

Evaluative Study Of M.A. Education Programmes Of Teacher Education At Higher Education Level In Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at evaluating the MA Education Programme of teacher education in Pakistan. Post-graduate teacher's training institutes in Pakistan grant the Master of Education (MA/M.Ed.), Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph D) post-graduate degrees in the field of education to enhance the careers and accelerate the professional development of educators. The population of the study was all heads and teachers of education departments of public sector universities and government colleges of education and prospective teachers enrolled in public sector universities and government colleges where the Master degree of Education (MA Education) programme was offered. The sample of 20 heads of public sector universities and government colleges of education, 56 teacher educators of 10 public sector universities and 10 government colleges of education, and 200 prospective teachers enrolled in public sector universities and government colleges of education departments, where the Master degree of Education (M.A./M.Ed.) was offered in Pakistan, was selected through cluster random sampling. For the collection of data, three questionnaires - one each for heads of institutions, teacher educators and prospective teachers - were developed. For analysis, chi-square as the contingency test, was applied for identifying the trends from the frequency of responses of each questionnaire item. It was concluded that the teaching faculty of the MA education programme was using a variety of teaching methods according to the nature of objectives, content and students. Evaluation systems for students of the MA education programme were found satisfactory. It is recommended that required changes be introduced in admission criteria, curriculum, duration of degree programme, teaching-practice, research work, rewards and incentives of existing MA Education Programme in Pakistan.

Keywords: Teacher Education; Educators; Universities; heads; Teachers and Students

INTRODUCTION

It seems clear, after decades of research into classroom, that teachers' expectations have a strong impact on pupil performance. Thus, the role of a teacher in the education system at any level is pivotal. Children usually emulate their teachers in habits and conduct. It is, therefore, necessary that in their teacher, the students find a role model to imitate. To make teachers effective role models and to enhance the quality of education by making the teachers more curious, creative communicators, patient, flexible, and tireless, the teachers' professional development programmes are an integral part of an education system at any level.

The problems influencing education were not created overnight and they cannot be solved quickly. The education environment is very complex. Quality provides educational professionals with the structure and techniques necessary to improve every educational process. Quality teacher education programs have to be successfully implemented. Quality of education cannot be enhanced in isolation. It has to be a coordinated effort starting from the elementary level and moving on to the tertiary level. Education has to be seen as a continuum rather than compartmentalizing it in various segments or levels. Moreover, quality of education depends on the

curricula as much as on the teachers who deliver the curricula in the classroom (Ahmed, 2000).

It is universally acknowledged that education is an effective means for social reconstruction and, to a great extent, it offers solutions to the problems a society is faced with. These problems may be economic, social, cultural, political, moral, ecological and educational. Since the teachers play a major role in education of children, their own education becomes a matter of vital concern. Teacher education must, therefore, create necessary awareness among teachers about their new roles and responsibilities (Rajput *et al*, 2005).

Policy-makers are paying more attention to educational, social and economic factors that contribute to improving education and learning and enhance returns to investment in education. The process of teaching is at the heart of education and the expertise, pedagogical know-how and organizational and technical competence of teachers are widely considered to be central to educational improvement (Sarita and Tomar, 2004).

The progress of a country depends upon the quality of teachers and for this reason teaching is the noblest among all professions. The irony of fate, however, is that teaching is often the most unattractive profession and the teacher no longer occupies an honorable position in society. If teaching is to regain something of its earlier noble status, then the quality of teacher education needs to be improved in Pakistan. Of course, remuneration will also need to be reviewed extensively. However, the whole process of teacher education requires that there are high standards of entry to courses, high standards expected of all the learning experiences, and high standards expected of those students who will be given a pass. In the absence of other influences, a teacher tries to teach in the way in which he himself was taught by his favourite teacher, which tends to perpetuate the traditional methods of teaching. Such an attitude can become a major obstacle in enabling potential teachers to change their approaches to those which have been found to be more effective (Rao and Rao, 2005).

Effective professional education can introduce the trainee teachers to these new approaches, but it is also absolutely essential that there is consistency in the approach. Thus, those leading the courses in teacher training need to carry out their own teaching, using the best approaches based on researched evidence, while school practice cannot be allowed to undermine this by encouraging the trainee teacher to revert to former practices. This is incredibly difficult to achieve as Carroll (2006) discovered when he found that even those taught well in courses, and who were totally committed to better ways, tended to always revert back to repeating the teaching approaches they remembered from their own school days (Carroll, 2006). A primary criterion in determining the quality of professional and academic status of teachers is that its members should have acquired a sound background of general education, subject matter specialization and effective preparation in the methods and techniques of teaching. The academic status of teachers refers to the prestige that teachers enjoy by virtue of education they have received in schools and colleges, their professional competence, their personal commitment and care for the pupils/students. All things being equal, the higher the level of education a teacher has received, the higher his/her academic status (Shami and Hussain 2005).

Teaching is a creative, intellectually demanding and rewarding job, so the standards for joining the profession must be high too. Skilled practitioners can make teaching look easy, but they have learned their skills and improved them through training, practice and evaluation. Initial training lays the foundation for subsequent professional and career development (Sarita and Tomar, 2004). Teacher education is an integral component of the educational system. It is intimately connected with society and is conditioned by the ethos, culture and character of a nation. The constitutional goals, the directive principles of the state policy, the socio-economic problems and the growth of knowledge, the emerging expectations and the changes operating in education, etc., call for an appropriate response from a futuristic education system and provide the perspective within which teacher education programmes need to be viewed (Rajput *et al*, 2005).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to evaluate education programmes of teacher education at the higher level in Pakistan.

PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

Population

Twenty-one heads of education departments of public sector universities, 11 heads of government colleges of education, 112 teacher educators of 21 public sector universities, and 11 government colleges of education and 400 prospective teachers enrolled in public sector universities and government colleges, where the Master degree of Education (MA/MEd) programme was offered in Pakistan, constituted the population of the study.

Sample

The sample of 10 heads of education departments of public sector universities (50% of the population), 10 heads of government colleges of education (99% of the population), 56 teacher educators of 10 public sector universities and 10 government colleges of education (50% of the population), and 200 prospective teachers (50% of the population) enrolled in public sector universities and government colleges, where the master degree of education programme (MA) was offered in Pakistan, were selected through cluster random sampling.

Thus, the sample of study comprised 276 individuals consisting of 20 heads of university departments of education/colleges of education, 56 teachers of university departments of education/colleges of education, and 200 students of university departments of education/colleges of education.

Research Instruments

For the collection of data, three questionnaires, one each for prospective teachers, teacher educators, and heads of institutions, were developed. Questionnaires were used because it was convenient for the researcher to collect data.

Data Collection

The researcher distributed the questionnaires herself to the respondents and through mail to others. The researcher received all the responses, so the response percentage was 100 percent.

Data Analysis

Chi-square, as a contingency test, was used to compare the frequencies of principals/teachers, teachers/students and principals/students. For statistical treatment, chi-square was applied using the following formula:

$$\chi^2_{Obs} = \sum_{cells} \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} \quad (\text{Garrett, 1997})$$

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results for each question are shown as percentages for clarity, but the chi-square calculations are carried out using the frequency data. Grouping of data is carried out where any category drops below 5% or five respondents and the degrees of freedom are reduced accordingly. The samples are as follows: Heads: N = 20; Teachers: N = 56; and Students: N = 200. The low sample in the first two groups reduces the sensitivity of chi-square considerably.

Table 1: Objectives Given in the MA Education Courses are Clear and Achievable

	Yes	No	Total	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	36	64	100	<i>Students/Teachers</i>	0.2	1	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	39	61	100	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	1.5	1	ns.
<i>Heads</i>	55	45	100	<i>Heads/Students</i>	2.9	1	ns.

As shown in Table 1, there is no statistical difference in the views of all groups. The heads are positive in their views. However, students and teachers show negative views about the statement. Their attitudes show that objectives of the courses are not clear and achievable, certainly from the perspective of the students and their teachers.

Table2: Duration of MA Education Programme Needs to be Enhanced

	Yes	No	Total	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	36	64	100	<i>Students /Teachers</i>	0.2	1	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	39	61	100	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	1.5	1	ns.
<i>Heads</i>	55	45	100	<i>Heads/Students</i>	2.9	1	ns.

As shown in Table 2, students and teachers are markedly negative in their views. Heads' views are somewhat different from them. Perhaps students and teachers are more negative about enhancement of the current duration of the programme.

Table 3: Semester System is More Appropriate than Annual System for MA Education Programme

	Yes	No	Total	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	82	18	100	<i>Students /Teachers</i>	0.4	1	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	79	21	100	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	0.1	1	ns.
<i>Heads</i>	80	20	100	<i>Heads/Students</i>	0.1	1	ns.

As shown in Table 3, the views of all three groups are positive. They consider the semester system more appropriate than the annual system for the programme.

Table 4: Marks Distribution for Theory and Practice is Satisfactory for the Students of MA Education Programme

	Yes	No	Total	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	64	36	100	<i>Students /Teachers</i>	4.8	1	< 0.05
<i>Teachers</i>	48	52	100	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	6.1	1	< 0.01
<i>Heads</i>	80	20	100	<i>Heads/Students</i>	2.1	1	ns.

As shown in Table 4, students and heads are satisfied with the marks distribution, but the teachers are much less positive.

Table 5: Existing Evaluation System of MA Education Programme Promotes Students' Comprehension of the Subject

	Yes	No	Total	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	61	39	100	<i>Students /Teachers</i>	1.0	1	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	68	32	100	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	0.4	1	ns.
<i>Heads</i>	75	25	100	<i>Heads/Students</i>	1.6	1	ns.

As shown in Table 5, all three groups hold positive views. This is an encouraging outcome.

Table 6: Students of MA Education are Trained to Use Advanced Instructional Technology Such as Television, Computer, On-line Library, Multi-media

	A	O	S	R	N	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	7	19	27	22	25	<i>Students /Teachers</i>	6.0	4	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	11	20	30	29	10	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	2.6	2	ns.
<i>Heads</i>	0	35	45	20	0	<i>Heads/Students</i>	0.7	1	ns.

As shown in Table 6, the apparent differences are not statistically significant. However, there appears to be a lack of certainty and, probably, the student view is most close to correct. Nonetheless, the low response rate in the first column is a matter of concern.

Table 7: A Variety of Teaching Methods is Used According to the Nature of Objectives, Content and Students

	A	O	S	R	N	Comparisons	χ^2	df	p
<i>Students</i>	5	7	33	20	35	<i>Students/Teachers</i>	1.6	3	ns.
<i>Teachers</i>	0	13	32	27	28	<i>Teachers/Heads</i>	5.0	1	< 0.05
<i>Heads</i>	0	35	45	20	0	<i>Heads/Students</i>	8.5	1	< 0.01

As shown in Table 7, the students are least positive and the heads are most positive. Again, the students' views are most likely to be valid, suggesting that teaching method variety is largely absent.

DISCUSSION

The research was aimed at evaluating the MA education programme of teacher education in Pakistan. Without the participation of highly qualified teachers, the process of economic, social, cultural, political, moral and educational development of a country is very difficult to be augmented. It was observed that the objectives of MA education courses were understood and achieved by heads, teachers and students of the MA education programme and content of the programme was sometimes rehashed according to expanding knowledge and new technology. It was found that the faculty of the MA education programme hardly ever contributed in curriculum revision. The role of a teacher cannot be divorced from the educational programme at any level. It is acknowledged that teachers are well aware of new research, innovations, curriculum requirements, their students' personality and national and international demands. Therefore, competent teachers of the programme should be involved for the development and revision of curriculum. It was also recommended by Jujjar and Dogar (2006) that teachers should be involved at least in the selection of content.

The majority of heads, teachers and students of the programme preferred the semester system for the MA education programme. It was also supported by Paliwal (1985) who was of the view that a semester system was better than year-long courses. The duration of the programme is very important to deepen their knowledge. The enhancement of MA education duration was approved by the heads of departments, but discouraged by teachers and students of the programme. It was also supported by Hussain (2004) who was of the view that the duration of teacher training should be lengthened to develop a favourable attitude of student teachers toward the teaching profession.

The evaluation system of any programme is a key source to assess students' intellectual abilities of apprehension, knowledge and skills. All the respondents of the study were satisfied with the existing evaluation, including marks distribution of theory and practice of the MA education programme. It is recommended that required changes be introduced in admission criteria, curriculum, duration of degree programme, teaching practice, research work, rewards and incentives, etc. of the existing MA education programme in Pakistan.

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