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National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

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Abstract

The focus of the researchers in the present study was to investigate the classroom situation in the public sector schools with reference to the national professional standards for teachers as given by Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan on 23rd February 2009. The research was delimited to only those four standards out of total ten standards which are directly related to classroom instructions and can be observed there. A checklist was developed based on the criteria mentioned in the National professional standards for teachers. Classroom observations of 30 voluntary teachers of the public sector schools of Rawalpindi were conducted for data collection. Data were analyzed through mean scores for each of the 18 statements of the instrument and overall mean for each of the four selected standards. Findings of the study indicate that public sector teachers have the subject matter knowledge but lesson planning and proper assessment is missing. It is being recommended that awareness about the national

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

468

professional standards must be created among public sector teachers and teachers should be made bound for planning their instructions

Key Words: Teacher Standards, Professional Standards, Classroom Practices, Teaching Practices, Learning Environment, Classroom Assessment.

Introduction

Education incorporates new ideas in a society and plays the role of a change agent. It brings change in the life style of the people. It influences the economic condition of people which results in the economic prosperity of the country. Teachers serve as foundation of the entire system of education. Quality of education cannot be achieved without quality teacher. Teachers are the heart and soul of the education and without an active and well qualified teacher it will not be possible to have meaningful development in this sector.

Teacher development cannot be viewed in isolation and must be considered together with the development of an environment conducive to academics, as well as research and development in the education. (Hammon & Cobb, 1996).

Teacher is the nucleus of the whole educational system and the most important figure for initiating radical and effective changes in the learning process, all attempts have to be made to generate creative teachers who are qualitatively skilled and empowered through a continuous professional development process. The teachers thus can be a change agent, who can revolutionize the education system with united premeditated thinking, and through developing and executing novel and innovative approaches in their classrooms.

According to Taylor & Robert (1995) the sociological investigation of the professions began in the 1930s to identify the defining characteristics or traits for distinguishing the professions from other occupations. ---The traits identified are: Skill based on abstract knowledge, Provision for training and education usually associated with a university, Certification based on competency testing, Formal organization, Adherence to a code of conduct and Altruistic service. Later on researchers undertook case studies of various occupations to determine the degree to which each exhibited these traits and, should those be considered as 'true' professions or not.

Cupino (2006) in a meeting on 23rd June 2006 discussed the ethics and responsibilities of teachers. In the meeting after deliberate discussions a vision was adopted for positive future. The teachers' code of ethics therefore expected envision a community of socially responsible, spiritually guided, self-propelled and technically-adept citizens upholding ecological sustainability, gender-equality, cultural sensitivity, enjoying socio-economic benefits from the labor and encompassing academic, technical, spiritual, cultural and life-skills for educational development.

O'Neil (1993) discussed three types of national standards that should be in education discipline i.e., content standards, performance standards and assessment and school delivery

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

standards However, Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Massachusetts gave the professional standards for teachers in 2011, these standards require teachers to Plan Curriculum and Instruction, Delivers Effective Instruction, Manage Classroom Climate and Operation, Promote Equity and Meet other Professional Responsibilities.

In Pakistan a project under the title “Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP)” was launched in Pakistan on October 12, 2005 .The main objective of project was to enhance the Government’s capacity to assure quality teacher education by improving policy framework, coordination and standard-setting. One of the important activities of this project was to develop national standards for teacher accreditation and certification and to develop strategies for improving the status of teachers and teacher profession.

The Ministry of Education, with the cooperation of UNESCO and the financial support of USAID, developed National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan. These standards were launched on the 23 February, 2009 .These Standards are:

1. Subject matter knowledge
2. Human Growth & Development
3. Knowledge of Islamic Values/ Social Life Skills
4. Instructional planning & strategies
5. Assessment
6. Learning environment
7. Effective communication and proficient use of information communication technologies.
8. Collaboration and partnerships
9. Continuous professional development & code of conduct
10. Teaching of English as second/foreign language (ESL/EFL)

(Govt of Pakistan,2009)

These professional standards as described by Government of Pakistan (2009) are designed to define competencies, skills and attributes deemed to be essential for beginning teachers, accomplished master teachers, teacher educators and other educational specialists. It also guide the development of pre and in-service programs of teacher education and help in establishing policies, procedures and systems for accrediting teacher education programs and institutions offering them and assure public about the quality of their educators and educational output. Each standard has three parts;

- a. Knowledge (content, what the teacher knows about his subject).
- b. Disposition (behavior, attitude, values).
- c. Performance and skills (what the teacher can do and should be able to do).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

470

Standard has been developed but there is a need to ensure that teachers follow these standards that is why researchers planned the present research.

Methodology

The Purpose of this study was to observe the implementation of those National Professional Standards for teachers which are directly related to the class room practices of the teachers. Population of the study was government elementary school teachers of Rawalpindi district. The study was delimited to the following National Professional Standards for teachers'; Subject matter knowledge, Learning Environment, Instructional planning & strategies and Assessment. The data was collected from thirty volunteer teachers working in public sector schools of Rawalpindi. Each teacher was observed thrice in his or her class. In order to observe the teachers, an observation checklist with a four point rating scale (Never, Seldom, Often and Always) comprising upon 18 statements was developed after the detailed study of the four selected National Professional Standards for teacher.

Data Collection

The data were collected through observation by the researchers. Formal permission for collection of data was sought from principals. The classes were observed and observations were recorded on the checklist

Data Analysis

After the collection of data the average of three observations of each teacher was calculated. Scoring was done as, 0 for never, 1 for seldom, 2 for often and 3 for always. Data were analyzed through taking mean scores for each statement of the instrument. Mean scores were interpreted according the following criteria

Less than 0.5	never
0.5 to 1.49	Seldom
1.5 to 2.49	Often
Greater than 2.49	Always

An overall mean for each of the chosen standard i.e. Subject matter knowledge, Learning Environment, Instructional planning & strategies and Assessment was calculated as presented in the following tables

Table # 1 Subject matter knowledge

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

471

Sr.#	Statement	N	Mean Weight	Remarks/ Interpretation
1	Teacher starts the lesson with an overview of the topic.	30	1.6	Often
2	Teacher asks the relevant question about the topic.		1.7	Often
3	Teacher provides the clear and coherent explanation.		2.5	Always
4	Teacher shows warmth and enthusiasm for the subject.		1.8	Often
Overall Mean			1.9	Often

Table # 2 Learning Environment

Sr.#	Statement	N	Mean Weight	Remarks/ Interpretation
1	Teacher creates healthy environment in the classroom.	30	2.1	Often
2	Teacher encourages the students for their participation.		1.8	Often
3	Teacher does not treat the students with discrimination.		1.6	Often
4	Teacher establishes good rapport with students.		2.2	Often
5	Teacher maintains attention and interest during lesson.		2.5	Always
6	Teacher remains fully aware of everything happening in the classroom.		2.4	Often
7	Students are not found talking in the class room during the teaching.		2.1	Often
8	Teacher prevents disruption and interference in the classroom		2.0	Often
Overall Mean			2.1	Often

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

Table # 3 Instructional planning and strategies

Sr.#	Statement	N	Mean Weight	Remarks/ Interpretation
1	Teacher enters with written lesson plan.	30	0.6	Seldom
2	Teacher motivates the students by using different reward techniques		1.0	Seldom
3	Teacher makes teaching effective with different teaching techniques.		1.6	Often
Overall Mean			1.1	Seldom

Table # 4 Assessment

Sr.#	Statement	N	Mean Weight	Remarks/ Interpretation
1	Teacher uses different assessment techniques during the teaching.	30	1.7	Often
2	Teacher does appropriate assessment during the lesson.		2.0	Often
3	Teacher uses different assessment tools.		0.7	Seldom
Overall Mean			1.5	Often

Findings

Following findings emerges on the basis of data analysis:

- Teacher often starts the lesson with an overview of the topic.
- Teacher often asks the relevant question about the topic.
- Teacher always provides the clear and coherent explanation.
- Teacher often shows warmth and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Teacher often creates healthy environment in the classroom
- Teacher often encourages the students for their participation.
- Teacher often treats the students with discrimination.
- Teacher often establishes good rapport with students.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

- Teacher always maintains attention and interest during lesson.
- Teacher often remains fully aware of everything happening in the classroom.
- Students are often not found talking in the class room during the teaching.
- Teacher often prevents disruption and interference in the classroom.
- Teacher seldom enters with written lesson plan.
- Teacher seldom motivates the students by using different reward techniques.
- Teacher often makes teaching effective with different teaching techniques.
- Teacher often uses different assessment techniques during the teaching.
- Teacher often does appropriate assessment during the lesson.
- Teacher seldom uses different assessment tools.

Conclusions

On the basis of the data analyses following conclusions have been drawn

- Teachers possess subject matter knowledge but of average level.
- Majority of teachers neither plan their lesson nor use lesson plans
- Teachers do not use variety of instructional strategies.
- Some teachers create healthy environment for learning and encourage students for their participation.
- Teachers neither take proper assessment nor use variety of assessment tools/ techniques during the lesson.

Recommendations

Here are few recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from current research

1. Results of present study showed that National Professional Standards for teacher are not being fully attained, so it is recommended that administration should make a comprehensive plan for the awareness, training and monitoring of school teachers in the light of National Professional Standards for teachers.
2. Electronic & Print Media may be used for providing awareness to people about National Professional Standards for teachers.
3. Workshops, refresher courses, conferences and Seminars be conducted on regular basis to create awareness among the teachers about Standards.
4. Findings also show that teachers lack in variety of teaching strategies and assessment techniques, so it is recommended that pre and in service training should be strengthen.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

474

5. Results of study indicates that teachers do not prepare lesson plans, so it is recommended that teacher should prepare and update their lessons plans as an integral part of their instruction and their performance should be assessed quarterly.
6. Regular research should be conducted to assess the standards so these may be updated and or upgraded according to the changes and requirements in National and International standards.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 3 March 2012

Naushaba Atta, Ph.D., Shamsa Aziz, Ph.D., Hamid Hassan, Ph.D. and Nadeem Ahmad Ch.

National Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Practices

476