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Professionalise or De-professionalise Teachers: Some Policy Lessons from Classroom Practices of Pakistan

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Abstract

Teaching quality is imperative for students' development. Proponents of teacher education argue that teachers with preservice training are more effective in teaching quality. Opponents argue that subject-mastery and on-the-job professional training are necessary. Considering the latter argument, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in Pakistan introduced the 'Induction Policy 2017' which abolished the requirement of teaching qualification for recruitment. To examine the rationale behind the change in policy, we undertook a multiple case study to explore the differences in the classroom practices of teachers with and without preservice professional qualifications. Employing a multiple case study approach, the data were collected from 16 participants (eight each with and without professional qualifications) through observations and interviews. The results revealed that teachers in both groups display a mix of weak and mediocre practices. Factors such as working conditions, low quality of training, low status of teachers, and parental non-cooperation contribute to weak practices. The paper argues that the policy offers quick pathways to enter the profession but teaching quality remains an issue. We call for a balance between pedagogy and content, prioritize teaching quality irrespective of qualifications and boost the professionalism and status of teachers.

Keywords: Teaching Quality; Induction Policy; Preservice Teacher Education; Subject-Mastery; Teaching Qualification; Classroom Practices.

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Introduction

Effective classroom practices by teachers are crucial for achieving better student outcomes and development. There is a significant policy debate surrounding the development and recruitment of high-quality teachers to support effective classroom practices. These debates concerning the recruitment and development of teachers are characterised by two differing perspectives. One perspective holds that candidates who have completed preservice[1] teacher education programmes are effective and should be recruited (Cohen-Vogel & Hunt, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Wenglinsky, 2000). These teachers are considered professionals due to their preservice training before entry into the profession. Proponents of teacher education argue that teaching is a technical profession that requires not only subject matter knowledge but also pedagogical content knowledge and an empathetic attitude. In contrast, opponents argue that the quality of teachers is associated with strong subject mastery (Cohen-Vogel & Hunt, 2007; Ingersoll, 2020; Kopp, 2011; Penner, 2019) or direct on-job professional learning (Harris & Sass, 2011; Hiebert & Morris, 2012). The perspective asserts that preservice teacher education can restrict qualified and motivated candidates from joining the teaching profession and criticises preparatory programmes as weak in developing strong subject mastery skills. Programmes such as Teach for America and the Induction Policy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan are examples that oppose preservice teacher education. These types of teachers enter into the profession with little or no professional qualification requirement moving away from professional status towards de-professionalization.

Research studies present distinct evidence to support their respective viewpoints (Boyd et al., 2008; Cavalluzo, 2004; Clotfelter et al., 2007b; D'Agostino & Powers, 2009; Goe &

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[1] Preservice programmes are the education that prepares individuals for the teaching profession before their entry into profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; USAID, 2011). These programmes are either two-year Associate Degree in Education (ADE) or four-year Bachelor in Education (B.Ed), currently offered in Pakistan.

Stickler, 2008; Goe, 2007; Goldhaber et al., 2013; Kusumawardhani 2017; Lee & Lee, 2020; Metzler & Woessmann, 2010; Shuls & Trivitt, 2015). However, most of these studies used proxies such as teachers' exam scores, surveys, and students' achievement. The issue with existing studies is that they often do not provide detailed information about what teachers 'know and do' in the classroom to impact instruction (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2007, p.2). Additionally, comparing the classroom practices of teachers with preservice professional qualifications with those of teachers having only subject mastery can determine their performance (see e.g., Linek et al., 2012). Most of the previous studies are conducted in developed countries' contexts like the USA, China, and Germany, with few studies being conducted in developing countries. Researchers have highlighted that evidence generated from econometric approaches to guide teacher education policies is unable to portray teaching-learning practices or value the professional voices and expertise (Brooks et al., 2023; Glewwe et al., 2010; Tatto, 2021). The global evidence emerging from the global North has implications for countries like Pakistan. For example, the introduction of preservice programmes and the Induction Policy 2017 are borrowed policy prescriptions. Despite inconclusive findings in the international research on the effectiveness of preservice teacher education, Pakistan has implemented recruitment policies that have eliminated the requirement of professional qualification. This study investigated the classroom practices of teachers belonging to two groups: those with professional qualifications and those with only subject mastery, to provide evidence about the Induction Policy.

In the subsequent section, the policy context will be briefly explained, followed by a literature review and an explanation of the methodology employed in this study. The paper then presents the findings, engage in the discussion, and conclude.

The Policy Context

As this study seeks to analyse the Induction Policy, it is crucial to understand the policy context of developing countries such as Pakistan. Developing nations, including Pakistan, often face

economic constraints that can compromise their ability to independently determine their education policies (Ali, 2009; Ali, 2017). The involvement of donor organizations and development banks investing in educational development, restructures the independent authority of the country. The presence of organizations such as donor agencies and development banks leads to external pressures in the form of policy prescriptions which are often presented as 'best practices' or impose conditions for funds. In such case, the nation has option to negotiate in a better way. Developing countries like Pakistan, however, are often noted for their weak capacity to negotiate these conditions due to weak national capital and may compromise to adjust the policy as per local conditions (Ali & Ahmed, 2023) or the policy elite may use the global policy prescriptions for their advantages (Silova, 2005). Even when the policy is implemented, it may struggle to be sustained for long-term. The Induction Policy and teacher education reform examined in this study, as discussed in the next paragraph, are borrowed from the developed contexts. However, the sustenance of the latter teacher education reform is being hindered by the former Induction Policy.

In Pakistan, efforts to enhance the quality of teaching can be observed in national policies, such as the National Education Policies of 1998-2000 and 2009a and 2009b. Nevertheless, research has revealed that the primary causes of inadequate teaching are non-standardized teacher education programmes and untrained teachers (Ali, 2018; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2009b; UNESCO, 2006). To address these issues, the Preservice Teacher Education Program (Pre-STEP) was launched in 2009 by the USAID in partnership with the Higher Education Commission. This programme introduced four-year bachelor's and two-year associate degrees in education. Despite the implementation of Pre-STEP reforms, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government taking advantage of the 18th amendment[2] has revised the recruitment criteria for teaching posts at primary level through the adoption of the 'Induction Policy in 2017'. This policy stipulates that individuals with a minimum of 14 years of

[2] It is a constitutional act introduced in 2010 which devolved education to provincial mandate from federal jurisdiction.

education in any subject are eligible for teaching at the primary level[3]. Additionally, the policy requires that all newly recruited teachers participate in a mandatory nine-month induction training[4] programme, consisting of two days of training per month. This approach contradicts the recommendations outlined in the National Policy (2009a) and contravenes the Professional Standards of Teachers (2009b), raising questions about whether individuals who possess professional qualifications are competent or whether subject mastery is sufficient. This research aims to explore the justification for this change in recruitment policy through the following research questions:

1) What are the differences in the classroom practices of newly inducted (2017 policy) teachers with and without preservice professional qualification at the primary level?

2) What are the perceptions of newly inducted teachers about the influence of their previously acquired qualifications on current classroom practices?

Review of Literature

The Process of Teacher Development

Growing criticism of the effectiveness of teacher education programmes has prompted researchers to examine the process of teacher learning. This has led to the emergence of two theories related to the development of teachers. The traditional perspective of 'theory-to-practice', which posits that theory taught will be applied to practice, has been criticised for its gaps in teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, 2017). The philosophy

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[3] In earlier requirements for teaching, professional qualification was compulsory. The short-terms preservice programmes e.g., Certificate for Teaching, Primary Teacher Certificates were phased out due to its low quality. These programmes were replaced by the new longer four-year and two-year bachelor level programmes. It was also decided during the implementation of the Pre-STEP project that candidates with on longer preservice programmes will be consider for the teaching posts.

[4] A well-established professional development practice in the professional community for professional learning of beginning teachers in their initial years of teaching career (Kearney, 2013).

underlying the 'traditional cognitive perspective' is based on the knowledge constructed through representations of phenomena in the brain known as schemata (Korthagen, 2017). Specific actions taken of teachers will indicate that the transfer of knowledge has occurred (Cobb & Bowers, 1999).

Critics argue that despite the traditional approach being flexible and well-designed, it cannot transfer learning in a discrete package (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Webster-Wright, 2009). Webster-Wright (2009) further posits that teacher learning is a social process that takes place through their actions as well as interactions with others. This approach to teacher learning is referred to as 'situated learning, which is rooted in field-based experiences or on-the-job learning (Kennedy, 2010; Korthagen, 2017; Webster-Wright, 2009). The situated theory supports the concept of on-the-job professional development for teachers. It suggests that learning occurs when teachers are exposed to real-life situations in the classroom and reverse the traditional 'theory-to-practice' order (Korthagen et al., 2006).

Teaching Qualifications, Classroom Practices and Students' Learning

Short-term in-service or preservice training are either ineffective in creating significant differences or unable to sustain classroom practices. A study conducted by Zhang et al. (2013) in China found that such training failed to improve teacher pedagogy and knowledge or affect student achievement. Similar results have been found in Pakistan, where trained teachers have been observed to return to traditional classroom practices over time (Westbrook et al., 2009). A Quality Teaching Round approach implemented in Australia has shown significant improvement in pedagogical practices, but its sustainability over time is questionable (Gore et al., 2017). Research has also shown that students tend to perform better under certified teachers who are well-prepared and have strong subject mastery (Boyd et al., 2008; Clotfelter et al, 2007a, b; Randel et al., 2016). Contrarily, there is substantial evidence that teachers with teaching qualifications show minimal to no improvement, or are no better than teachers without certification, in classroom

practices and student achievement (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goe & Stickler, 2008; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Kusumawardhani, 2017; Schacter et al., 2006; Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013).

Teachers without Teaching Qualification, their Classroom Practices and Students Learning

Several studies have identified gaps in preservice programs (Korthagen, 2017; Ingersoll, 2012; Webster-Right, 2009). However, the assumption that teachers with content knowledge can be effective in teaching requires further empirical evidence. Research has shown that content knowledge has a statistically significant effect on student learning (Metzeler & Woessman, 2012) in Peru, (Lee, 2018; Lee & Lee 2020; Fitchett & Heafner 2018) in the United States and (Bold et al., 2017a) in sub-Saharan African countries. Some of these studies also indicate that strong content-knowledge expertise can contribute to students' attainment of higher education (see e.g., Lee & Lee, 2020). However, when it comes to classroom practices, teachers with content-knowledge tend to have a negative effect on instructional practices, exhibit discipline-oriented practices, and have less belief in student-centered practices at the primary level (Fauth et al 2019; Fitchett & Heafner 2018; Wilkins, 2008).

To summarise, the existing research studies are inconclusive regarding the effect of professional qualifications on students' achievement. Whereas subject mastery seems an important factor in contributing to student's learning outcomes. However, higher subject-mastery does not lead to student-centered classroom practices at the primary level. In other words, teachers with subject-mastery may lack pedagogical expertise as compared to teachers with professional qualifications but can improve students learning at a higher level.

Research Methodology

We employed a multiple-embedded case study approach to "resolve the contradictory testimony or competing values" among two groups of teachers (Stake, 2006, p.6) and to conduct cross- case

analysis for comparison (Ahmed & Ali, 2023). Our focus was on 'analysis of the Induction Policy' – a case – in which we explored classroom practices of teachers with and without professional qualification –two cases– to see the differences through cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). In this way, the two cases became embedded sub-units of a single case – Induction Policy – to maintain the focus (Yin, 2018).

Research Participants

The study considered two groups of teachers: (1) those with professional qualifications, who hold four-year bachelor's degrees or two-year associate degrees in education, and (2) those with subject mastery only (i.e., physics, mathematics) without professional qualifications (refer to table 1). Of the 170 teachers, a total of 16 teachers (8 each with and without professional qualifications) used a simple random strategy for observations. All the selected teachers were interviewed. These teachers were teaching English, Mathematics, and Science subjects and were recruited through the Induction Policy 2017 in the public sector.

Table 1
Demographics Characteristics of Teachers Qualification-wise

Demographics	With Preservice Professional Qualification (n=08)			Without Preservice Professional Qualification (n=08)		
Grade Teaching (n)	1st (02)	4th (03)	5th (03)	3rd (01)	4th (05)	5th (02)
Average enrolment	50.62			59.25		
Average time taken in class	25 minutes			27.5 minutes		
Qualification (n)	Bachelor's/master's degree (14, 16 or 18 years of school)					
	Bachelors in education	03		4-Year's Bachelor	05	

	Associate degree in education	05	Master's	03
Experience	3.3 years		3.5 years	

Data Collection Methods

Firstly, the data were collected using the Classroom Observation Scale (COS) developed by Bhutta et al. (2014) to understand the differences in practices among the teachers (n=16). Preparation before data collection (Cohen et al., 2007) and predetermined rules to maintain the focus on what is to be observed (Bryman, 2012) offered a systematic and holistic record of the behavior and practices (Gray, 2014). Extensive qualitative notes were also collected during observations to document information about incidents, behaviors, and actions as a reference point (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, the COS offers a 3-point rating scale of pedagogical practices. The pedagogical aspects mean scores below 1.5 are weak, between 1.6 to 2.5 are mediocre and above 2.5 are good practices.

Secondly, in-depth semi-structured interviews (n=16) averaging 45 minutes were conducted to validate the findings and add explanatory power to observations. Interviewing allowed us to record teacher's perspectives on the past events (Patton, 2002) and understand the meaning attributed to their actions in the classroom (Erickson, 2018). The interview protocol included perception-based questions e.g., how do you give feedback to students during classroom? Any examples? How do you ensure the active involvement of students during teaching? The integration of observations and interviews was to explain the meaning of observational findings (Creswell & Clark, 2018) and to enhance the credibility of research findings (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Data Analysis

The audiotape interviews were transcribed, keeping new words and quotations in the original language. In the transcription stage, a continuous back-and-forth process of audiotape and text was used to identify missing words, inaccuracies and get familiar with the

data. The transcribed data was converted into coding using an open coding strategy. According to Miles et al., (2014, p.79) coding helps "to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks, so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme". As suggested by Lederman (1990) and Miles et al., (2014) we formulated general themes and sub-themes based on the observation scale using Bryman's (2012) thematic analysis framework for 'conceptual and structural unity'. In a sense, the development of themes was a deductive approach to the systematic categorization of the codes. The codes were clustered together under suitable themes for each group of teachers to carry out cross-case analysis.

The observation tool used in this study was validated and used in a nation-wide study in Pakistan (Bhutta & Rizvi, 2022). Nevertheless, the researcher has received extensive training and observed more than 10 classes with another researcher to gain 80% inter-rater reliability (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Using the peer debriefing technique, the observations and interviews were again discussed with two experts (one who trained for observation and one who guided on interview protocol). This process of debriefing was undertaken to control personal biases and assumptions. This study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of the Aga Khan University.

Table 2
Example of Coding and Theme

Classroom practices	*Theme 1: Physical Setup of the Classroom*		
Sub-themes/items	Indoor space	Classroom arrangement	Classroom display
Codes	Physical description, overcrowded classrooms, lack of furniture	Rows and columns arrangement, group arrangement	Science subject's charts, printed charts

Description of findings	The classroom is described as overcrowded, usually compensating students from about 50 to 80. The classroom does not have furniture, but a carpet system for children to sit.	The students are sitting in rows and columns. There is little space among rows and columns used by teachers to walk into the class.	The charts are in the printed form. Because, first, teachers have a shortage of time so unable to make charts. Second, students are not able to make complex charts (e.g., a map of Pakistan). That is why printed charts are displayed in the classroom.
Data source	Observation & interviews	Observation & interviews	Observation & interviews

Findings

The findings are presented according to the research questions. Each research question heading contains related themes. Each theme compares the classroom practices of the teachers who are with and without professional qualifications.

Differences in the Classroom Practices of Teachers

Classroom Physical Setup and Management

The physical setup of the classrooms across both groups of teachers depicted insufficient space for the enrolled students and contained 'broken benches and tables; broken electric buttons and wires' *(Obs/2-20).* The 'insufficient space makes it difficult for teachers to move in the class' *(Teacher1 PQ/5-20).* 'With lack of rooms and ninety above students, we [teachers] are trying *'to build*

a bridge over the sea' Teacher3 (PQ/5-20). In a nutshell, *Teacher3 (PQ/5-20)* briefly explained:

> We cannot organise them in the groups like in elite schools… because we have number and space issues. So, we keep in mind the availability of the resources and conditions and arrange for students to benefit all. I make them sit in rows, the shorter ones in the front and the taller ones at the back.

Both types of teachers delivered their lessons by standing in one place in front of the students. 'Students will be sitting in sequence… in lines. In line from one side of the wall to another side of the wall' *(Teacher1 without PQ/5-20).* Due to overcrowded classrooms, employing innovative strategies for classroom arrangement is restricted. The traditional arrangement affects the learning of students negatively. 'The problem is the strength... there are 96 students, the majority are who passed [successful in examinations], and some are failures. The main reason behind the high rate of failure was little space to walk [to reach students at the back]' *Teacher3 (without PQ/5-20).* In this situation, using charts was the main source of learning material. In general, charts are viewed as an effective resource by professionally qualified groups for conceptual understanding and they preferred displaying charts for every subject according to students' interest. However, observations suggest that charts in classes were not related to the subjects the teachers were teaching. An example from classroom observation noted, 'Urdu and Islamiyat [language and religion subjects] charts were printed, dusty, comprising small fonts and drawings, and thus did not display students' work' *(Obs/3-20).*

Among professionally qualified teachers, the approach of classroom displaying charts were different. For instance, *teacher2 (PQ/5-20)* preferred to assign tasks and display the most informative chart. Whereas *teachers5 (PQ/5-20)* utilized student's abilities to make charts i.e., microscope in groups and later displayed them in classroom as an appreciation. *Teacher8 (PQ/5-20)* narrates the effect of classroom display as follows:

Student enters [in the classroom] and says there is a new chart let us see. They start reading, which stimulates their mind. Students

look at the picture with interest and understand that it is an ear and the inside ear is the eardrum.

Looking at the physical setup strategies, overcrowded classrooms are challenging for both groups of teachers to manage. The teachers being unable to reach to maximum children results in learning losses. Interestingly, professionally qualified teachers revealed the usage of charts differently. Yet, unable to effectively use it inside the classroom. It may be that the theory learnt during academics is not translated into real classrooms. Similarly, both groups of teachers attributed classroom management to the purpose of maintaining discipline and stopping students from disturbing the class, as '... children get busy in activities so you [teacher] will not get complaints' *(Teacher2 without PQ/5-20)*. Either the concept of classroom management is misperceived or in overcrowded classrooms, the teachers are limited to dealing with disciplinary issues.

Classroom Interaction Strategies

The teachers with subject masters were more supportive than teachers with professional qualifications. Supportive means listening to children, displaying a non-discriminatory attitude and possessing a calm tone. These teachers tried to build a friendly environment to encourage students to share their problems and express their feelings. Due to friendly interaction, *Teacher4 (without PQ/5-20)* 'was able to identify that students were a bit weak [academic performance] due to their low socio-economic background.'

The professionally qualified teachers were found to keep friendly interactions and appreciate students' positive responses with common practices such as clapping, verbal appreciation, or rewards *(Obs/3-20)*. This is because 'students get more vulnerable when punished by teachers, so I [teacher] arrange games after completion of their tasks which allows them to remain friendly and follow my [teacher] instructions' *Teachers5 (PQ/5-20)*. Another reason, *Teacher6* (*PQ/20*) explains 'being friendly and appreciation is necessary because students observe teacher's behavior and techniques. They [students] reply in a

similar way in which teachers react. If students know the teacher is friendly, then they like to interact.

The observational findings showed child-child interaction as negative, non-existence and bullying events. To control child-child interactions, teachers with subject-mastery were 'giving harsh punishment such as exclusion from class activities and using stick' *(Obs/3-20)*. Common strategies applied by subject-master teachers to maintain discipline were (a) asking questions (b) punishing students, and (c) checking students' cleanliness. The teachers physically punished and barred students from teaching the learning process. *Teacher6 (without PQ/5-20)* explained that 'I do sit-stand on students. I slap them so that they are afraid. If you give them punishment without a stick, it does not make them right [obedient].' These results affirm observations 'teacher punishing students with a stick when they would talk, asking them to leave the class, making them stand, calling them 'fat', or making them correct their mistakes several times' *(Obs/3-20)*.

In comparison, child-child interaction in the professionally qualified teacher's classroom was non-existence and lax in discipline. With little order or control, 'students were playing, beating each other, and doing work of other subjects during the class' *(Obs/3-20).* However, teachers avoided using harsh punishment techniques and preferred changing seats, questioning, maintaining silence and enforcing advanced lesson planning. According to teachers 'freedom to student should not be given [speaking with peers]… a lot of interaction is not required; when student get freedom, they crack jokes and create disturbance' *Teacher8 (PQ/5-20).* This dictates teachers' assumption that focusing primarily on lessons makes a learning environment, maintains discipline and make teaching effective. The findings also suggest that teachers regarded punishment and questioning as effective ways to make students fearful. It is a 'formal method' and 'beating' as an effective method to make students behave' *Teacher5 (Without PQ/5-20).* Interestingly, the lecture-based traditional way of instruction is criticized for weak discipline. Opponents of traditional teaching encourage students' involvement to reduce chances of classroom disturbance. 'In the traditional method, I

[teacher] did not involve students which created disciplinary issues. When you [teachers] involve students then they have little chance to create noise and tease each other' *(Teacher7 without PQ/5-20).*

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Most teachers used a questioning strategy at the (a) start of the lesson, (b) during the lesson (probing and exploring the lesson), and (c) end of the lesson (evaluation of the students). Nevertheless, the aim of using a questioning strategy varies among groups. Professionally qualified teachers asked questions to brainstorm with the students. In contrast, subject masters asked questions directly related to the topic to explore the concept. For example, in mathematics, *Teacher6 (without PQ/5-20)* 'started teaching by asking students what we call one digit. two digits? On that base, I have taught, and they learned and recognized the numbers to say and read it.' Lecture method strategies such as grammar translation method and procedural method were dominantly used by teachers across the groups. *Teacher3 (PQ/5-20)* explains:

> I ask topic-related questions… tell them that these will be discussed… I read the topic and then check whether the children are reading which I take around in the class. I loudly read it and ask the children to read after me. Apart from active teaching strategies, subject masters were found putting more effort into reasoning, asking and answering questions and giving concrete examples. The reasons for better learning practices of subject master teachers were:
>
> > Probing questions (e.g., rub hands and touch face tell me why and how you feel? Tell me about your neighborhood?) and 'asking questions that were not memorized (e.g., give examples of the square, 'solve 5/9 + 3/9', 'why acute angle?'), and showed interest in children's answers through clapping, verbal appreciation, etc. *(Obs/3-20).*
> >
> > Professionally qualified teachers relied heavily on
> >
> > Reading and repeating sentences (e.g., loudly repeating A B C), and asking factual questions (e.g., how many shaded parts?) or frequently asking a few questions that require rote memorization such as what is + sign? Where are the nose

and ear? Identify proper and improper fractions: 1/7, 7/10, 10/7 *(Obs/3-20)*.

In general, teachers across the groups asked three types of previous knowledge questions. First, to gauge previous knowledge and understanding about the topic, for example, 'how sugar is measured, and fever is checked before teaching *'heat and measurement''*. Second, teachers asked questions directly related to the topic being taught like 'define angle before teaching the *'angles'* topic'. Third, they asked questions related to the previously taught lesson like revising *'environment'* before teaching *'neighborhood' (Obs/3-20).*

Perceptions about the Influence of Qualifications

Teacher's Perception about Their Academic Qualifications

Professionally qualified teachers having four-year bachelor's or two-year associate degrees in education explained being professionals as:

> Directly, we do not use our skills. we are mentally prepared and practically taught to use all the techniques during the associate degree. We do practical usage, explain to trainee-teachers, deliver our lectures, and respond to questions. It is all mental preparation, confidence boosting, language skills, and behavior. Because of this when we are teaching in school, we are professionals *(Teacher5 PQ/5-20).*

Teacher3 (PQ/5-20) elaborated:

> I use different techniques taught in B.Ed. Hons to reach student's level. It means if I am going to Lahore [city]. I have different options, i.e., via train, airplane, or car. I have to think about which transport to use to save time and reach on time. So, these techniques are taught in B.Ed.

In the preservice programme, the practicum boosts trainee-teachers' confidence and provides a platform to practically implement the theory. This theory-practice approach is delivered through pre-planned lessons in partner schools' classrooms for a specific duration and evaluated by teacher educators.

In contrast, Subject master's teachers expressed strong subject command which leads to their confidence in teaching. These subject masters also believed that their academic qualifications were more suitable to teach at the secondary level and could not prepare them to teach at the primary level. *Teacher3 (without PQ/5-20)* described, 'for higher level the preparation is more [subject-mastery is suitable to teach higher grade students] and for lower level [primary level] preparation is not related like not getting angry on student's [pedagogical development].' However, general skills learned during qualification such as presentations, task completion and a good environment helped them develop their teaching skills.

Challenges

Trainee-teachers (during their academics) have struggled for proper recruitment structure on various platforms (e.g., courts, meetings with officials) which resulted in discouragement and insecurity of the future. *Teacher1 (PQ/5-20)* shared:

> We do not have a service structure… we were afraid and dis-heartened that provincial and district levels do not have appointment criteria. We did a lot of meetings, and wrote letters to the high court but have not received any fruitful result. Then I applied to become a primary school teacher and became a victim of the induction policy. I faced troubles and was not given the post. I went to court and then got my right.

The graduates urged the government to bring professionals to have 'the right people for the right job' and 'the right job for the right person' *(Teacher3 PQ/5-20).* However, a pertinent problem related to the quality of preservice programmes is the gap between theory and practice. The theory-practice approach, where the theory is supposed to be applied, cannot be adequately applied in distinct phases, such as the first year and the last year of programme. Furthermore, another fundamental problem highlighted by teachers is the traditional way of teaching used by teacher educators in higher education institutes.

Other factors that impede the application of innovative teaching strategies include the lack of human resources (i.e., teachers, mentors) and material resources (i.e., rooms, furniture, cleaning systems) in

public schools. *Teacher5 (without PQ/5-20)* highlighted, "…we do not have a building …two schools are merged in one school that is not sufficient for even one. There is no water system, no washrooms, and no electricity.' Furthermore, lack of parental involvement in children's academics consistently appeared as a hurdle for students' better outcomes and disciplinary issues. According to teachers, children in public schools often come from low socio-economic backgrounds, and their parents lack interest in educational activities and do not cooperate to discuss students' progress.

Need for Continuous Professional Development and Status

Professionally qualified teachers are willing to learn more, gain experience, and improve their teaching. For them, learning is a continuous process of gaining new knowledge to improve the teaching-learning process.

The need for continuous professional development is acknowledged by subject masters. However, they often lack interest in acquiring teacher training programmes. This is due to their dissatisfaction with the processes through which teachers are prepared. The programmes are often seen as loose in terms of quality assurance, admitting non-regular candidates without enough contact with trainers or exposure to quality practicum, leading to inadequate preparation. *Teacher4 (without PQ/5-20)* elaborated:

> Professional qualification is essential for teaching. At this level, I do not need a qualification like a bachelor and master's in education. I have two views; first, how it is going on and how it is done [quality is not maintained]; second, we wish that it becomes regular [face-to-face and not distance] and it is implemented.

Another problem is 'due respect is not given to teachers. I [teacher] was treated very badly when I told policemen that I was a teacher. A lot of teachers with us are saying that we are leaving because they do not have respect in their department' *Teacher1 (PQ/5-20)*. The low status of teachers is contributing to the teachers' leaving the profession. *Teacher1 (PQ/5-20)* views teaching at the primary level as the foundation of children. Therefore, the status of

teacher's teaching at the primary level should be raised by upgrading their scale. Other teachers intend to leave the teaching profession due to personal and professional factors. *Teacher2 (PQ/5-20)* expressed 'his family's expectations are higher of him as they have invested huge capital in him. The teaching profession is temporary [leaving the profession for other opportunities]'. Similarly, *Teacher7 (without PQ/5-20)* states 'to be honest my chances to stay in the profession is reduced to 50% because the situation [status and working condition] have broken my heart'.

Discussion

Our main concern is whether the teachers with or without professional qualifications demonstrate effective teaching. The answer to this question can help us gauge whether the decision of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to abolish teaching qualifications was well-justified or not. We know that the evidence related to the effect of teaching qualifications on students' learning is mixed and that the evidence of the effect of subject mastery on student's learning is also mixed. Additionally, we have noted that the evidence is mainly emerging from the developed countries context and rarely discusses the actual classroom practices. Research in Pakistan on the issue is still weak and often look at this issue marginally (Ali et al., 2018; Ansari, 2020; Azhar & Kayani, 2017; Suleman & Gul, 2015). Our research was designed to help us contribute to this gap albeit in a limited sense. Nevertheless, there are at least three lessons that this research can contribute to this debate.

1. Pedagogy vs Content

The perceptions of participants in this research indicate that teachers with teaching qualifications show a better understanding of pedagogy. It makes sense because the emphasis during their studies in preservice programmes remains higher on their pedagogical development. In contrast, the teachers with subject-mastery (and without professional qualification) show a better grip on the content knowledge. The command over content also gives them confidence in their initial years of teaching. It can be inferred that not having

the right balance of pedagogy and content leads to weak classroom practices for both types of teachers. These results resonate with a recent nation-wide study by Bhutta and Rizvi (2022) confirming that 80% of teachers show weak levels of classroom practices irrespective of their background qualifications. Central to concerns about the teaching practices is the concern about the learning outcomes of the students. The poor classroom practices also result in poor student learning outcomes as shown by various studies (ASER & NEMIS, 2020; Bhutta & Rizvi, 2022). So, if both types of teachers demonstrate not-so-good classroom practices, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's decision to abolish the professional qualification from recruitment criteria in the absence of concrete evidence seems premature. Although the global evidence on the effectiveness of professional qualification is mixed, it does not support abolishing professional qualifications altogether (Brooks, 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2013; Goldhaber et al., 2017; Shuls & Ritter, 2013). In fact, the good performing countries on PISA like Finland, Singapore and South Korea place a strong emphasis on the professional qualification of their teachers (Mullis et al, 2020; OECD, 2019).

2. Quality Teaching Matters

The central question that we should rather be asking is why quality teaching matters, irrespective of teacher's qualification. One can determine the low quality of teaching by measuring the learning losses. Hanushek (2014, p. 24) differentiating the effect of quality teaching on students learning and economic gains (in the US context but useful generally) suggests:

> Teachers near the top of the quality distribution got an entire year's worth of additional learning out of their students compared to those near the bottom. That is, a good teacher will get a gain of 1.5 grade level equivalent while a bad teacher will get 0.5 year during a single academic year. Importantly, this analysis considered kids just from minority and poor inner-city families, indicating that family

> background is not fate and that good teachers can overcome deficits that might come from poorer learning conditions in the home… excellent teachers add over $800,000 [economic gains of quality teaching] to the future incomes of students in a class of thirty. Even a teacher just above average at the sixtieth percentile would add over $100,000 to a class of twenty students.

The gains and losses of teaching quality are significant. The challenges of low quality in developing countries have persisted for decades. Developing countries diverted its attention towards increasing student enrolment and access to education to meet the targets of global movements like the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. A steady growth is visible in low-income countries in terms of access to education and enrolment (Bold et al., 2017b; Hanushek, 2013). However, students struggle in terms of learning at the primary and middle level and struggle even in performing basic arithmetic's and reading simple sentences in India (ASER, 2014), Pakistan (Bhutta et al., 2022; Mullis et al, 2019) and African countries (Bold et al., 2017b). This discussion means that policies should focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. Currently, the policy of removing professional qualifications seems to be counterproductive in terms of getting higher-quality teachers in the classrooms. Some teachers in our research, who did not have teaching qualifications, were keen to leave the teaching profession altogether as soon as they got a better job elsewhere. In the words of a teacher:

> Teaching at the primary level is the foundation and most important for children. Majority of teachers are leaving because the scale [rank of teacher] is equal to a XXX (lower rank soldier). You cannot treat a teacher with low rank. Scale [high rank] is important because intelligent people do jobs for scale and it has more respect.

A better alternative to regulate teachers in larger jurisdictions and ensure quality teachers in the classroom could be through a teaching license (Ali & Ahmed, 2022).

3. Teachers Professionalism and Status

This historically remains a larger challenge for the teaching profession and teacher education in Pakistan, due to which ambitious students are not attracted to the teaching profession (Halai, 2007). Research indicates that both types of teachers – with and without professional qualifications - share similar challenges, such as poor working conditions, lack of respect and parental support, which affect their classroom performance. Even good qualified teachers will struggle if conducive conditions within the schools are not created and satisfaction of teachers in terms of personal and professional factors (e.g. low salary, lack of support, lack of resources) is not ensured (Ingersoll, 2003). Consequently, recruitment of quality teachers only by changing criteria is not sufficient, rather understanding how well teachers are prepared and what changes are needed in their preparatory programmes. In this way, not only the performance of teachers will get better but also the sense of professionalism will be enhanced, which results in improved status of teachers. In a recent survey, it was quite visible that stakeholders expect teachers to show professionalism by attaining professional qualifications (Ali & Ahmed, 2022). In this regard (Korthagen, 2017) suggests that current teacher qualification programmes have to be restructured in light of evidence about how teachers learn and develop their professional skills. Thus, a holistic understanding about the preparation of teachers, their recruitment and retention will help policymakers make decisions in concert.

Conclusion

The recruitment policies such as the Induction Policy 2017 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which allows graduates of any background to enter the teaching profession, may address teacher shortages in the short-term but may not be sustainable in the long-term. Because individuals from any background leave the teaching profession as soon as they find better opportunities. Instead, the policy focus should be on improving the quality of preservice programmes. The study suggests that qualification alone is not sufficient for quality teaching and perhaps cannot guarantee that good teaching will take

place. There are other important factors that can either impede or contribute to good teaching practices. For example, working conditions are important for teachers to deliver pedagogy effectively and feel satisfied. We found that little professional support, a lack of resources and incentives for teachers in the public sector are demotivating for them.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government provided short-training and abandoned long-term training, this recruitment process disjoints the teacher preparation phases. It needs to be understood that preservice is the first phase supported by induction training –the second phase– and in-service training – the third phase. Therefore, removing the professional qualification from recruitment policies will have a direct impact on teacher education institutes. For example, the enrolment of prospective teachers might decline in the universities. The continuous and short-term experimentation in teacher education has resulted in new challenges with little or no improvement. Consequently, it is important to improve the working conditions and create more opportunities for teachers to interact with stakeholders. The system needs to ensure that if qualified teachers have entered the teaching profession, they are retained for a longer term. The dissatisfaction of teachers can compel teachers to leave their profession in initial years leading to the issue of a shortage of teachers. Lastly, we acknowledge the limitation of the data in this research. Therefore, we make a call for more longitudinal studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods to strengthen the evidence for policymakers. We believe there could be other variables that can contribute to determining the effectiveness of teaching e.g., gender and experience.

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