want their appointment in rural areas; they use political support to avoid transfer (UNESCO, 2003).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are; (i) To find out whether Multi-grade schools prevailed in this district, (ii) to explore whether

the teachers teaching in these Multi-grade schools were properly trained for Multi-grade Teaching, and (iii) to investigate whether Multi-grade schools were officially recognized for Multi-grade Teaching.

Method and Procedure

Twenty five District Education Officers (Male), twenty five Deputy District Education Officers(Male), 150 Assistant District Education Officers, 20,032 Multi-grade Schools, and 18, 85,298 students of multi-graded government primary schools in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa constituted population of the study. Thirty of the Professional Support Staff, six each from district Nowshera, Peshawar, Mardan, D. I.Khan, and Abbotabad were selected through purposive sampling. The collected data through Questionnaire from the Professional Support Staff and researcher's self-observation was analyzed by the statistical tools of percentage and Chi- Square.

Findings and Results

Table 1: There are two or three classrooms primary schools in this district.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	17	13	0	30	15.8
Percentage	56.67	48.33	0	100	

Table 1 explains that 56.67 per cent of the professional support staff was of the opinion that there were mostly two or three classrooms primary schools existing in this district,

48.33 percent of the participants were agreed to some extent, and nobody agreed to the statement. Chi Square 15.8 was greater than the table value at 0.05. The statement was found significant and therefore, it was accepted.

Table 2: The teachers of these multi-grade schools are properly trained for multi-grade teaching.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	1	10	19	30	16.2
Percentage	3.33	33.33	63.34	100	

Table 2 indicates that only 3.33 per cent of the respondents were mostly in favor of the statement that the teachers of these multi-grade schools were properly trained for multi-grade teaching. 33.33 per cent agreed to some extent, and 63.34 per cent did agree at all. Chi Square value 16.2 was greater than the table value at 0.05. The statement was found significant in favor of "Not at all", therefore, it was rejected.

Table 3: Special attention is paid to multi-grade teaching.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	1	4	25	30	34.2
Percentage	3.33	13.33	83.34	100	

Table 3 states that only 3.33 percent of the professional support staff was of the view that special attention was mostly paid to multi-grade teaching, 13.33 per cent agreed

to some extent, and 83.34 per cent did not agree at all. Chi Square 34.2 was found greater than the table value at 0.05. The statement was significant in favor of "Not at all", therefore, it was rejected.

Table 4: These multi-grade schools are officially entitled for multi-grade teaching.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	3	2	25	30	33.8
Percentage	10	6.66	83.34	100	

Table 4 explains that 10 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that multi-grade schools were mostly officially recognized for multi-grade teaching, only 6.66 per cent agreed to some extent, and 83.34 per cent were in favor of "Not at all". Chi square value 33.8 was greater than the table value at 0.05. The statement was significant in favor of "Not at all", and therefore, it was rejected.

Table 5: The government is providing special financial support and facilitation for multi-grade schools.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	0	9	21	30	22.2
Percentage	0	30	70	100	

Table 5 shows that none of the respondents was of the view that the government was providing special financial support and facilitation for multi-grade teaching. 30 per cent of the professional staff agreed to some extent, and 70 per cent did not agree at all. The calculated value 22.2 of Chi Square was found greater than table value at 0.05. The statement was found significant in favor of "Not at all", and therefore, it was rejected.

Table 6: Teachers are encouraged by the government with incentives who teach in multi-grade setting.

Frequencies/ Percentage	Mostly	To some extent	Not at all	Total Frequencies/ Percentage	χ^2
Frequencies	0	4	26	30	39.2
Percentage	0	13.33	86.67	100	

Table 6 indicates that none of the professional support staff was of the opinion that teachers were mostly encouraged by the government with incentives who taught in multi-grade setting, 13.33 per cent agreed to some extent, and 86.67 per cent did not agree to the statement. Chi Square value 39.2 was found greater than the table value at 0.05. The statement was found significant in favor of "Not at all", and therefore, it was rejected.

Findings of the study

- (i) Multi-grade teaching was mostly prevailing in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.
- (ii) Most of the teachers of these schools were not properly trained for Multi-grade teaching.
- (iii) Majority of the participants were of the opinion that no special attention was paid to Multi-grade schools.
- (iv) It was found that Multi-grade schools were not officially recognized.
- (v) No Special financial support and facilitation is provided for Multi-grade teaching schools.

Discussion

Analysis of this study indicated that multi-grade teaching is widely prevailed in the remote and urban areas of the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (Pakistan). The analysis of data collected through Questionnaires from Professional Support Staff, Acknowledged and supported, the APEID Report (UNESCO/ APEID, 1996) which pointed out that multi-grade teaching has been neglected by the education department. As for as teachers training is concerned, the findings of the study indicated that teachers were mostly not trained for multi-grade teaching which becomes a challenge for teachers' development. It was observed that teachers in multi-grade were frustrated and de-motivated toward multi-grade classrooms. Mansoor (2011) shares the sentiments that multi-grade teachers require special training and learning materials without which it becomes difficult for teachers to handle the multi-grade classes. In such scenario the students feel neglected and get bored easily which in turn affects their learning levels. It creates problems if not implemented properly (Mansoor, 2011). Little (2006) is of the view that the report on Pakistan mentions that of the problem is a lack of teachers trained to handle multi-grade classrooms; this issue is not re-addressed in the account of teachers training. This research study also verifies Little's (2006) report. Ames (2004) says that it is very controversial in the context of multi-grade teaching, since teachers learning occurs at different levels in diverse fields

and contexts. Ames (2004) shares his sentiments that isolated and isolating condition of work and poverty of the communities served by multi-grade classrooms reinforces teachers' negative perception toward multi-grade teaching and so was observed by the researcher in this research study. Furthermore, the results of this study indicates that teachers are not willing for the realities of multi-grade situation, teachers just teach because that is expected from them. Studies conducted on multi-grade teaching show the lack of teacher's preparedness for multi-grade teaching (Kyne, 2005; Lingam, 2007; Little, 2005). Little (2005) is of the opinion that pre-service and in-service teachers training are vital for multi-grade setting. Lingam (2007) and (Mason & Burn, 1997) also emphasizes that for effective multi-grade teaching, the teacher must be better trained. The findings of this study show that special attention was not paid to multi-grade teaching by the government. Even, most of the Professional Support Staff was of the opinion that Multi-grade teaching was not officially recognized. The findings of this study also indicate that government was not providing special financial support and facilitation to Multi-grade teaching. In the current study, it was found out that teachers in Multi-grade situation were not encouraged by the government with incentives who had been teaching in Multi-grade situation.

Conclusions

In view of analysis and findings, it is concluded that Multi-grade teaching is prevailing throughout the province but it is ignored from the government's side. Teachers deployed in these Multi-grade schools are not properly trained for Multi-grade teaching. Even these Multi-grade schools are not officially recognized, no special attention is paid, special financial support and, facilitation is provided to these special types of schools.

Recommendations

In view of analysis and findings the following recommendations are made:

- (i) The government should officially recognize Multi-grade schools in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.
- (ii) Proper Multi-grade teachers training programme must be arranged for Multi-grade school teachers.
- (iii) Multi-grade teaching is activity based and students centered therefore, these schools must be equipped with teaching materials and other resources required.

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