Teacher Education and Sustainable Change: where lies the problem?

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Abstract

Education is considered as a powerful means to bring major change, emancipation, and development at both individual and regional levels. Though education policies and curriculum documents since 1947 are plenty in Pakistan, yet it falls short of achieving these objectives (Siddiqui, 2021). We have significant literature available on change at societal level brought through education in general and teacher education in particular. The central question, however, is that why teacher education programmes in Pakistan have not been able to bring about a sustainable educational change. This paper aims to respond to this important question and suggest some doable ways to make teacher education programmes more effective to lead to sustainable change. The paper identifies reasons behind unsustainability of professional development of teachers which are lack of understanding of educational reforms, deficient re-entry preparation on teacher education programme, insufficient support from colleagues and head teachers, absence of follow up mechanism to track teachers' performance and their professional development (both content and pedagogical knowledge) of the trainees. This paper focuses on sustainable development from the perspective of teacher education in Pakistan and suggests a mechanism to sustain the educational change initiated by a teacher education programme.

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Introduction

A seminal study on teacher education in Pakistan, cited by Warick and Reimers, (1995:58) concludes that, "Teacher certification, which is designed to improve the quality of instruction, has no relationship with three of the four achievement tests and a weak relationship with the fourth." This finding posed a fundamental question about the validity and quality of teacher education with special reference to educational change at personal and school level. The relationship of personal and institutional change is gaining increasing attention in the recent literature on change. Fullan (1992:114) argued that "teacher development and school development must go hand and hand. You cannot have one without the other." He also considered teacher education as a "lifelong learning starting before one enters teacher pre-service and continuing throughout one's career." This positional paper maintains that personal and institutional development has to be linked. Another challenge is the sustainability of the change. Before discussing the possible scenarios of change, let us clarify a mis-notion about sustainability. Sustainability does not just mean "preservation" rather it is an ever developing process. Thus, a sustainable change is a change which is developmental in nature.

Educational change and sustainability

In this section some scenarios are presented with reference to the educational change as a result of a teacher education programme.

Scenario 1

In the present instance of change, the teacher educator employs certain real-world activities that are meant to be effective (Siddiqui, 2010). The materials employed are frequently seen as having an instant impact, like speeding up reading. It has been noted that exercises and specially created materials are employed so that the easier paragraphs arrive later to demonstrate an improvement in reading speed. Similar to this, the teachers exhibit some talents as

well, giving the students the appearance of change in an unnatural setting. But this change—which might just be an illusion of change—remains limited to the teacher education program, which lasts just a relatively short period. Participants return to their previous, accustomed teaching methods when they return to their actual situation. Both the school where the instructor works and the individual teacher are affected by this type of change.

Scenario 2

The second scenario related to change may be more common and well-known in the local setting. This type of change typically lasts only a short while with teachers who actually aim to use the learned strategies for some time, but due to a lack of a supportive environment at school, such as a lack of cooperation by the colleagues in school, the environment tempts the teacher to return to the comfort zone after the initial "adventurturism."

Scenario 3

The third situation, in which students in a teacher education program are exposed to certain pedagogical practices, is also extremely frequent. Some participants pick up a few techniques and apply them for the remainder of their teaching careers. This type of change is essentially stagnant and non-developmental. Dalin and Rolff (1993:96) caution that in such circumstances, "to replace one practice with a new one may simply mean to replace one rigidity with another." This transformation is misleading in that teachers who continue to learn new teaching techniques think they have changed their teaching techniques because that is what was demanded of them. This belief is an illusion and may lead to an attitude of snobbery where learning is not taking place.

Scenario 4

The fourth scenario regarding change is that the participants undergo a change during a teacher education programme; go back to school and they keep on further refining through constant reflections on their day-to-day experiences, finetuning their

teaching strategies and developing professionally throughout their teaching life. The core of this kind of change is 'sustainability'.

Having gone through these four different possible scenarios regarding change, the central question arises, why the line of change has a strong probability to come back to the base line of status quo? And what are the factors and/or forces of resistance that bring the upward line of change back and hinder it to be a vertical line. Unpacking the forces will help understand why change disappears from teachers' lives and/ or move to school.

Forces of Resistance

In this section, some commonly observed forces are mentioned which can potentially bring the line of change to the starting line or create another status quo. These forces are linked to the:
- Individual
- Programme
- School
- External Environment

Individual based forces

The person themselves (in our case, the teacher) may contribute to change together with other causes. A change may be started and maintained if a teacher is committed and determined. In contrast, there are fewer chances for a change initiative to occur or be sustained for a while if a teacher is not dedicated and/or persistent (Siddiqui, 2021).

Programme based forces

In this part, various troubling aspects that are evident in Pakistan's traditional teacher education program that directly impact the start or sustainability of change are explored.

Change in pedagogy is equivalent to change in education

A typical teacher education program places a greater emphasis on teaching pedagogy-related skills. instructional is typically thought

of as knowing and using specific instructional techniques. These socially acceptable teaching methods, such as pair work, group work, student conversation, etc., are taught to teachers as a cure-all for all educational woes. Unfortunately, we haven't given much thought to investigating teachers' perceptions and assumptions on some fundamental educational challenges before building on those perceptions and assumptions. It is also discouraging that appropriate attention is paid. It is further discouraging that attitudinal change is given the proper emphasis (Siddiqui, 2021). As a result, the teacher only employs the strategies and procedures they are exposed to because specialists advise them to be used. Change is not seen as a whole process but rather as a tool in this paradigm of teacher education.

Local problems, imported solutions

Another significant obstacle to change is the fact that many of the approaches and practices that instructors learn about in teacher education programs are uncommon in our societies and seem foreign to their own surroundings. This is so because the majority of research-oriented themes are derived from industrialized nations, whose challenges and classroom environments are very dissimilar from ours. Therefore, when Pakistani instructors return to their actual classrooms, they seldom notice any connection between what they learned during the teacher training program and what they are experiencing there.

Conflict between the professed ideas and actual practice

Wide discrepancies between instructors' stated beliefs and their actual practices are a major impediment to transformation. The best way to describe this phenomenon is through some instances. There are teacher educators out there who profess good concepts like a humanistic approach, teamwork, critical thinking, reflective practices, etc., but their personal actions are almost the complete opposite of what they preach. Because of the stark contrast between theory and practice, program participants become demotivated and begin to believe that there is no connection

between theories and real-world classroom practices and that they are only appropriate for books or teacher education programs.

Transplantation approach vs reflective practice

Participants in a typical teacher education program are given some tips on how to be a successful teacher (Siddiqui, 2007). Different lists of qualities that make a good teacher are given to the participants, with the false expectation that simply understanding these qualities will make the participants good instructors. This approach considers the teacher to be merely a consumer of knowledge rather than a producer of knowledge. They are not exposed to any form of critical thinking or reflective techniques that would help them make judgments based on their future professional demands. As a result, the teachers adopt a rigid, static, and rigidly prescribed form of instruction that is highly unlikely to succeed in the different context of real world. As a result, when the teachers return to their original schools after the program, they frequently struggle to use the provided set of tactics in a setting that is substantially different from the one generated by the program. The teachers drop off the vertical curve of change and onto the horizontal line of the status quo as an underlying sense of vulnerability and frustration sets in.contexts. A feeling of vulnerability and frustration creeps in and the teachers drop themselves from the vertical curve of change to the horizontal line of status quo.

Teachers' self-image of a helpless consumer

The majority of instructors share the belief that they cannot make any changes to the curriculum because it has been handed down to them. Furthermore, the majority of them find research to be an alien activity. The integration of teaching and research and how a teacher might improve or extend a particular curriculum are rarely covered in a typical teacher preparation program. The traditional programs only serve to reinforce this perception of oneself as the least valuable and effective member of a big educational system. The rising line of change is swiftly brought down to the baseline of the status quo by this defeated mindset.

Lack of readiness for re-entry

The process of changing a school is complicated, but most teacher education programs downplay the importance of the re-entry procedure (Siddiqui, 2007). There isn't a thorough discussion of several fundamental aspects of change, such as its holistic character, its sluggish pace, and how it cannot be mandated. Additionally, the majority of teacher education programs do not emphasize action plans, such as short-term planning and long-term planning according to participant circumstances. They quickly come to the conclusion that trying to change is pointless and that maintaining the change won't help. **Lack of follow-up**
Any change endeavor must have a robust follow-up structure in place to be successful. Typically, there is no follow-up mechanism after completing a teacher education program, leaving the participants feeling alone. Continual monitoring and teacher support are the two main aims of a follow-up system.

School-based gravitational forces

In the preceding part, we looked at a few factors that prevent change in teacher education programs relating to their nature and makeup. When discussing the post-programme phase, Guskey (1985, p. 59) says that "support during this period of trial and experimentation is critical. Teachers need continuous guidance and direction in order to make adaptation while maintaining programme fidelity."
In this section school-based gravitational forces will be discussed that impact change.

The head teacher

The head teacher is essential to keeping a change going. A head teacher's chances of success are higher if she or he actively participates in the reform process. On the other hand, it is more probable that the change won't happen or that it will happen very quickly if a head teacher plays no part in the process. The head teacher is typically unable to participate in traditional teacher education programs. As a result, a head teacher can find themselves in a situation where they are unable to comprehend the underlying meaning of the change or value the school's change initiatives. Thus, provide little support to the teachers working for change. Several useful initiatives are wasted as the head teacher has an autocratic approach and is unable to share and understand

the trainee's perspectives. Hopkins (1995:11) underlining the role of leadership suggests, "Leadership which arises from relevant knowledge or experience seems to be more successful than leadership stemming from authority."

Unfortunately, many training programmes focusing on issues faced by the head teachers are not available for in Pakistan. Furthermore, they are not empowered enough to act as catalysts in initiating and sustaining educational change.

Cooperation from colleagues

Only with the support of others around you can maintain a change. The lack of appreciation among coworkers in the classroom is a major factor in stifling progress. Ball (1987, p. 28) quotes Lacey (1977) as saying "change or the possibility of change brings to the surface those subterranean conflicts and differences which are otherwise glossed over or obscured in the daily routine of school life." The bulk of the time, the frigid behavior of colleagues demoralizes the teacher who strives to bring about change in the classroom. The head teacher's lack of supportive behavior further aggravates the harm. The end consequence is a sad solitude that ultimately forces the teacher to

School policy

After completion of a teacher training programme, a teacher returns to his/her school. A teacher returns to his or her school once the teacher training program is through. In order to keep the change going, the school's policy is vital. The likelihood of remaining stable to the changes is low if school policy is unsupportive. The implementation of change will not be sustained if the school's policies on punishment, tests, homework, etc. are not founded on a flexible approach.

External Environment

In this section some strong forces are discussed which exert their pressure from outside the school but the impact of this pressure is felt by every stakeholder in the school. These forces in their existing state are generally putting their weight against the change initiatives taking place in the school.

Community based pressure

The role of community in making a change initiative successful is crucial. Dalin and Rolff (1993:6) underline the role of parents and home and suggest:

> Research indicates that as much as 80-90 percent of variation in the learning outcomes is attributed to the home and local environment. Without a close cooperation with homes and the community, schools cannot provide learning opportunities.

In our culture, there is a lack of communication between the family and the school. Additionally, parents' attitudes about their children's education are not exactly encouraging. They don't give much thought to their children's personality development and just want them to perform as many tasks as possible in order to earn good scores. Parents frequently put pressure on instructors to ensure that their children receive good scores. The teacher who returns to the classroom after completing a teacher education program and tries out new methods does not receive any praise or support from the parents since they are just interested in getting good outcomes. So, for them *process* has no importance and the only significant thing is *product*.

The Curriculum

Another crucial factor in the process of educational change is the curriculum. In Pakistani context, the curriculum is prepared at the national level and the teachers' sole role is to "implement" it. On the basis of national curriculum, syllabus is developed that is usually presented in the form of textbooks in Pakistan. Textbooks occupy the most important role in most of our school systems. It is a prevalent belief that the role of the teachers is to teach textbooks and completion of textbooks is considered the greatest concern of school administration and thus school teachers is to finish the programme, i.e., the textbooks. The teachers, even after the end of a teacher education programme, have no room for innovation as

curriculum and syllabus are predetermined. Several teachers, though cognizant of innovative pedagogy, feel themselves shackled by the textbooks. Furthermore, traditional teacher education programmes in Pakistan do not offer skills to enrich or enhance the given curriculum. Consequently, when teachers go back to their schools the existing curriculum de-motivates them to initiate an educational change.

Examination

The force of external examination impacts all stakeholders including the head teacher, teacher, teaching methodology, students, and parents. In the absence of a vibrant assessment system of school performance, the appraisal of a head teacher wholly depends on the examination results of the school. Similarly, performance of a teacher is appraised on the results of his/her class. In a situation where parents expect a lot from teachers to make their children prepared for the examination, and the students' concern, in majority of the cases, is also similar. These pressures from different directions, i.e., students, head teacher, parents, and colleagues emanate from examination. Majority of the teachers complain about the shortage of time as they have to finish the assigned syllabus in a stipulated period of time. The pressure of time and the anxiety of finishing the syllabus flow from the concern about these external examinations. Thus, it is through external examination system that the affairs of schools are controlled.

Some Suggestions for sustainable educational change

In this section, some doable recommendations are given to set up an effective mechanism to initiate and sustain educational change.

Change at three levels

In teacher education programmes, serious efforts are needed to bring change in the participants at three levels, i.e. conceptual, pedagogical and attitudinal. Focusing change at any one of these three levels will not work if it has not occurred at the other two levels. There is a golden rule in this respect; a change in existing belief system is required before expecting a change in the outside

world, and the same rule can be applied to understand the change in conceptual domain of the teachers. The greatest challenge a teacher education programme faces is to facilitate teachers to reconceptualize some basic educational issues and the profession of teaching. Guskey (1995:59) suggests that "The specific teacher beliefs and attitudes most crucial to their professional growth and development need to be explored and better ways of measuring these variables need to be found." When teachers come to a teacher education institute they come with certain fixed ideas and beliefs about the role of the teacher, student, pedagogy, and education. Teachers should be facilitated to learn, unlearn and relearn the process of teaching and learning in a specific context through multiple ways, i.e., reflective journals, debriefing sessions, critical thinking, cooperative learning, and action research. In the same way, some serious efforts are also needed to be made to bring a favorable change in the attitudes of the teachers. These changes, at three levels, are not isolated ones, rather are complimentary in nature and provide strength for one another.

Balance between theory and practice

A teacher education programme should work to get a perfect balance between theory and practice. Supervised visits to schools, observation of real-time classrooms, introducing team teaching, peer-teaching and individual teaching, and seminars and conferences are the possible ways to put theory into action. Teaching practice – one of the most important tool to link theory and practice should be a well thought-out process rather than a formality. The programme participants, before actually delivering a lesson in the classroom, should visit the school to familiarize themselves with the school culture by interviewing the teachers, observing the classes, and meeting the students. These pre-teaching activities help the programme participants to plan lessons carefully. The lesson plans should be shared in the large group. This exercise helps the programme participants to further refine their lesson plans. The programme participants should start their teaching in pairs. In a typical lesson, one programme participant should act as a teacher and the other as an observer. In the next session, the roles could be reversed. These programme participants then reflect on their teaching experience and share this with the whole group.

Teachers as reflective practitioners

A teacher education program should also include critical reflection. Participants in the program should be encouraged to reflect and keep reflective journals throughout it to help them reevaluate their teaching and educational philosophies critically and look for better alternatives. The writing of reflective notebooks by the teachers during educational programs may be encouraged. They frequently use these notebooks to evaluate their own habits and deeds in the classroom. The diaries might be given to the program instructors, who could then engage the participants in conversation by replying to journal entries. The reflective practice helps the participants to find multiple educational alternatives and resultantly make educational choices according to their needs and context. Reflection is important tool for a continuous and lifelong development for majority of the professional especially the teachers. The reflective approach helps teachers to keep the line of change rising in their lives and in their schools.

Teachers as researchers

One of the emerging trends in teacher education is redefining and refining the role of a teacher. With a set of specific effective teaching approaches and skills that emphasized the most in the traditional approach to teacher education. In contrast, it is thought that a teacher's duty in the modern world extends beyond only imparting knowledge. A good researcher is a prerequisite for a good instructor. This new position aids a teacher in developing into a reflective practitioner who is constantly looking for ways to enhance their performance in the classroom. Improved teaching proficiency and the lives of students can result from metacognition and reflection on one's work. A teacher has the chance to take on the role of a researcher through their research, which frequently takes the form of action research. Action research should be a fundamental component of educational programs in a teacher education institution.

Change as a holistic process

One of the factors that makes the line of change vulnerable is that change is not viewed as a holistic process in most of our teacher

education colleges. The ultimate outcome is that the rising line of change drops down and joins the horizontal line of status quo. Dalin and Rolff (1993, p.1-2) referring to the importance of collective approach to change suggested "the more we have worked with schools undergoing change, we have discovered the ad-hoc and piecemeal efforts at change are inadequate".

A teacher education institute needs to offer programmes to important stakeholders including teachers, head teachers, and managers. In this way they can all come together and work for school improvement. This collective approach is important if we are interested in a sustainable change.

Follow up programmes

Most teacher training programmes in Pakistan do not prove as effective since there are no follow up programmes. As classroom research is not a one shot event, the programme participants need to be encouraged to continue their research when, at the end of the programme, they go back to their respective schools. They should be equipped with the necessary skills to help their colleagues improve their performance in their classroom by encouraging them to think about their practice in a systematic way and keep on improving their professional competence as an ongoing activity.

Teachers as curriculum planners

In a teacher education programme, teachers should be facilitated to reconceptua1ize their role from an implementer of a given curriculum to a curriculum planner. This is important because the given curriculum reaches the students through teachers and their interpretation and execution of a curriculum depends largely on teachers. The programme participants need to be exposed to the skills of enhancing and enriching a curriculum. This helps the teacher, to some extent, in receiving, interpreting, and executing a curriculum in his/her own way under given constraints.

Schools as units of change

To bring and sustain educational change a teacher education institute should look at the school as a unit of change. Schools should be encouraged to recommend their candidates for the education programmes. There should be a professional link

between schools and a teacher education institute. This link could be useful in tracking the professional development of teachers.

Support System

Change cannot stay and move without a proper support system. Huberman and Miles cited in Fullan and Hargreaves (1992:2) suggest:

> "Large scale change bearing innovations lived or died by the amount and quality of assistance that their users received once the change process was under way…...
> The forms of assistance were various."

A teacher education institute should influence the schools to create support systems for teachers. A holistic approach towards educational change has more chances of staying and evolving.

Parents

Parental expectations play a vital part in accelerating or slowing down any change initiative in school. Majority of the parents are concerned only about the grades of their children and exert pressure on the school to gear all its efforts to making that possible. This attitude of parents, some times, hinders any educational change which apparently does not guarantee good grades. A teacher education institute may influence parents directly by inviting them to specially designed seminars geared towards awareness in order to facilitate them to become part of the whole process.

Policy Makers

When we refer to decision makers we refer to various levels of decision making, involving different people. Policy makers, though not quite visible, may exert tremendous pressure to make a change initiative a success or putting up resistance to make sure the status quo prevails. A teacher education institute can organize national and international seminars to impact policy makers.

Curriculum

Teacher education programmes should make conscious efforts to make the programme participants realize that they are not helpless

implementers of curriculum, rather can play a vital role in enriching a curriculum. The programme participants should be engaged in activities to improve and add to a given curriculum.

There is a need for more collaborative work between teacher education institutes and the curriculum wings. Institutes of education could be instrumental in organizing programmes for people affiliated with curriculum planning process. These opportunities would help the curriculum planners to appreciate the other alternatives available in planning a curriculum. Similarly, there is need to bring awareness in the areas of syllabus and textbooks. There should be focused workshop sessions to actually plan a curriculum together. These sessions would help the people associated with the curriculum wings to actually see how a theoretical alternative could be turned into a reality.

External Examination

The programme participants of teacher education programmes should be exposed to alternative modes of assessment. They should also learn the skills to devise high order thinking questions based on the texts they teach. In school the pressure of examination is immense. Prodromou (1995:14) aptly described this situation:

> "Many teachers, trapped in an examination preparation cycle, feel that communicative and humanistic methodologies are luxuries they cannot afford. When the market calls on teacher and institutions to produce quantifiable results, it usually means good examination results. Sound teaching practices are often sacrificed in an anxious attempt to 'cover' the examination syllabus, and to keep a head of the competition."

The direct or indirect influence (what Prodromou calls overt and covert backwash effect) influences the classroom practice. The direct effect is solving old question papers in the classroom and engaging students in examination geared activities. The indirect effect, on the other hand, is subtler where the teacher (at an unconscious level) acts according to the examination requirement only. For instance, his/her treatment of text becomes more examination oriented.

Collaboration between educational institutions and examination boards is necessary to start a real transformation in the examination system. Meetings, workshops, and conferences are some ways to collaborate, and the decision-makers in the study field should be the target audience. Alternative ways of assessment

should be discussed throughout these interactions. Additionally, there is a requirement for early material preparation and exchange of alternative methods for creating test papers. Workshops that have been set up especially for this purpose can be used to create these materials.

Conclusion

Teacher education is a powerful tool to play a central role in the professional development of teachers. The teacher education programmes are supposed to empower teachers to interact with students, teaching material, and classroom situations in a more effective manner in order to bring a qualitative change in education, which could then lead to a change in the lives of students and society. This expectation, however, could not be turned into a reality as the mainstream teacher education programmes failed to groom teachers who could develop or supplement the given curriculum, or could help create an environment in the classroom that would lead to the development of critical thinking skills among students. There are a number of forces that impact the process of change in a positive or negative way. The notion of change needs to be viewed as a holistic process where teacher, teacher educator, curriculum teaching materials, students, community, and the assessment system all play an important role. Since the role of the teacher is central, teacher education programmes can play an important in bringing qualitative change. The paper focused on dealing with change simultaneously at three levels: conceptual, pedagogical and attitudinal. The teacher education programmes in Pakistan need to reposition themselves by overhauling their perspective, content, methodology, and focus. Only then we can expect a sustainable, qualitative change in the educational system of Pakistan.

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