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RESEARCH PAPER

Support Needs of Novice Public-School Teachers for Effective Management of Elementary Level Classrooms in Lahore

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Yaar.muhamma d@umt.edu.pk The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the support needs which novice teachers considered essential in their initial three years of service. A basic qualitative research design was used, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample comprising of 20 novice teachers who had less than three years of teaching experience at public-elementary schools in Lahore. The result of the study indicated that novice teachers considered that both principal and senior teachers should guide them. It was found that half of the interviewed teachers were satisfied with the support of the principal and senior teachers, whereas other half reported principal did not help them, and senior teachers were involved in leg-pulling. Most principals were co-operative, and novice teachers could discuss their classroom management challenges with them like student's absence, behavioral challenges, cleanliness, and lack of interest of parents/over-involvement. Whereas some reported their principal did not listen to their challenges, and they could not discuss challenges with them. Most teachers received suggestions from principals such as keeping students involved, teaching slowly, and dealing with students' behavioral challenges patiently.

Introduction

Novice teachers are those who have just started their journey of teaching, and they are learning classroom management (Collins & O'Brien, 2011). They consider their initial time is difficult (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014) because they are facing highs and lows in their job and learning to manage their class successfully (Awan, 2015). At this time, they consider they are generally given difficult classes since good classes are given to experienced teachers (Cangelosi, 2013; Farrell, 2008). Novice

teachers need support to enhance classroom management skills with the support of senior teachers and their evolving experience, which not only gives them the confidence to learn effective classroom management strategies but also achieve successful implementation over the time (Ahmad et al., 2012; Laslett & Smith, 2002).

Although novice teachers have learned classroom management in teacher education programs, yet they consider they need constant cooperation and support from both principals, administrative staff, and senior teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Novice teachers consider the role of the principal as most crucial because the principal as a leader could give novice teachers the confidence to learn classroom management (Webb, 2007; Wilson, 2012). They need constant support from the principal in terms of feedback upon classroom management practices(Simon & Johnson, 2015). Besides, they need support regarding non-teaching duties assigned to novice teachers, which give less time to plan for classroom management (Sohail et al., 2016), which further aggregate challenges in classroom management for them (Iqbal, 2019). Novice teachers need a physically feasible environment to manage classroom (Tekindal et al., 2017). They need a classroom which is not over-crowded, the students who do not have a lot of behavioral challenges, and the airy and comfortable classrooms for both teachers and students so they could manage the classroom effectively and successfully teach students (Suleman & Pakhtunkhwa, 2015; Wilson, 2012).

A principal can provide physical and material support, utilize man-power to help in managing classrooms, and provide solution to the challenges teachers encountered during the management of classrooms(Wilson, 2012). This could only be done when the principal cooperates and facilitate novice teachers (Evertson & Weinstein, 2013). The non-teaching staff keep the class clean, provide facilities, and help the teacher in solving situational challenges (Akdağ & Haser, 2016).

Senior teachers who have more than five years of teaching experience know the rules of the school, already understand psychology of students, and have learned and practice a variety of classroom management strategies (Wolff, Jarodzka, den Bogert, & Boshuizen, 2016). Novice teachers need support from the senior teacher to learn classroom management, application of school rules (Wolff, van den Bogert, Jarodzka, & Boshuizen, 2015), ways to handle a variety of behaviors of students, and setting of achievable targets of teaching and learning (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Hannan, Russell, Takahashi, & Park, 2015). The senior teacher could listen to the experience of novice and guide them to improve their teaching and learning (Farrell, 2012a). This relationship of sharing with a senior teacher provides confidence to novice teachers, thus helping them find the solution to their challenges which they experience in classroom management with the help of a senior teacher (Byrne, 2017).

Mentoring is a process which helps novice teacher learn confidence to encounter the classroom management challenges they have experienced, and help find solutions through constant guidance (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Pogodzinski, 2014). Research has indicated that almost 40-50% of novice teachers leave the job because of the absence of mentoring (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

This study explored the support novice elementary public-school teachers of Lahore in their initial time regarding support from the principal, assistance from non-teaching staff, professional sharing relationship with senior teachers, mentoring, and team teaching. This study was guided by the following research questions:

What are the support needs which novice teachers considered essential to help them adjust to the school in their initial three years?

How do novice teachers express the support they have received from the principal regarding classroom management?

How do novice teachers experience support from senior teachers regarding classroom management?

Literature Review

Novice teachers are doing two jobs in their initial time: teaching and learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Although they have done teaching practicum during the teacher education program; however, this teaching was under the constant supervision of teacher educators and school coordinators. Hence, they are constantly guided on the planning of lessons, strategies of classroom management, and instant feedback during classroom management (Davis, 2017). When they joined the school, they experience real challenges in the real classroom (Davis, 2017). They experience that the knowledge and skills they accquirdduring teaching practicum was very different from teaching inactual classrooms (Burns & Darling-Hammond, 2014). A novice teacher briefed his experience and expressed that the day he entered in the class; he experienced things that did not proceed as one planned. In the classroom, one realizes that teaching is not that simple:One has to manage a variety of behaviors of students, disturbing the tempo of teaching (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). A novice teacher learns with each day of experience, and he may keep on putting effort into learning to teach effectively (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

Needs are the required professional facilitation from others (Burkman, 2012). For quality teaching, novice teachers also have some needs which required to be fulfilled by others in their school, especially the principal, non-teaching staff, and senior teachers. It has been observed that in developing countries, the needs of novice teachers are not fulfilled and support of other colleagues and principals is usually inadequate(Byrne, 2017). The teachers need a sense of belongingness with colleagues and supportive relationships which help them share their classroom management related challenges with senior teachers, which might help them manage a class effectively (Flores, 2019).

Novice teachers expressed the support of senior teachers helped them in classroom management (Bakker & Bal, 2010) on experiencing reality shocks in actual classrooms with respect to students' behaviors (Awan, 2015). Most novice teachers face problems related to students' behaviors, which they found most difficult to manage (Hannan et al., 2015). A study indicated novice teachers experienced isolation through their early months because experienced teachers did not render their help to novice teachers, and they experienced challenges of classroom management (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010). The support of senior teachers also helped the novice in administrative works, especially learning to manage both teaching and non-teaching tasks (Pogodzinski, 2014). Formal ot informal collegial support from a teaching partner, or observation from a senior teacher in the early days is very important in school. A study highlighted that the teachers who had received support from colleagues were found certain about staying in the job of teaching, and those who had not received any collegial support were uncertain about staying in the job (Clandinin et al., 2015).

Mentors play a very positive role in their effective teaching of novice teachers (Steffy, 2000). The mentors who belong to the same area or subject help them to adjust better in school. Besides, the teachers who have a common time for planning the lesson seek help from each other, which reduces work pressure and stress. The mentor can better facilitate this time and help the novice better adjust at the end of the first year of teaching (Hannan et al., 2015; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Novice teachers experience motivation after receiving the help of mentor teachers. The collective use of mentoring gave motivation to novice teachers, increasing their ability to improve their classroom management skills. Another study found that the real-time mentoring in which the mentor understands the feelings and experience of novice teachers change their overall performance towards teaching and handling classroom challenges (Van Ginkel, Gisbert, Verloop, & Denessen, 2016).

The role of the principal is very important in the adjustment of a novice teacher (Barkauskaitė & Meškauskienė, 2017). The communication between the principal and novice teachers might help the principal to understand the challenges the novice teacher has been facing in the classroom. The principal might help in disciplining the class through personal observation. The principal could allow the novice to observe and attend the classes of experienced teachers to learn classroom management skills (Wilson, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

To cope up with classroom management challenges, the novice teachers need constant support at the workplace which satisfies their needs (Sanford, 2017). Maslow (1954) theorizes the hierarchy of needs starting from physiological needs at the bottom and self-actualization at the top of the pyramid (Maslow, 1954). Herzberg's two-factor theory underscores the relationship with administrators at work as need (Herzberg & B. & Snyderman, 1959). A novice teacher needs the support of the principal (Fisher, 2011) and professional sharing with colleagues

(Buchanan et al., 2013) who helps him/her in suggesting better ways to manage the classroom (Girardet & Jean-Louis, 2018). Moreover, both mentorship and team teaching help novice teachers to stay motivated and overcome challenges in managing classrooms(Akdağ & Haser, 2016; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). To motivate novice teachers, the needs like appreciation for good work and achievement from colleagues and principal matters (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015; Johnson, Irizarry, Nguyen, & Maloney, 2018).

Material and Methods

To explore the needs of novice elementary public-school teachers, the researchers used a basic qualitative research design. The basic qualitative research design was derived from the philosophy of constructionism and symbolic interaction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2016). This design of qualitative research helps in exploring how people interpret their experiences, how they describe the world they have experienced, and how they give meaning to those experiences (Merriam, 2002).

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique and collected data from 20 novice teachers. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects individuals and sites who had direct interaction with the situation or experiences which were intended to explore through interviews (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015). Novice teachers were those who had less than three years of experience at their first teaching job in public-elementary school at Lahore.

The first researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to explore the needs of novice teachers. The interview explored the support they were having from the principal, administrative staff, and senior teachers. The ideal support they expected at the start of the job. Their perception of the varieties of support that administration, the senior teachers, could render to a novice teacher regarding the challenges they experienced in classroom management. In addition, interview questions related to the availability of mentoring and team teaching in those schools to support the novice teachers were also included.

A qualitative content analysis method (Kyngäs, 2020) was used for the analysis of interview data. The first researcher conducted interviews with novice teachers after seeking consent from both principal and novice teachers. Since the fouc of the analysis was substantive content or topic of talk, interview data were transcribed, transforming spoken utterances to a written text (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Roulston, 2014). Then the first researcher interpreted those transcripts and highlighted the important responses. At the next step, similar responses were collected at a place, and themes were extracted from a cluster of responses. At the final stage, the research described each theme along with the actual response of participants (Creswell, 2007; Mills & Gay, 2016).

Results and Discussion

Twenty novice teachers responded individually to each of the interview questions. All the responses were categorized around four broad thematic topics: Perception about required support from both principal and senior teachers, current support from both principal and senior teachers, discussion of problems with principal, the suggestion of principals upon challenges discussed by novice teachers, and availability of mentoring in school.

Perception about required support from both principal and senior teachers

All the participants were of the view that a novice teacher needs support from both principal and senior teachers. The principal should guide teachers about school rules, provide facilities, and offer guidance when the novice teacher asked for it. The senior teacher should help novice teachers in classroom management; guide the novice about the behavioral challenges and ways to overcome those challenges. The novice teachers should be given class with all physical facilities and the classes which would have less number of students. Moreover, both of them should guide novice teachers in non-teaching tasks. As one novice teacher stated:

The administration should provide airy classrooms to the students. And the student-teacher ratio should be less so that the teacher can give attention to each student. Then the teacher will enjoy teaching. Although we have to work, teaching will be much easier. The relation with the colleague teacher should be friendly. The relation with the principal should be friendly. We should have a friendly environment. (Teacher 2)

Another respondent described:

Yes, of course. A teacher needs the guideline of experienced teachers and principals. A novice teacher usually do not know the rules and students' behavioral challenges. So, senior teachers should guide them. The principal should listen to their problems and try to solve them to facilitate them. You know old is gold; their experience helps in improving your teaching style. (Teacher 17)

Current support from both principal and senior teachers

Half of the participants reported that they were satisfied with the support they were receiving from both principal and senior teachers regarding classroom management and other administrative duties. They considered that they were given ideal support in their initial days. As one respondent narrated: "Mash Allah, my principal and colleagues are very co-operative. When I discussed the support of administration with other colleagues, I realized that was getting the best possible support. My principal tries to help the teacher in all the ways possible" (Teacher 8). Another described: "Alhamdulillah, both principal and senior teachers support me.

When I ask for some material support from the principal, he provides me with that." (Teacher 15).

Half of the participants expressed that their principal and senior teachers did not cooperate with them. Both of them had not provided any emotional and moral support to the novice teachers. The principal did not give them leave when they needed it and did not provide a solution to their problems. The majority of senior teachers were involved in leg-pulling. They did not guide them. Only a few teachers were co-operative. As one respondent reported, "Now, we know that we must manage a class. As a teacher we will have to manage students and their learning. There is no emotional and moral support given to a new teacher" (Teacher16). Another participant stated:

When you tell the challenges and issues to the principal, she notes them down and says that these will be solved. But those issues are never solved. You can say she uses delaying tactics. You can say sometimes the senior teachers also cooperate with me. You know that there is leg-pulling in every school among teachers, especially between senior and new teachers. (Teacher 20)

Sharing problems with principal

The majority of participants described that they could discuss classroom management problems with the principal. They expressed that generally, they discussed students' behavioral challenges, frequent absence, parents' lack/over-involvement, absence of stationary in students' bags, and lack of interest of students in learning. The principal listened to their challenges and provided a solution. As one participant expressed:

Yes, we can discuss our classroom problems with the principal. Usually, I discuss the problems related to parents with the principal because the parents do not show interest in the life of students. The parents do not provide clean uniforms to children and come to school with breakfast. The children enter school in an untidy dresses and empty stomachs. They do not have proper notebooks and pencils. The parents do not even bother to check the stationary in the bag before sending them to the school. I usually keep notebooks of children with me after the class work because they destroy them. I have to discuss student's health issues with the principal like I had a child with cancer, hepatitis, and kidney problems. The children eat unhygienic things in school, which affect their health. I stop children from eating spicy snacks. I only allow them biscuits. But they eat these things at home, and their parents do not stop them. They suffer from bad throat and stomach problems, and they cannot concentrate on their studies. I discuss all these things with my principal. (Teacher 1)

This lengthy quotation suggests that the principal is very co-operative and spends time in listening the voice of teachers in order to address these problems and issues. Another participant reported:

Yes, I do discuss the classroom management challenges with the principal. Generally, the challenges are related to students. I discuss when a student takes off from school frequently, or a student's behavior is difficult to manage. Sometimes, I request him when some physical facility is missing. (Teacher 12)

Some participants expressed that they could not discuss the classroom management challenges with the principal. Neither principald were interested in solving the problems of teachers, nor did they provide any assistance to them. However, when they discussed any challenge, the principal considered that teacher incompetent and told the teacher that it was his/her duty to solve all the problems in the classroom. As one participant briefed:

No, I cannot discuss classroom management challenges with the principal. I have learned that if you discuss classroom management challenges, you will be trapped and told that you are not competent. It's better that you resolve your problems on your own. (Teacher 4)

This quotation supports the finding of the study that some principals are not co-operative and they pay no attention to the problems of novice teachers, and they want the teachers to solve all classroomsrelated problems and issues by themselves, practicing somewhat laissez-faire approach to supervision of teachers.

The suggestion of principals upon discussing challenges with novice teachers

The majority of participants expressed that their principals asked them not to give punishment to students. In addition they advised them to keep the pace of teaching slow so that all students could learn, to use diverse teaching strategies to keep students involved in learning, to include fun activities to develop the interest of students, to assist student in solving their problems, and to deal with students' behavioral challenges patiently. They perceived that their principals supported them and provided them good suggestions. As one respondent narrated, "She is an experienced person. She asks me to calmly observe the child and give sufficient time to students. And the student will improve gradually. (Teacher 10). Another described: "He told us to teach politely to students. Do not give physical punishments to students. Do not teach too much to students so that they feel burdened. Adopt different styles of teaching so that the students do not get bored" (Teacher 15).

Few participants reported their principal did not provide suggestions to overcome challenges of classroom management. However, senior teachers advised them to involve students in learning, assign them group work, and involve gifted students when marking student-work to overcome the challenges associated with the over-crowded classes. As one participant stated:

They advised me, 'Involve some students with you while teaching and ask the gifted students while checking the work and to handle overcrowded classes. In

this way, you can easily manage the class. 'They also said, 'if you alone try to check the homework of students, then the students will make noise and most of the time will be used in marking the work.' (Teacher 2)

Availability of mentoring in schools

All the participants described that there was no formal mentoring available in their schools. However, the majority of them were mentored during the practicum in the teacher education program. However, there was no formal mentoring provided to them, and there was no mentor in their schools. The educational officers visited schools; however, they only visited classes for inspection but they did not provide mentoring to help novice teachers in managing the classroom. As one respondent expressed, "I was not at all given formal/informal mentoring. I have learned teaching through trial and error" (Teacher 9). Another participant described: "I was not assigned any formal mentor in my initial time. In the induction training, I have received a little bit of training" (Teacher 13).

Conclusion and Discussion

On the basis of the results of this study, it could be concluded that all the novice teachers considered that both teaching and non-teaching staff, especially the principal, should guide the novice teachers and help them to adjust in school and manage their classes effectively. Half of the teachers were satisfied with the help and support of both principals and teachers, and half of the teachers considered that the principal did not listen to their problems, and the senior teachers did not guide them; rather, they were involved in leg-pulling. The majority of teachers could discuss their classroom management challenges with the principal, such as the absence of students from the school, cleanliness, behaviors of students, lack of interest of parents/over the interest of parents, and challenges of non-serious students in learning. The principals advised them to keep the pace of teaching slow, to deal with students patiently, and to involve students in learning through activities. Some teacher pointed out that their principal did not support them and considered the teacher incompetent if he/she would discuss challenges; however, senior teachers supported them and suggested them to teach in groups and took the help of gifted student while marking work. All the teachers knew about mentoring; however, they have not received formal mentoring.

The findings of the current study revealed that all novice teachers need support from the principal, administrative staff, and senior teachers. They expressed that a novice teacher did not have good understanding of the school rules, challenging behaviors of students, recommended ways of teaching, and the challenges which arise in their classes while teaching. Half of the teachers pointed out they had received support from both principals and senior teachers. Both guided them. However, half of the sampled novice teachers had not received support from both. The principal did not listen to the challenges they were experiencing, and the senior teachers were involved in leg-pulling. These findings are in line with previous

research which underscores that novice teachers usually do not receive this support in developing countries like India and Pakistan (Jahan, 2017; Karim, 2006), though the support of the principal and senior teachers help the novice teachers adjust in schools and overcome the challenges of classroom management (Barkauskaitė & Meškauskienė, 2017; Byrne, 2017; Flores, 2019). If novice teachers are not provided support from both, then how can the principal expect from them to teach effectively by him/herself and successfully overcome the challenges of classroom management without any assistance (Evans & Yuan, 2018).

Some novice teachers were getting support and feedback from the principal. However, some teachers expressed their principal did not give them feedback and listen to their challenges. However, the reality is when a novice teacher is striving to learn classroom management, they constantly need feedback from principals and suggestions to learn (Hudson, 2012). The principal is the main person who can help the novice teacher in classroom management (Barkauskaitė & Meškauskienė, 2017). The communication and discussion between both novice teachers and the principal are essential for success in classroom management. This discussion has been found to help in overcoming challenges related to physical facilities and behavior management of students in the classroom (Wilson, 2012). When the principal gives feedback and appreciates the novice teacher on their effort, this increases their confidence and increases their ability regarding classroom management (Epling, 2016; Hannan et al., 2015). The novice teachers need the support of senior teachers(Hannan et al., 2015). A study found that experienced teachers did not extend their support to novice teachers until the moment they requested from a teacher to guide them. Thus, novice teachers experienced social isolation at the start of the job (Castro et al., 2010).

The study revealed that novice teachers have awareness about mentoring; however, all of the teachers have not received formal mentoring during their early days. Research has indicated that there was at least 105% of the transformation found in teacher retention due to the facility of the mentoring program offered to the novice teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Novice teachers need constant mentoring in their early months, and this mentoring has been found to guide novice teachers in all aspects of teaching and learning from challenges which they have been experiencing to improvement in the skill of classroom management (Farrell, 2012b; Pogodzinski, 2015). Mentoring teacher-developed confidence (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017) and gave motivation to the teacher to teach (Van Ginkel et al., 2016).

Recommendations

The study came up with the following recommendations:

(1) School based mentoring system is supposed to be initiated for all teachers particularly for the novice teachers. Principal/senior teachers are supposed to undertake the mentoring responsibilities. The system could be formal or non-formal as well with a freedom to mentee to choose the mentor.

School principals are instructional leaders and it is their responsibility to frequently appraise the novice teachers particularly their classroom management strategies and give them constructive feedback. This will help the novice teachers to build their capacity to overcome classroom management related issues.

The study indicated the need to create a collaborative culture in schools so that all teachers periodically meet and share their concerns and learn from the experience of others especially seniors. In creating such culture the school principal is supposed to share leadership roles and encourage dialogue in a trustworthy environment.

An open door policy which permits two way effective communication between principal, senior teachers and novice teachers is needed. This will help in promoting a culture of sharing concerns, fears, and challenges with hope that the seniors will not only perform empathetic listening but suggest ways out of their experiences to deal with such challenges.

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