Assessing Quality of English Teachers at Secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study was conducted to assess the quality of English language teachers at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan through survey of 545 prospective-teachers, and 31 English teacher-educators. English language teachersø Quality Assessment Questionnaire based on input (physical facilities, policies and clarity in objectives), process (learning environment, attitude of stake holders and access to existing facilities) and output (quality of assessment and status of learners) was the instrument of survey for this research. Analysis of data proved that quality of English teachers was satisfactory to some extent. The study has implications for higher education commission of Pakistan, National Accreditation council for teacher-Education, and provincial department of education Punjab.

Keywords: Quality, English teachers, prospective- teachers, teacher-educators, Language

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Introduction

Quality of English language teachers has always been a point of great concern not only in Punjab but also in the other provinces of Pakistan (Government-of-Pakistan, 2009). Almost all polices and plans have brought this point under discussion and surfaced the need to ameliorate quality of English language teachers in Pakistan (Memon, 2007; Shami and Hussain, 2006). Different governments struggled to better the quality but had to face obstructions due to lack of funds and political will. Mass production and need of teachers has been a stumbling block in the quality of English language teachers (Iqbal and Ahmed, 2010).Quality of English language teachers determines the quality of teachers and quality of teachers is directly pertinent to quality of students learning (Alderman et al., 2001). The quality of English language teachers in Pakistan is further deteriorated by pressure to produce more English language teachers to cope with rising demand of teachers in Pakistan. Quality has been a victim in quantitative expansion of English language teachers. The result was production of English language teachers with little understanding of both content and methodology (Parveen & Bhatti, 2009). Deteriorating quality of English language teachers needs certain measures on urgent basis to improve the quality of English language teaching programs in Pakistan. The latest Education policy (2009) emphasizes on improving quality of English language teachers and keeping this policy in view National accreditation council for teacher education has been established and professional standards for English language teachers have been set to develop. For quality development measures, empirical evidence about present conditions of quality of English language teachers is needed without delay. There is scarcity of quality assessment studies in Pakistan, especially in English language teachers. The present study intends to fill the lapses and provides evidence about poor quality of English language teaching programs in Pakistan.

Quality in English language teachers

Quality is a term having a multidimensional meaning and scopes that varies from context to context and sometimes person to person. Quality for a university can be interpreted as an instrument by which we ensure the objectives of its educational system being obtained (Ismail, 2010). It is evaluated as degree to which goods or services achieve its target (Sitkin et al. 1994). Seyfried (2007) Describes that quality is concerned how good education institutions are offering their services as the consequence of their educating. Quality possesses two dimensions: relevance and excellence (Ullah, 2005). Relevance is the degree to which a product matches to the needs or standard. Excellence is the degree to which goodness of service is compared to standard (Irfan and Kee, 2013). Quality cannot be achieved until we define the quality in the context.

Indicators of quality

Assessment of quality needs the identification of indicators of quality. Quality indicators are of three categories: Input, process and output indicators(Chapman and Adams, 2002).Input indicators prescribed by different authors can be stated as: quality of admission process, quality of faculty, quality of support service and physical infrastructure. Process indicators can be narrated into following six items: planning, delivery, assessment and evaluation, accountability, research and development and support services(Bolaji and Ali, 2013). Output indicators are: achievement of learning outcomes, satisfaction of stakeholders, quality of output and success in Market.

The summary of input indicators is following :quality of admission process, quality of faculty, quality of support service and physical infrastructure(Bolaji and Ali, 2013); building, classrooms, cafeteria, common rooms, library, laboratory, computers and computer laboratories, play grounds, Mosque, incentives, transport, budget, teacherøs academic and professional qualification, skills and attitude of teachers (Ullah, 2005); Multimedia (ICT), competences and experience of administrative staff and access indicators (Zou et al, 2005); class size, teacherøs salary (Bunting, 1997); teacher student ratio (Vos, 1996); hostel facility, financial support(Iqbal, 2004); preparation of lecture, positive attitude (Khan, 2003); furniture, access to faculty (Ismail, 2010); academic calendar (Menon et al. 2007); and access to advisory staff (Hameed and Amjad, 2011) .

Process indicators are: establishment of mission and goals, curriculum, workload on students and teachers, feedback, accountability, assessment, and evaluation (Feldman, 1976; Marsh, 1987;Vos, 1996). Bunting (1997) added dropout rate of studentøs as process indicators. Burke (1997) included site visits. Tam (1999) Wrote the list with management and teacher training workshops. Tam (1999) added peer evaluation (Review) as process indicators in his study. Khan (2003) identified co-curricular activities. Iqbal (2004) added admission process, uniform procedure, quality control, quality assurance practices, supports facilities, teacherøs eligibility to utilize A.V aids, opportunities of professional development, content delivery methods, follow-up visits, political interference and examination system. Inglis (2005) included planning, leadership and administration. Ullah (2005) added the list with job security, discipline, campus climate, and guidance and counselling. Menon et al. (2007) recruitment process, research and development activities and remedial program. (Seyfried, 2007) included relevant material as process indicator. Ursin et al. (2008) added self-evaluation, peer evaluation. Unicef (2000) added learner centred approach and supervision. Dilshad and Iqbal (2010) added partnership with other

institutions, learning resources, accreditation and documentation of information as process indicators. Zou et al. (2012) included rules and regulations as process indicators.

Output indicators are: quality of assessment (Marsh 1987); creative and independent work ability in prospective teachers (Feldman, 1976); research publications and quality of teaching (Kells, 1992; Ramsden 1991); success rate and employment rate (Bunting, 1997); achievement of desired learning outcomes, values acquisition (moral, ethical, social, behavioural, attitude, character) satisfaction of stakeholders, cost effectiveness and student retention(Tam 1999); physical health of students (Unicef, 2000); social status, participative decision making (Dilshad & Iqbal, 2010).

Quality Assessment

Assessment of quality can be defined as a systematic procedure to comprehend the quality of teaching and learning (Batool and Qureshi, 2007; Zou et al., 2012). It comprises of evaluation of all or selected indicators of quality through external and internal ways. **First**, quality assurance has some degree of external review. In other words committee of either government representatives, faculty representatives, or some mixture of the two has responsible to visit institutions and reporting on their internal quality assurance system.

Second, institutions generally possess some manners of reviewing their own programs in order to cater them to respond to external review committees. Measurement of quality is undertaken most of the times through perceptions of stakeholders. The external agencies can just conduct evaluation that either the work is going properly or not.

Assessment of quality is done to serve two main purposes: quality assurance to different stake holders and quality enhancement (Asif et al., 2013). Quality assurance means to guarantee the excellence of learning or services to keep predestined standards (Inglis, 2005). The word ₌quality assurance is to sustain and improve quality there of (Bornmann et al. 2006; McKimm, 2003).Quality assurance mechanism is to evaluate the excellence of learning or services with the lowest standards which are set by the donors, manufacturers, exterior government or by the authority of professional standards(Ismail, 2010).Quality assurance provides assistance to donors and customers et to ensure that the standards of an organization must be kept up or sustained (Craft, 2003).Quality assurance is not only fault finding but also is an ongoing, dynamic, and integrative way of assuring and enhancing the quality (Ullah, 2005).

Quality enhancement on other hand is associated with the improvement of quality of learning or services (Inglis, 2005). Quality enhancement is a process of improving quality continuously (Gvaramadze, 2008; McKimmm, 2003).It focuses on self-regulatory system to follow the approach of õwhole institutionö which included individual instructor, departmental and course teams and organizational infrastructure (Seyfried, 2007). Approaches of quality improving system are aimed to better the continuous system of English teaching and learning to support advanced teaching and to encouraging educational improvement (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Quality of English Teachers in Pakistan

Quality of English language Teachers at secondary and higher secondary level in Pakistan does not meet the international standards and victim of downfall day by day. There are numerous reasons of poor quality of English language such as improper admission criteria for taking admission of students in Educational institutes, uninterested and lazy students, lacking of competent English teachers, inequity between teacher-educator and prospective-teachers ratio, lacking of conducive and constructive educational climate, shortage of physical facilities, imperfect textbooks, poor facilities and substandard assessment system have put down the excellence of education and ongoing obstacles in the development and improvement of English language teaching system in order to achieve targets of local and international job market. In Pakistan the quality of English language teachers is very low and the product of higher education system of Pakistan cannot compete internationally (Aadil, 2010; Shah, 2010).

Batool and Qureshi (2007) narrated a number of problems which have a great impacts on quality. Main reasons of poor quality in educational institutions are substandard quality at primary and secondary level education, students have no command on their communication skills, no efforts seen for establishing constructive socio-economic climate of the higher education and problematic through the competitor groups of students and teachers etc. Aadil (2010) and Iqbal (2004) expose those challenges which are: (i) Non-flexible admission criteria, (ii) Lack of qualified faculty, (iii) Supervisors lack local field experience, (iv) Lack of collaboration with both local and international researchers and job market, (v) Lack of seriousness and (vi) Lack of brand.

Government of Pakistan has taken stern steps relevant to connotation for English language teachers in order to viewing their efforts for quality improvement(Batool and Qureshi, 2007). We intend to explore the prevalent quality of English language teachers in Punjab, Pakistan. There is a gap between existing and desired level of quality of English language teachers in Pakistan. The quality of English language teachers needs improvement. This study will contribute to the amelioration of quality of English language teachers by giving empirical evidence to higher authorities including personnel from higher education commission of Pakistan, National Council for Accreditation of English teacher education, provincial department of education, university administration and departments of English language teachers in universities.

Research methodology

The present study was descriptive in nature which intended to explore the quality of English language teachers. The data were collected in natural settings by conducting a survey. Descriptive research delineates situations, events, and person to expose their current status (Robson, 2002). It usually describes situation in which events are taking place for evaluating data and drawing conclusions for synthetic ideas (Saunders et al., 2011).

As Survey research is associated with the deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2011).Cross-sectional survey was adopted for this purpose. The data for this study was collected in Fall 2014.

The sample consisted of 545 prospective-English teachers and 31In service English teacher for quantitative survey. The researchers randomly selected four out of 11 purposively sampled secondary schools. Namely: Government Islamia High School Vehari, Government Model High School Vehari, Government Model High school Mailsi, Government High School Mailsi, District Vehari (Punjab) Pakistan. All the prospective-teachers and in service English teachers in the Institutions were accessed.

Research Tool

Review of available literature explored 28 indicators of quality in higher education settings. These quality indicators were divided into three categories: input, process and output. The detail follows:

Input indicators: Admission criteria, administration, academic calendar, library, computer laboratory, play ground, cafeteria, common room, hostel and transport.

Process Indicators: Planning, curriculum content, delivery, schedule, guidance and counselling, discipline, environment, examination system, program updating, access of faculty, assessment and evaluation, research, quality control and assurance.

Output Indicators: Quality of assessment and status of learners.

Keeping in view the above stated categories and indicators, a questionnaire was formulated on 5-Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (coded as 1) to strongly agree (coded as 5).Three open ended questions were also added: ‑What are strong points of your department?, What are the draw backs of your department and give suggestions to improve quality of your department.

These seven indicators were used in three organs of quality: input, process and output. There were 25 items related to input indicators: physical facilities (13); policies (6); and clarity in objectives (6). Process indicators had 21 items: learning environment (12); attitude of stake holders (6); and access of facilities (3). Output indicators had 10 items in quality of assessment and status of learners.

Results and discussion

The study explored the quality of English language teachers. After a thorough discussion with experts, mean range with following criteria were employed for the interpretation of the results: 1.00 to 1.50 = strongly disagree, 1.51 to 2.50 = disagree, 2.51 to 3.50= neutral, 3.51 to 4.50= agree, 4.50 to 5.00 = strongly agree. Table 1 shows cumulative mean (3.52), falls within agree range(3.51-4.50), which means that English Teachers are satisfied with the quality of English teachers at their respective institutions. Similarly, input, process and output quality was observed as positive. Khan and Saeed (2010) stated similar out comes about the quality of B.Ed program, but Dilshad (2010)contradicts that prospective-English teachers were not satisfied with the quality of English teachers they were getting.

Table 1

Mean response value for Variables

Variable	Mean
Quality of Teacher Education (cumulative)	3.51
Quality of Input	3.51
Quality of process	3.65
Quality of output	3.57
Physical facilities	3.19
Policies	3.70
Clarity in objectives	3.65
Learning environment	3.42
Attitude of stakeholders	3.61
Access of existing facilities	3.91
Assessment and status of learners	3.57

Out of seven variables English Teachers were most satisfied with access to existing facilities (Mean=3.93), quite surprisingly least satisfaction was recorded with provision of physical facilities (Mean=3.21). Positive perception was observed about attitude of stake holders, assessment and status of learners (mean=3.64), policies and clarity of objectives. Learning environment was not perceived as satisfactory.

Detailed item wise analysis of seven indicators of English language teachers quality is followed as: Physical facilitates perception (Mean = 3.21) was in neutral range (2.51-3.50). English Teachers perceived positively about access to library (Mean= 3.89), library staff cooperation (Mean=3.72). It was further noted that English Teachers were neutral about academic calendar (Mean= 3.43), availability of books (Mean=3.25), access to computer laboratory (Mean=3.17), laboratory staff cooperation (Mean= 3.45), quality of hostel facility (Mean=3.09) and transport facility (Mean= 3.48), availability of furniture (Mean= 2.97), multimedia (Mean=2.96), computers (Mean= 2.89), common room (Mean= 2.55), and hostel availability (Mean= 2.89).

Policies perception (Mean = 3.67) was in agree range (3.51-4.50). English Teachers perceived positively about admission on merit (Mean= 3.97), English teachers motivated to learn (Mean=3.77), Recruitment of English teacher-educators on merit (Mean=3.68), English teacher-educators develop themselves professionally (Mean=3.87) and English teacher-educators are skilled (Mean= 3.98). The respondents were neutral about well defined admission criteria (Mean= 3.12).

Clarity in objectives was reported positive (Mean= 3.68). Moreover, positive perception was noted about clarity in program objectives to English teachers-teachers (Mean= 3.69), clarity in program objectives to English teacher-educators (Mean= 3.73), curriculum fulfils the needs of English teachers (Mean= 3.62) and course content meet program objectives (Mean= 3.66).

Learning environment was perceived neutral (Mean= 3.47), the respondents were neutral about discipline (Mean= 3.44), quality assurance practices (Mean= 3.41) research supportive environment (Mean= 3.43), English teacher-educatorsø satisfaction (Mean= 3.39), achievement of program objectives (Mean= 3.44) and grades represent competence (Mean= 3.45). However, positive perception was noted about learning supportive environment (Mean= 3.58) and quality enhancement practices (Mean= 3.54).

Perception about the attitude of stakeholders was positive (Mean= 3.62), similarly attitude of administrative staff cooperation was also positive (Mean= 3.58), timely completion of courses (Mean= 3.59), schedule following (Mean= 3.67), sharing experiences (Mean= 3.57), students access to faculty (Mean= 3.86) and proper guidance of English teachers (Mean= 3.85).

Access of facilities was positive (Mean= 3.92),use of audio-visual aids in classrooms was not satisfactory (Mean= 3.20), play ground facilities (Mean= 3.99), and access to cafeteria(Mean= 4.00).

Assessment and status of learners was reported positive (Mean= 3.56). Moreover, positive perception was noted about sharing of marked answer sheets with prospective-teachers (Mean= 3.53), provision of feedback on assignments (Mean= 3.56), programs update (Mean= 3.50), revision of course outlines (Mean= 3.63), efforts to improve teaching quality (Mean= 3.94), imparting job skills (Mean= 3.48) and graduates get good social status (Mean= 3.68). However, neutral perception was noted about quality (Mean= 3.42) and graduates getting good jobs (Mean= 3.32).

Table 2

Comparison of prospective-teachers and teacher-educators perception

Variable	Variable	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig.
Overall	Quality	Teacher-educators	31	3.58	.40	1.555	574	0.120
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.43	.53			
Input	Physical facilities	Teacher-educators	31	3.26	.66	1.119	574	0.264
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.11	.73			
	Policies	Teacher-educators	31	3.87	.44	3.116	574	0.002
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.52	.62			
	Clarity in objectives	Teacher-educators	31	3.65	.61	0.113	574	0.910
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.64	.75			
Process	Learning environment	Teacher-educators	31	3.60	.59	2.858	574	0.004
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.24	.68			
	Attitude of stakeholders	Teacher-educators	31	3.60	.59	-0.091	574	0.927
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.61	.73			
	Access of facilities	Teacher-educators	31	4.03	.51	1.449	574	0.148
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.79	.91			
Output	Assessment and status of learners	Teacher-educators	31	3.61	.52	0.796	574	0.426
		Prospective-teachers	545	3.52	.62			

According to table 2 mean value, standard deviation and significant difference indicates that there is no difference between opinions of in service English Teachers and prospective English Teachers about overall quality of English teachers. We observed significant difference in ‑policies (t(574)= 3.116, p=0.003) and ‑learning environment (t (574)= 2.868,p=0.004) only, where as perception of English teacher-educators were more positive.

Qualitative Analysis

Three qualitative questions given in questionnaire were part of the research, but the respondentsø response rate was very low. Only 23 participants responded this part. Analysis of the respondents is following. Regarding the strength of the departments of education the respondents are of the view that English teachers at secondary level were qualified (having mostly Master degree in English and few of them having M.Phil). They were motivated to teach English. In addition, administration was serious to uplift the quality of English teachers. Regarding shortcomings, the respondents revealed lack of infrastructure (furniture, rooms), teaching aids, and consistent policy major issues. Some of the respondents wrote about lack of proper performance evaluation and accountability system. One of the respondents went so far to say that ─lack of equality, fair play and absence of any monitoring system was source of all problems. Another respondent suggested that English Teachers need to be recruited through international advertisements, to serve as academic and ethical role models.

Discussion

The researchers focused to assess the equality of English teachers in secondary schools of Pakistan, as perceived by internal stake-holders: English Teachers. The quality of input, process and output of English language teachers was explored. The quality of input came out to be slightly satisfactory; the in service English teachers were more contented than the prospective-English teachers on two indicators: policies and learning environment. Contradictions on other five indicators were not so much significant. Poor quality of English teachers in Pakistan is not a new phenomenon, it has been a matter of great enquiry in almost all National Education Policies of Pakistan(Government-of-Pakistan, 2009).The quality of English language teachers has great impacts on the quality of education, which is one of the reasons of poor economic condition of developing countries (Memon, 2007). Almost all policies and successive governments have been endeavouring to improve the quality of English language teachers, but the quality of English language teachers could not be improved. The reason is that there is considerable gap in commitment and implementation of English language teachers quality enhancement measures (Government-of-Pakistan, 2009).Commitment gap results in low allocation of funds for the purpose and implementation gap takes to inappropriate allocation, poor monitoring and accountability system.

Among seven indicators (physical facilities, policies, clarity in objectives, learning environment, attitude of stakeholders, access of existing facilities, assessment and status of learners) which were incorporated to assess quality, physical facilities were at the lowest stage. That maybe due to allocation of insufficient funds to the high schools, void of department to convince authorities to provide funds for the departments(Memon, 2007). It is very important when authorities are busy in managing different sorts of external pressures and have a little time to be aware of departmental needs and priorities. Department of education had been provided withless furniture, multimedia, classrooms, common rooms and outdated computers. English Teachers are of the view that the problem is being further complicated by lack of funds for maintenance, poor governance and low competence of support staff. They widely think that support staff is brought under the recommendations of political pressure groups that ultimately affecting the quality of teachers.

Learning environment is affected by poor quality of English teachers in Pakistan. Discipline, quality assurance practices, support for research and teaching are deficient areas, which require improvement. Performance of English teachers cannot be improved without improvement in governance. English teacher sopine that there are no provisions and proper guidance to faculty about laws, if there are, having lack of implementation, no serious effort is being made to foster up the quality at departmental levels(Dilshad & Iqbal, 2010).

In output, assessment quality and status of learners was slightly satisfactory as grasped by internal stake holders: English Teachers. The quality of graduates is largely criticized by Heads of public sector schools and private sector employers. One of the English teachers who was in liaison with private schools expressed that the private employers told the graduates were poor in content, methodology and ethical competence(Memon, 2007).

Conclusions

The quality of English language teachers in Punjab is satisfactory to some extent but quality of physical resources and learning environment are up to the mark. English Teachers perceptions vary regarding learning environment and polices; in service English teacher-educators have positive attitude and Government Institutions with reasonable infrastructures were higher in quality. The quality of English language teachers can be sparkled by giving more funds, better leadership, better governance and facilitating the Teachers with modern techniques and audio-visual aids.

Limitations of study

The study was based on perceptions of in service English Teachers and prospective English teachers achieved through questionnaire. The use of check list for physical facilities, review of course outlines, and observation of admission and assessment process may improve the authenticity of research. Moreover, the sample was selected from southern Punjab. English Teachers from other areas and other stake holders may have contradictory perceptions. Government school heads, private sector employers, alumni, National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, key informers and public perceptions may describe a different story.

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