

Failure in Quality of Academic Performance of Students in Public Sector Schools of Sheikhpura

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Abstract

Concerns have been raised about the failure of students in quality of academic performance in public sector schools over the past many years. Therefore, this research study was conducted to explore the factors which affect the quality of academic performance of students in public sector schools. Mixed methods research design was used to explore this phenomenon in Sheikhpura, Punjab. 10 boys' and 10 girls' schools were randomly selected using multi-stage random sampling techniques. From different strata all stakeholders, which included students, parents, teachers, and heads were randomly selected totaling to 300 participants. Close ended questionnaires were developed by the researchers for data collection from 120 students and 120 parents. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate data from 40 teachers and 20 heads of the schools. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques on quantitative data and thematic description approach for interview analysis were used to analyze different data sets. Various causes of students' failure such as, rote based education and assessment system, outdated curricula, old teaching methodologies were discovered. The results have serious implications for school education department in the province of Punjab.

Keywords: academic performance, failure, public sector schools, students

Introduction

Academic performance is defined as the ability of students to study and remember facts and describe their knowledge orally or on paper to demonstrate

different skills that students have achieved during study period (Suleman, Sawar, Aslam, Lodhi, & Hussain, 2012). Quality of academic performance is the demand of the day and it is increasing with a speed (King, 2013). Unfortunately, the measuring of the quality of academic performance is not a simple task and the complexity of this process is because of changing values of quality with the time associated with different stakeholders' view point (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafique, & Berhamu, 2011).

This research attempted to investigate factors that affect quality of academic performance in public sector schools of Tehsil Sheikhpura, Punjab, Pakistan. Just like the deteriorating quality of education everywhere in Pakistan including Punjab, the condition is no different in publicly funded schools in Sheikhpura. The purpose of this research was to investigate factors that cause failure in academic performance of students in public sector schools of this city.

The situation of education in Sheikhpura is not satisfactory. It stands on 28th position out of 36 districts of Punjab in the assessment and quality of education as mentioned in Punjab schools' reforms roadmap issued in November 2016. The literacy rate is 60.7% in overall ranking of different Tehsils of Punjab. Although the literacy rate of Sheikhpura has improved, provision of quality education remains a problem. The results of some public schools are satisfactory, but many schools have failed to give good results in rural and urban areas of the city. It is equally important to provide quality education to all students because the progress of any country depends on it (Kameenui, 1998).

Rationale of the Study

The situation of failure in quality of academic performance is more alarming in developing countries in comparison to the developed countries (Kamal & Berner, 2009) and the condition in Pakistan is not different. Unfortunately, in Pakistan no authentic check and balance system is established yet, in the field of education in spite of tall claims by the government. The quality of education provided to the children in public schools as well as private schools is quite unsatisfactory (Alami, 2016). Approximately 41 percent in Lahore, 45 percent in Karachi, 50 percent in Islamabad and 30 percent primary students in Rawalpindi are unable to read and write simple sentences (Ghafoor, 2012). Nearly half of Pakistan is considered to be literate, but it is difficult to say that all reflect the essence of education. According to a UNESCO report, in Pakistan about 94% students of sixth class and 68% students

of fifth class cannot read an essay. This is a very alarming state of affair. The race for scoring more marks motivates students to play tricks without understanding the subject material and encourages them to rote memorize and not engage in creative writing. The use of guess tests and exam papers lead to selective study and all of the aforementioned results in the inability to express any simple concept when required (Imami, 2015).

Significance of the Problem

The government has been trying to improve the quality of education in public sector schools, but so far no positive outcomes have yielded. The academic performance of the students is not satisfactory according to the different boards of secondary education of Punjab. This research study was conducted to explore the factors affecting academic performance of students in Tehsil Sheikhpura.

The reasoning for selecting secondary level education is that this level provides the base for college and university level education. According to different research studies, teachers suggest that if a student has weak educational base at primary or elementary level, it results in the failure of students at secondary level (Suleman & Gul, 2015); therefore, it can be assumed that if a student has a grip on the basics of education, he would successfully overcome various challenges that he would encounter in his academic career (Suleman, Q., Aslam, H. D., Sarwar, S., Lodhi, I., & Hussain, I. (2012).

Factors of Failure in Quality of Academic Performance

Through the review of the literature, the researchers found few pertinent factors that might cause the failure in quality of academic performance. A brief look at those repeatedly cited factors in the literature is given as under. ***Rote based education system***— a system of teaching and assessment where learning by heart is given more importance than conceptual clarity (Rasheed & Usmani, 2015; Raza, 2016; Rehmani, 2000), ***Old and outdated curriculum***— no advancement in the curriculum is made and same old syllabus is being taught (Ejaz, 2016; Hussain, 2000; Kazmi 2005), ***Lack of use if ICT in teaching-learning***— conventional teaching methodologies are used and no audio-visual aids are applied in making teaching effective (Ahmad, Rauf, Rashid, Rehman & Salam, 2013; Kamal & Berner, 2009), ***School management and environmental factors***— lack of cooperation

from school management and other environmental pressures such as influence of powerful people in local rural areas, and corruption, and incompetence (Mondale, 2013; Sisungu, 2002, Suleman & Gul, 2015), *Parents related factors*— poor socio-economic status, illiteracy, and lack of interest of parents (Adane, 2013; Asikhia, 2010; Subhani, 2015; Shaharyar & Azam, 2015), *Social factors*— customs and traditions of rural areas like early marriages, and discouraging female education (Ahmad, I., Rauf, M., Rashid, A., Rehman, S. and Salam, M. 2013; Katozai, 2002), *teachers related factors*— lack of training and use of new technology (Mazhar, 2007; Movahedzada, Cherif, Adams & Dunning, 2013). This research has used these factors in the quantitative tools.

Based on these above mentioned factors and to explore further into the factors/causes of failure in quality of academic performance of students in public sector schools, this research was carried out. This study might also be of interest to the readers because efforts were put in the public schools to perform better quality output during the tenure of the present PML-N lead provincial government of Punjab.

Research Questions

1. What are the significant factors that affect students' academic failure and hinder the quality of academic performance in Tehsil Sheikhpura?
2. What are the proper means and ways for ensuring excellence in academic performance in public sector schools of Tehsil Sheikhpura?

Methodology

This study was conducted to examine different factors influencing the students' academic failure at secondary level in Tehsil Sheikhpura. Through mixed methods research methodology both quantitative and qualitative data were generated. Data from the students, parents, teachers and head teachers were collected in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of study. As the problem of the study was limited to only one Tehsil, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to deeply probe into the problem, hence strengthening the design of the research by making it more detailed, comprehensive, and compatible.

Sample Size

Stratified random sampling was used as a sampling technique. There were two strata of sample. One stratum was for public boys' high schools and the second one was for girls' public high schools. Ten schools were randomly selected from public secondary schools of boys and ten from public secondary schools of girls. Those twenty public secondary schools were taken randomly with half of them from village area and half of them from urban area to see the real picture of quality of academic performance in public sector schools. Students of class 10 were taken as a sample and they had already appeared in the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Examination (BISE).

The parents of those randomly selected students were also included in the sample. One of the parents (either mother or father) was selected for the sample, bringing the strength to 120. Two teachers were selected from each school, making the sample size of 40, and one head/ principal was also selected as a sample. Thus bringing the total sample size to 300.

Instrument

Close ended questionnaires were utilized in this study. Two questionnaires were developed by the researchers for students and parents after a careful review of the literature and the validity of the questionnaires was ensured by holding discussions with two subject specialists (education), three head masters, two headmistresses, and one principal from different public sector higher secondary schools. The questionnaire was then translated into Urdu and the language was also validated by an Urdu language expert. This was especially done for the parents, who were mostly illiterate. Thus, a bilingual questionnaire was distributed to the participants, which was pilot tested for validity.

As essential with the research design, triangulation of data sources and instrument was ensured to comply with the design of the research. For that, interviews were used with head teachers and teachers and the interview protocol was developed in line with the objectives of the research. These were also translated into Urdu.

Failure in Quality of Academic Performance

Verbal and written consent was taken from all participants before collecting the data. The participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to leave or end the interviews at any time during the study.

Table 1
Distribution of Sample

Respondents	Total Numbers	Male		Female	
		F	%	F	%
Students	120	60	50	60	50
Parents	120	60	50	60	50
Teachers	40	20	50	20	50
Head Teachers	20	10	50	10	50
Total	300	150	50	150	50

The sample distribution for this study is presented in Table 1. The sample of 300 participants was equally divided into male and female. A total of 120 students participated: 60 boys and 60 girls; 120 parents also had 60 fathers and 60 mothers; and 40 teachers included 20 male and 20 female. Similarly out of 20 heads, 10 were male and 10 were female. This equal representation of male and female was specifically ensured in order to get a clear perspective of both genders.

Table 2
Mean of all Factors as Reported by Students

Factors	Agree %	Disagree %
Quality of academic performance	60.4	39.6
Current education system	75.1	24.9
Teacher related factors	10.8	89.2
Parents related factors	4.6	95.4
Students' characteristics related factors	9.6	90.4
School management and environmental factors	11.1	88.9
Societal factors	2.6	97.4

Table 2 displays combined factors analysis and view of students. This table indicates that the majority of the students rated current education system as the most significant contributor to students' failure in education. The next significant factor is quality of academic performance with (60.4%) students in agreement with this

factor. Mostly the students disagreed with societal factor and parent factors (97.4%) and (95.4%) respectively, which means that according to students these two factors do not contribute to students' academic failure. Similarly, students' characteristics related factor, teachers related factors and school management and environmental factors did not contribute significantly to the students' failure in education.

Table 3
Mean of all Factors as Reported by Parents

Factor	<i>Agree %</i>	<i>Disagree %</i>
Quality of academic performance	66.3	33.7
Current education system	75.7	24.3
Teacher related factors	11.2	88.8
Parents related factors	4	96
Students' characteristics related factors	8.5	91.5
School management and environmental factors	11.3	88.7
Societal factors	2.9	97.1

Table 3 illustrates combined factors analysis in view of parents. This table indicates that majority of the parents (75.7%) rate' current education system as the most significant contributor to students' failure in education. The next significant factor was quality of academic performance according to the parents (66.3%). Mostly the parents disagree (96%) that parents' factor was not contributing to students' academic failure. Similarly, students' characteristics related factors, teachers related factors, school management environmental factors and societal factors do not contribute significantly to the students' failure in education.

Interview Analyses

Interview questions from teachers and heads were asked on the same factors on which the data from students and parents were taken. Following is the factor wise analysis of the data generated through interviews.

Quality of Academic Performance

Teachers were asked questions about students' quality of academic performance. Out of 40 teachers, 30 teachers (13 males and 17 females) said that they were not satisfied with the current quality of students' academic performance

and they wanted to bring improvement in it. One of the teachers expressed his opinion in the following way:

“Low quality of academic performance is an issue of current education system because students do not have the ability to use scientific formulas in practical life. They lack scientific thinking and concept clarity.”

The head teachers said that they were not satisfied with the current quality of students’ academic performance and they wanted to bring improvement in it. One of the head teachers stated:

“Quality is not the name of good marks, but quality of academic performance is the name of efficient knowledge that can be used in practical life, concept clearance, academic and productive skills, but our students as a whole do not have such qualities yet.”

Teachers were asked about the main reason of students’ failure in quality of academic performance and the teachers responded that the current education system and government policies were the main reason of the overall failure. One of the head teachers expressed his opinion in the following words:

“Government decided to promote all the students to get 100 percent result at school level; therefore, weak students were promoted in the next classes and these students could not learn effectively at a higher level because they had no strong academic base.”

One of the female teachers said that students were taught many subjects in one without any break; therefore, students get mentally exhausted and do not learn effectively because human memory can take in a limited amount of information. Two head teachers were at the same wave length and said:

“There is another problem that government is handing over the public schools to PEF, which also affect students’ quality because private sector

cannot arrange highly qualified staff in low salaries. There is a rise of fear in current staff and teachers because of job insecurity.”

Current Education System

Teachers and heads were asked about government policies of education system. Teachers and heads said that government policies were disoriented and copy pasted from around the globe which were not doable. A head expressed his opinion and said that the government tried to copy the policies of advanced countries; therefore, these policies were not suitable for our educational problems. A teacher voiced:

“Parents who can afford do not like to send their children to public schools if any private school is available in their home town. They think that schools without fee are constructed for

poor.” **Teacher Related Factors**

Teachers and heads gave their opinion on the role of teachers in students’ failure regarding quality of academic performance. Teachers (36 in numbers) and heads (17 in number) said that teachers had central role in the teaching process. The teachers identified the following reasons on part of teachers’ role: absenteeism, tardiness, carelessness about professional duties, low qualification, lack of professional training, wasting of teaching hours in personal activities or gossips, lack of attention, dishonesty with duty, extravagant and luxurious lifestyle, materialistic attitude, lack of leadership attributes, bad characteristics as smoking and drinking. One teacher expressed his opinion in the following way:

“Government should punish teachers on their dishonesty for official duties as absenteeism, tardiness, carelessness during school visit by doing hidden and fair inquiry about teachers’ routine on daily basis. Punishment for the teachers on the basis of students’ result is not fair because there are many other factors that are responsible for students’ failure in exams.”

A second teacher expressed his opinion in this manner:

“All the teachers do not have less qualification but these are few in numbers. The majority of teachers are very ambitious and they try to present themselves as a role model for students.”

On the other hand, a teacher said:

“Absenteeism and lateness have been controlled in schools of Sheikhupura. There are about 11% teachers who remain on leave in Sheikhupura and it is not an alarming situation because teachers may be provided causal leave in emergency”.

Parent Related Factor

When heads and teachers were asked about the role of parents in students' failure they all agreed to the fact that parents nowadays had more awareness, hence more responsibility of their child's academic performances. A couple of teachers expressed that there were parents who did not provide their children with care, time and support in their homework. They elaborated that some parents were poor and could not provide their children with basic requirements of education such as stationery and balanced food. A teacher stated:

“If parents have some bad behavior and use corporal punishment and there is a lack of encouragement, the performance of the students might be affected. The parents normally do not trust their daughters thus affecting the potentials of their children.”

One of the head teachers suggested that government may provide financial support to those students who are poor. In this way, their learning may be improved. Parents should visit schools regularly and they should attend parent teacher meeting. Parents need to realize that they have an important role in the performance of their children.

School Management and Environmental Factors

A lead question relating to the problems of school environment, infrastructure and management was asked. The majority of teachers and heads said that there no particular problem was evident about the school infra-structure. Schools had enough funds in the form of Non Salary Budget (NSB) from the government to avail the learning material and other facilities. Only two heads expressed that government does not provide books according to the needs and number of the students. The government has taken an initiative of establishing computer laboratories in different schools, but the computers and teachers are not available for this purpose. Head teachers also pointed out about the load shedding of electricity and gas, which creates a problem in the school environment.

Societal Factors

Societal factors question was addressed in negative by the majority of the teachers. The teachers said that they did not have any pressure from the society as any interference, forceful possession of school building from any person or party. However, interesting to note was the views of heads in this regard. The Head teachers considered poverty in society especially for the target audience of government sector school as a big challenge. Moreover, they saw the role of rural society in discouraging female education. Girls are married in their early age due to lack of basic resources and they cannot concentrate on their studies. There are many other problems like corruption and unemployment, which create disappointment among students and demotivates them.

Discussion

The discussion of the study is presented research question wise.

Research Question One

What are the significant factors that affect students' academic failure by hindering the quality of academic performance in Tehsil Sheikhpura?

The main objective of this research was to identify the factors that had a negative effect on the quality of academic performance of students in public sector schools of Tehsil Sheikhpura. The major factor identified through the finding of the study was rote based education system. This finding was in line with Adams

(2006), where the sub factors were identified as outdated curricula, memorization based assessment system, old teaching methodologies, in-effective government policies and lack of advance technology at school level. Similar findings were reported in a study to find factors of failure in board examinations at secondary level (Battle & Lewis, 2000). Teacher related factors were identified as lack of devotion, low morale and less passionate about teaching (Barnard, 2004). Moreover, parents related factors were identified as social and economic status and low qualification (Barnard, 2004). Students' characteristics factors were categorized as absenteeism, tardiness and carelessness. These findings were consistent with the findings of study conducted by Caldas and Bankaton (2007). Environmental and management factors of school were identified as mismanagement and lack of practical and advance facilities for quality education. Blevins (2009) conducted a qualitative study on socioeconomic status and academic performance of students. He concluded that societal factors were the major cause of low quality education in schools. Societal factors were categorized as unemployment and corruption that spread disappointment in students and became a cause of students failure in education (Chambers & Schraber, 2004). Hence the first objective, "Investigate the factors that affect students' failure and hinder the quality of academic performance in public sector schools" was achieved.

Research Question Two

What are the proper means and ways for ensuring the excellent academic performance in public sector schools of Tehsil Sheikhpura?

The following means and ways were suggested to improve the quality of academic performance. The participants said that socio-economic status and education of parents have a significant role on the performance of students. It was suggested that if audio visual aids were used, the academic performance of the students might be improved. The participants said that authentic assessment might be used which could assess students' practical skills, that is, reading, writing and communication skills. This type of assessment might be taken by assessment teams in all schools of Tehsil Sheikhpura (Farooq et al., 2011), thereby eliminating bias and favoritism in assessing the children, especially in practical examination of matric and intermediate classes where examiners reportedly give numbers to students on reference basis. The participants suggested that teaching method should fulfill the modern needs of education system. Teaching method might be

incorporated with advanced technology to make it more meaningful (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2014).

The findings of this study pointed out that syllabus might be designed according to the new advancements in education. This was consistent with the findings of (Duke, 2000), where he asserted that technical education should be focused in designing the syllabus enabling students to learn practical skills to earn their living. Eamon (2005) in his study conducted in Latino students reported similar findings. The participants said that syllabus might be brief and comprehensive. It should be designed according to the ideology of Pakistan (Farooq, M. S., Chaudhry, A. H., Shafique, M., & Berhamu, G. 2011). Subjects like mathematics, science, art, language and literature and technical education should be included in the syllabus to improve the academic performance of the students. This finding was in line with (Eitle, 2005). The participants of the study further suggested that the government must provide advance technology to all public school, such as, projectors and audio-visual aids according to the nature of subjects to make the learning process more attractive and meaningful (Fantuzze & Tighe, 2000). It was further elaborated that the government must also appoint a special team of educationists and researchers to develop curriculum that should include educational movies and video clips, which might be used as audio-visual aids in schools (Garzon, 2006). The participants believed that the government should develop new schools because the population of Pakistan is increasing (Jeynes, 2002). The participants said English was a foreign language and the students could not attain expertise in it. This was one of the major reasons of students' failure in examination (Krashen, 2005). It is the responsibility of the government to provide educational material and software, which might help students in learning the English language (Ma & Klinger, 2000).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The reasons behind the concerns regarding the failure of students' academic achievement have been looked into through this research and the factors that are responsible for this failure have been pointed out. There seemed to be many causes for the deplorable state of education in the public sector schools such as, rote based education and assessment system, outdated curricula, old teaching methodologies were discovered. The results have serious implications for school education department in the province of Punjab. Keeping in view the findings and conclusion, following recommendations were made:

- Technical and vocational education may be focused upon to make the students skill oriented. They can earn their living in this way. They can also contribute towards national economy.
- Syllabus may be designed from simple to complex approach and according to the ideology of Pakistan.
- The government should spend a suitable share of budget on education where the training of teachers should be focused to make the learning of students more effective and efficient.
- The government must provide educational material and software to students for the learning of English because English is regarded as a major subject in which students generally fail.

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