



Teacher Education for Sustainability in Pakistan

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Abstract: Education plays vital role in sustainable development. Education is permanent modification of creativity and behaviour as the result of new experiences through education (Kaushik, 1997). It is not only a catalyst with potentialities to transform all the aspects of development but contributes in the current challenges of sustainability. The aim of education is to ensure and secure the basic purpose of education, to achieve the tasks of life and to attain basic life skills in an integrated and sustainable manner (Azam, 2003). According to Singh (2008) "Education is essentially a process of growth and development, which goes on throughout the whole life" (p.7). Education for sustainability is less understood and less practiced by teacher educators in Government Colleges of Education offering Associate Degree in education and four years B.Ed program. It is difficult to assume that whether teacher educators have proper acquaintance with education for sustainability, skills and willing to incorporate education for sustainability in teacher education policies and practices. In addition, it cannot be presupposed that through experience teacher educators will attain such skills. Therefore, education for sustainability should be carefully planned and made as integral part of teacher education programs instead of ad hoc based approach for education for sustainability.

This study will investigate how Associate Degree for education teacher training program for prospective teachers has been designed or shaped and find out how teacher educators are affianced with education for sustainability in their teaching. The purpose of study is (i) to determine the elements of Education for sustainability before and after Associate Degree program, (ii) to investigate teacher educators knowledge, skills and attitude related to education for sustainability and, (iii) to examine the perception and engagement of teacher educators regarding education for sustainability. The focus of this study will be on five indicators of sustainability which include the social impact of education, education as strategy for development, financial viability, adaptability and capability to bring socio-economic change. A case study approach will be used for this study. Data will be collected through surveys, in-depth interviews and analysis of over five years documents.

Keywords: sustainable development, process of growth and development, teacher educators, prospective teachers, social impact of education, financial viability, adaptability and capability, socio-economic change

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INTRODUCTION

The teacher education in Pakistan has been facing serious challenges in terms of policy, quality and lack of resources. During the past two decades several initiatives have been taken to improve the teacher education but recently innovative reforms have been initiated by under PRE-STEP project with the support of USAID. The aim of this innovation was to enhance the quality of teacher training through introduction of a two-year Associate Degree in Education (ADE) and BEd (Hons- a four-year). The new introduced programs have replaced Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC), Certificate in Teaching (CT) and one-year B.Ed program prevalent during transition period. Both the ADE and a four years BEd has been initiated in elementary colleges of education in Pakistan including public universities It is assumed that EFS have been considered in the design of programs.

Education is essentially human capital as it is directly promotes the quality and capability of human being. Education improves and develops the verbal skills, and expenditure on human resources increases the national product and also increases the wealth. Education produces a society, which has more productive capacity to satisfy the material and non- material wants of the population (Singh, 2008, p.80). The teacher has a new role of to improve positive impact on social circumstances (Rao, 2008). The main purpose of education is imparting literacy and numeracy and it is process of socialization and total development (Singh, 2008).

Education for sustainability in teacher education has been also a common term but people know little about EFS. This study was carried out at government elementary college of education to assess knowledge, skills, attitude and perception about EFS in ADE pre-service teacher education program. This study investigated the knowledge, skills and attitude of teacher educators related to education for sustainability and examined the perception and engagement of teacher educators regarding education for sustainability. The study involved interviews with teacher educators on the inclusion of efs in teacher training programs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Education promotes social, economic and environmental change in society and development through education and training must be sustainable so that creativity and change in behaviour as result of education should be positive and permanent. Kaushik (1997) believes that news experiences through education and training is permanent modification of creativity and behaviour. The balanced social, economic and environmental thinking for future with reference to development and ensuring quality of life is called sustainability (UNESCO, 2012). The sustainable development is a development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (United Nations, 1987, p.15). The transformation of education into all aspects of development is great challenge for sustainability. Azam (2003) argues that the purpose of education and training should be to achieve the basic tasks of life and learn life skills in sustainable way. Singh (2008) define education as a continuous process of growth and sustainable development

The teacher education and trainings is an instrument to provide educational opportunities to individuals to attain the educational objectives to create knowledge making process for sustainable development. In teacher education several approaches and methodologies have been adopted to achieve the educational objectives. The study seeks to answer the following

questions

1. What are teacher educators knowledge and skills related to EFS
2. What teacher educators have attitude to learn about EFS in teacher training program
3. What they perceive about EFS and what are their engagements to implement EFS

This study will identify how Associate Degree for education teacher training program for prospective teachers has been designed to ensure sustainable development through teacher education. In addition this paper will determine the fundamental principles of sustainability incorporate in Associate Degree program and changes in knowledge, skills, perception and attitude in teacher educators related to sustainable development. The focus of this study will be on five indicators of sustainability which include the social impact of education, education as strategy for development, financial viability, adaptability and capability to bring socio-economic change.

The study will focus on evaluation of B.Ed teacher education program previous previously offered by elementary colleges of education and ADE in the context of context of pedagogy, quality, environment, use of technology and cooperative learning in sustainability perspective. The study presents the observations and findings on program design, scheme of study and teaching methodologies to achieve the sustainable development through education

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Education brings structural social change (Scimecca, 1980). It has been proved that there is a close relationship between school and community which helps to solve the social an economic problems (Silver, 1980). There is a requirement to establish strong linkages between teachers and parents for social change to promote education and sustainability (Safdar, 2005). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is gathering momentum in education sector which is “overarching paradigm of the United Nations” (UNESCO, 2012). The teacher training institutions are supposed to scrutinize their role to accomplish education for sustainability in relation to the training of pre-service teachers (UNESCO, 2005). This movement has been facilitated by the development of several initiatives and UNESCO defines that

“Sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. These three spheres – society, environment and economy – are intertwined. The sustainability paradigm is a major change from the previous paradigm of economic development with its damaging social and environmental consequences” (UNESCO, 2012, p.5).

It is expected that teacher education is fulfilling the goals of the United Nations’ Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The overall goal of pre-service teacher education is to promote “critically reflective approach to all aspects of the curriculum, especially themes such as citizenship, which lie within the social domain” (Wilkins, 2004, p.242) that leads towards education for sustainability. “The teacher and school should expect that students are developing sense of community in classroom and establishing climate of mutual respect” (Killen, 2005,

p.19). Therefore, it is very pertinent to say that the role of teacher is to bring effectiveness and change new beliefs of students (Macmillan & Garrison, 1988) and teachers can easily motivate community for sustainable social change.

It is fact that “ throughout the world, societies of all kinds are facing war, terrorism,, inequalities, starvations, diseases, energy crises,, environmental disasters, and so many other threats to life and peace” (Mattos, 2009), p.204) and in this critical situation teachers can play vital role in sustainable change and development in society. The role of teacher is to facilitate motivated learning to achieve the objectives of education (Mishra, 2007) which can be possible through proper training of prospective teachers. Information and communication technology is also tool face the challenges of 21st century to achieve the educational objectives and adopt new learning strategies for sustainable development in the new knowledge economy instead of implementation of policies to achieve only learning experiences (Siddiqui, 2007). The UNESCO setting the objectives for Education for Sustainable Development emphasis that:

- education that allows learners to acquire the skills, capacities, values and knowledge required to ensure sustainable development;
- education dispensed at all levels and in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, community);
- education that fosters responsible citizens and promotes democracy by allowing individuals and communities to enjoy their rights and fulfill their responsibilities;
- education based on the principle of life-long learning;
- education that fosters the individual’s balanced development.(UNESCO, 2005, p.9)

The sustainability is required in every aspect of teacher education program including establishment of strong linkages to achieve the objectives of EFS, therefore, to overcome the current challenges and ensure sustainability in teacher education programs it is necessary to enhance the professional development of prospective teachers through training and capacity building. The existing teacher education in Pakistan faces several challenges with reference to education for sustainability. There are so many barriers to EFS that includes absence of sustainability objectives in curriculum, lack of financial resources to integrate ICT in teaching methodology, poor quality of training programs, time constraints, marginalization of education for sustainability and conceptual misunderstandings on the part of stakeholders. An additional potential constraint emerged from limited competencies on the part of supervising teachers in professional practicum schools.

METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was adopted for this study. Data was collected through surveys, in-depth interviews and analysis of documents. In total 34 teacher educators (18 male and 16 females) of B.Ed program and ADE program participated in study. All 34 teacher educators of ADE classes were surveyed to canvass their views about the EFS. Possible examples were provided verbally, including the social impact of education, education as strategy for development, financial viability, adaptability and capability to bring socio-economic change. The teacher educators worked in groups of 5 or 6, generating 26 response sheets. The teacher educators were offered

two suggested models for reporting their responses, either listing pluses or minuses with regard to the scenario, or a PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting, de Bono, 1992). They were free to respond in any form they chose, however. The anonymous sheets were placed in a box. The responses benefited from the group discussions that took place. The documents produced by groups of teacher educators were analyzed for patterns and outlying responses and as part of a systemic analysis of the enablers and constraints with regard to EfS. The response sheets were codified and the codes tallied to illustrate frequency and patterns of responses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the participants confirmed the importance of education for sustainability, however, all the participants of study were not clear about the indicators of sustainability supposed to be achieved through education and training. A group of teacher educators' stated:

"We know that education brings social reforms and with the help of community a teacher can change mindset of students and parents to value the knowledge for sustainable development but how those objectives will be achieved that is not reflected in the curriculum and dispensing education for social change."

Group participants comprising 8 teacher educators indicated "we are training the student to be a teacher" but "how to achieve the goals of education for sustainable development seems to be missing in teacher training program offered for pre- service training". Another participants group pointed out that:

"the Associate Degree in Education (ADE) leading towards B.Ed (four years) is new initiative taken by government of Pakistan to improve the quality of teacher education and ensure that the pre-service training program is linked with the recruitment of teachers. We are concerned about the quality of prospective teachers and what skills and knowledge is required to be a good teacher. The concept of educational for sustainability is missing"

The common issue was raised regarding the training teacher educators on education for sustainable development. "We have heard about EFS but neither we are not properly trained nor curriculum objectives specify the education for sustainable development" one group of participants indicated that "social change is the need of hour, our society is shattered, terrorism and extremism has been penetrated in our society, therefore, a teacher can play vital role to bring social change through education".

All the participants confirmed that new initiatives taken for the improvement of pre-service teacher education are remarkable but "divert ADE/ B.Ed program toward integration of information and communication technology and education for sustainability is missing". A few teacher educators showed their concerns that "shift of teacher education program for one year to two or four cannot may make significance difference in the quality and sustainability of professional development", however, rest of the participants appreciated the new initiatives taken by government of Pakistan in the field of professional development.

CONCLUSION

Almost all the participants identified that the objectives of education for sustainability have been envisaged neither in one year B.Ed program nor in ADE and B.Ed four years pre-service teacher education program. The results of study shows that a large number of teacher educators have positive attitude to learn more about EFS but they possess very less knowledge and skills to achieve the objectives of education for sustainable development through teacher training program during the preparation of prospective teachers.

Most of the participants perceive that EFS is very important particularly in the context of Pakistan where low level of participation in education, extremism and terrorism have distorted the society. Teacher educators believe that they prepare prospective teacher who are responsible to impart the education at primary school level, therefore, it is very important that the objectives of education must be sustainable to bring social and economic development. The study did not find any engagement of teacher educators with reference to education for sustainable development.

The constraints and issues were highlighted by the participants that include lack of recourses, inconsistency of curriculum with the objectives of EFS and educational quality. Variance in the in-service teacher training program offered by elementary colleges of education and donor funded projects and recruitment policy issues were highlighted as one of the major concern by teacher educators. The participants also pointed out that ADE and B.Ed are very new initiatives which need more coordinated efforts and policy reform at national and provincial level to ensure the inclusion of this program graduates into the teaching profession.

All the participants highlighted the importance and strength of ADE and B.Ed four years program but suggested that curriculum of these programs must be associated with the sustainability paradigm which will lead towards sustainable social and economic development.

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