



Evaluating the quality of BEd programme: Students' views of their college experiences

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance of teacher training has become of a great concern nowadays. This paper addresses the quality of BEd programme of the University of Education (UE) Lahore. The main purpose of the study was to evaluate the quality of BEd programme with regard to the internal efficiency of Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs), the affiliated institutions of UE. The study was conducted on a random sample of 600 BEd students drawn from 11 GCETs in Punjab province. Data was collected through a questionnaire which was validated through a pilot study in 2006. The reliability of the final questionnaire was established at 0.863 allowing the researcher to launch the study at large scale (Gay, 2000). The findings revealed that BEd programme was effective in terms of updating student teachers' knowledge and skills. Student teachers favoured the quality of BEd curriculum, lesson planning and presentation by themselves and their teacher educators, and had some reservations about the proper use of audio-visual aids for effective classroom teaching learning processes. Female gender showed more satisfaction with the quality of BEd curriculum and teaching than their male counterparts. No significant difference was found in the opinion of the students of GCETs having low, medium, and high enrolment.

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1. About Pakistan and its education

Pakistan was emerged as an independent Islamic state on 14th August, 1947. It has an area of about 796,095 Sq. kilometers. Pakistan comprises of four provinces: Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Balochistan and Sindh and some federating units which include Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Federally Administrative Northern Areas (FANA).

The education system of Pakistan is 3-tier: Primary (grades 1–8); secondary (grades 9–12); and higher education (post-secondary qualifications). There are 270 teacher education institutions, of which 227 are run by the public sector and 43 are operated by the private sector (Academy for Educational Development, 2005). In Punjab, pre-service teacher education is catered in Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs) and University Colleges of Education (UCEs), the affiliated constituent/institutions of the University of Education (UE), Lahore. UE introduced its BEd Programme in 2002–2003 in all its 35 GCETs and six UCEs. The main objectives of BEd programme are to: (a) provide

basic and advanced knowledge to the prospective teachers in different disciplines and equip them with the latest trends in teacher education; (b) prepare computer literate and research oriented teachers; (c) train the teachers in view of the required demands in the field of teaching methodologies and content of the relevant subjects at elementary level; (d) practice the content and methodology more rigorously under the supervision of highly qualified supervisors; (e) broaden the vision of trainee teachers by teaching them innovative topics; (f) enable prospective teachers to use variety of teaching techniques and audio-visual aids for effective teaching learning process; and (g) create sportsmanship among the prospective teachers (University of Education, 2005, p.3). The main focus of teacher education programmes at UE was “to promote discipline of education as the core knowledge area for continually improving and updating teacher education and teaching learning strategies” (University of Education, 2002).

2. Introduction

2.1. Rationale for evaluation of teacher education programmes

The prime responsibility of a teacher in an educational institution is teaching. Teaching is a complex activity. Andrew, Cobb, and Giampietro (2005) found that good teaching is a complex

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interaction of a wide range of teachers' characteristics, abilities, dispositions, knowledge of subject fields, experience, and pedagogical knowledge. These factors interact with particular school cultures, sets of educational goals, and children to produce effective teaching.

The teaching community is a significant group for ensuring quality education and learning. The real teacher education depends upon the personal as well as professional development of the teacher. Memon and Pardhan (2001) stated that the teachers' development should entail both dimensions: personal and professional. Such development is embedded in the humanistic and critical approach to teacher education.

Improving teacher education is among the most prominent reforms suggested for education today (Ginsberg & Rhodes, 2003) and to ensure the quality of pre-service teacher education programmes should be of high concern. Luseno (2001) also stress teacher education programs can only be successful when the outcomes being fostered are relevant to teachers' needs. Mietlicki (2004) found that teacher education programs for the 21st century must include a major focus on diversity to equip all teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work effectively with students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and social class groups. Kim, Andrews, and Carr (2004) highlighted the 10 initial teacher preparation competencies, developed by Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INSTASC): (a) content knowledge and pedagogy; (b) student learning and development; (c) diverse learners and the ability to adapt to diverse learners; (d) instructional strategies; (e) classroom management and motivation; (f) communication techniques; (g) curriculum and planning; (h) assessment; (i) reflective practice; and (j) professional relationships internal and external to the school. This is possible through proper monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes has been a major concern of much of the literature on teacher education in these days (Newton & Braithwaite, 1987).

In order to enhance the quality of teacher education programmes, their continuous evaluation is essential due to two main reasons. Firstly, teacher education programmes are being challenged to undergo major changes that will ensure that all beginning teachers are prepared to teach all the students. Secondly, global developments are asking for a rapid change in the attitudes and practices without reshaping or restructuring the current teacher educational programmes. Shahid (2007) states that, the effective pre-service professional preparation leads to profession commitment and excellence in teaching.

2.2. Strategy for quality of teacher education programmes

Quality of teacher education can be improved in order to gain the competitive edge required in the knowledge based global economy. For that purpose, the developed countries are increasing their expenditures on research and education, as well as their demands for greater efficiency and effectiveness of the education system. The efficiency of the system can be achieved through: establishing a system for quality assurance in education, a system of teacher professional development, a restructured curriculum aimed attaining lasting and transferable knowledge, skills, values, and forms of behaviour suited for modern society. The system efficiency may be increased through better use of the existing investments and professionalizing the human resources in education. Ankomah, Koomson, Bosu, and George (2005, pp. 13–14) point out that preparing teachers for the challenges of a teaching career means equipping them with subject-specific expertise, effective teaching practices, an understanding of technology and the ability to work collaboratively with other teachers, members of the community and parents. Adams (1993) included six elements of

quality i.e. reputation of the institution, resources and inputs, process, content, output and outcomes, and value added.

Nietfeld and Cao (2003) assert that the quality of teacher education programmes at changing student beliefs and ensuring a deep understanding of pedagogical knowledge is mixed at best. Alawiye and Williams (2001) state that, teachers must have both basic knowledge about teaching and the ability to teach under real time constraints. Lacking either, the teacher is ill prepared. Smith and O'Day (1990), who were the earliest advocates for standards-based reform, envisioned a reform that was systemic, affecting all aspects of the educational system, and long-term. They placed considerable emphasis on professional development for both pre-service and in-service teachers and for conditions that would enhance teacher professionalism. In the context of Pakistan, Ali (1998) found that the staff of the GCETs is poorly trained and under-motivated, use inappropriate methods and do not supervise the teaching practice of students in a way likely to enhance teaching skills. Assessment of the prospective teachers depends entirely on rote learning. Hussain (2003) found that the teachers of GCETs mostly use the writing board and charts as teaching aids while projectors, multimedia, and computer are not used at all.

2.3. Evaluation of the quality of educational programmes

The quality of any educational programme is evaluated in numerous ways. Cao and Nietfeld (2005) investigated that the effectiveness of instructional programme increases when teachers include reflection on instructional goals, students' characteristics and needs, content level and sequences, teaching strategies, materials, and other issues related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment before, during, and after lessons.

The quality of the programmes of institution can be judged by determining and assessing the indicators of the efficiency. Abagi and Odipo (1997) pointed out the indicators for the internal efficiency of education system: (a) resource allocation to different inputs; (b) pupil-teacher ratio; (c) teachers' inputs in schools; (d) transparency and accountability on utilization of physical facilities; and (e) school management. However, the efficiency of any institution also depends upon the encouraging environment for the teaching-learning process. Kingdon (1996) found that encouraging private unaided schools would lead to gains in efficiency as these institutions were more technically efficient and cost-efficient. The internal efficiency of the institution generally depends upon the enrolment of the institution, utilization of human and non-human resources. A research study about the internal efficiency of the institution shows that enrolment and internal efficiency of any institution are positively correlated. This study found that "if the enrolment rate is relatively low and internal efficiency of the education system is very low. The low enrolment rate and internal efficiency result in great loss of resources in terms of finance, materials and equipment, and time to the country as a whole" (Ministry of Education, Youth, & Sports, Cambodia, 1999).

2.4. Evaluation of the quality of teacher education programmes

Evaluating the outcomes of teacher education programme requires firstly a definition of what we expect from teacher education to accomplish and influence in terms of candidate's knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and secondly, means for measuring these things. As Cochran-Smith (2001) has observed, the question that is currently driving reform and policy in teacher education is referred to as "the outcomes question". This question helps to conceptualize and define the outcomes of teacher education for teacher learning, professional practice, and student

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