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PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH



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ABSTRACT :

The study aims to examine the problems faced by elementary school teachers in Himachal Pradesh. By multi stage random sampling 127 teachers were selected from different districts of Himachal Pradesh and were administered a questionnaire constructed by the researcher and were also interviewed to have an insight over their perspectives. The findings show that the teachers face different problems in the school related to Infrastructure, Students behaviour, Administration, Parental Behaviour, Motivational factors in job and Task other than teaching.

KEY WORDS: Teacher, Elementary education, Teachers' Problems.

INTRODUCTION:

Teaching is a profession filled with the excitement of helping children discover themselves and their full range of capabilities. It is a series of events where in teacher attempts to change the behaviour of students in the intended direction. Educational change depends on what teachers think and do. School teacher is the second most important architect of child's personality after mother. It is well accepted fact that 'the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens and the quality of its citizens depends upon the quality of their teachers'. The National Policy on Education (1986) has also stressed the significant role that teachers need to play in the improvement of the educational system and in the development and growth of education. The teacher's role is viewed in terms of a mediator, a facilitator and a director of learning, a helper and controller of the learning behaviour of the learner, a dispenser of knowledge; a counselor; an evaluator of the learner's performance in the academic field; an expert in class management activities; and a link between school, parents, community and society.

The success of any educational system depends on good and well-resourced teachers. Therefore, teachers are considered the most important and fundamental factor for the success of any educational system (Deen, 2000) and are the lifeblood of any education system (Sarita&Tomer, 2004).Muralidharan (2013) stated that India has demonstrated considerable progress in the past decade on improving school access, infrastructure, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher salaries, and student enrolment. Nevertheless, student learning levels and trajectories are disturbingly low.Educational outcomes depend on the number of teachers and their qualifications, availability of teaching and learning resources in schools such as textbooks and blackboards, and their use made by teachers in actual classroom activities. These different elements influencing educational outcomes can be thought of as comprising 'quality' of education. The low quality of the school system contributes to irrelevant curriculum, faulty methods of teaching and evaluation, parental apathy towards actually sending their children to school, teacher apathy towards developing learners' potentialities.

Teachers admit that at primary level the focus is no longer on 3Rs and at elementary level the subject based teaching has taken backseat. Their reasons are: multi-grade situation (not having one teacher for each class), frequent transfers, non-rational deployment, load of non-teaching activities, paper work generated by SSA and RMSA, migration of students from better off sections of society to private schools, non-cooperative community. More than 60% of the primary schools in India had a single teacher or at the most two teachers to take of all five classes. In a single teacher school, a teacher hardly gets any time to think about the quality education. So, the attendance of students began to decline and guardians decided to admit their wards in private schools where there is regular presence of teachers (Kanwar, 2013).Vyas (2008)also endorsed that for the failure of education system in India some factors such as shortage of teachers, indifferent attitude of parents towards child's education, insufficient public financing and accountability, and a lack of motivation among teachers to pay special attention to poor children, are responsible.

But, it is also argued that school place, books, and classrooms are ineffective and meaningless without teachers. The effective and successful learning depends upon the quality of teaching which demands academically competent persons who care about the well being of children.The entire process of teaching-learning transaction depends on the efficiency of a teacher (Sabu, 2015). Teachers' work efficiency is related with his satisfaction with his/her work as endorsed by Fagbasmaye (2002) who observed that teachers are very unhappy with their lot and that most of them are negatively disposed towards their jobs. According to him, teachers can be effective and productive when they are happy with their job because productivity is a function of human frame of mind and motivation is a necessary requirement for effectively in the long run.In some nations, school teacher's salaries are often

perceived to be lower than those of other professionals; this perception is especially strong among teachers. This affects the teachers' motivation to educate (OECD 2009; Figlio and Kenny 2006; Ortega 2010, Player 2009, Heutel 2009, Loeb and Page, 2000). There are many other problems for teachers that make the profession more complicated than it has to be.

Researchers have endeavored to develop better curriculum, text books and teaching aids. Considerable efforts have been made to devise better techniques of teaching and means of assessing student's achievements, but all of these were of no use and development target have remained to be achieved, unless the pivot of the education system the teacher would not be satisfied (Srivastava, 2006).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The State of Himachal Pradesh has made a tremendous progress in the field of enrolment of students, reduction in the dropout rate, improvement in the literacy rate, reduction in the gap of male and female literacy rate etc. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has been making all out efforts to ensure 100 per cent enrolment of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years by strengthening the elementary education system in the state. The State has opened new upper primary schools by covering all the remote areas of the state, to ensure that the children have to walk minimum distance from their habitation to attend the school. Even with improving enrolment and retention rates, student attendance continues to be patchy, with one national survey reporting that around one quarter of enrolled children were absent on any given school day (ASER, 2011). Along with that the performance of students are not up to the mark. It is evident from the survey reports of ASER (2014) that the learning levels of children in government schools (both primary and upper primary) are very poor.

The reasons for poor performance could be many but teachers are generally are held responsible for the same. There is no denying that the teacher is the single most important component of the educational structure and success or failure of system largely depends on them. Teaching profession pose a lot of responsibility to the teachers as they are responsible to the various stake holders like students, parents, management society and nation as a whole. Since their responsibilities are large, many of them face problems while fulfilling their responsibilities. A teacher begins his profession with an objective of serving the society with high ideals but he faces many problems like institutional problem, administrative problem, academic and personal problems.

Veenman (1984) reported that the major problems as perceived by beginning teachers in their first year of teaching are classroom discipline , motivating students, dealing with individual students, assessing individual students' work, relationship with parents, organization of class work, insufficient teaching material and supplies. Poor salary, poor working condition of primary school teachers, non involvement in consultations and decision making, taking lot of non teaching works like census duty, election duty, rational card renewal etc., absence of an effective system of incentive and disincentives for good and bad performance are some crucial problems which the teachers are facing. If they encounter any type of problem, it may hamper their efficiency because the persons facing problems could not perform his/her obligations and functions properly. Thus, it very important that the problems of elementary school teachers are identified and analyzed to find different remedies for positive development of teachers and in turn success of the elementary school education.

METHODOLOGY

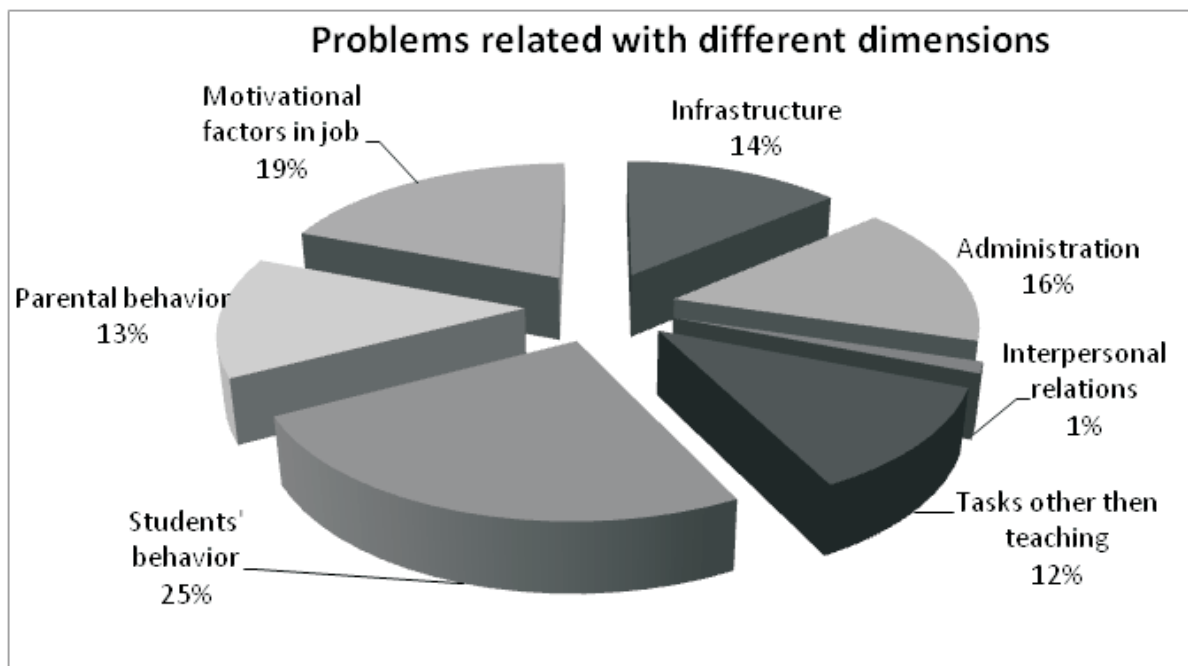
The descriptive survey method was employed to carry out the study. A sample of 127 teachers from elementary school situated in Himachal Pradesh from districts Chamba, Kangra and Hamirpur was

selected by employing multi-stage random sampling. A Questionnaire was constructed by the investigators to collect the data on the problems faced by elementary school teachers. It contained both open and close ended type questions. The questionnaire contained items pertaining to problems in different dimension related to Infrastructure, administration, interpersonal, other duties, classroom related, parents related and job satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with teachers.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

To know about the specific problems encountered by the teachers of the elementary school of Himachal Pradesh, their responses on each dimension were considered individually. Various problems encountered by the elementary school teachers are listed below in the form of pie chart:

Figure 1: Various problems faced by elementary school teachers (in %age)



The data depicted in figure 1 illustrate that one in four teachers (25%) encountered problems related to classroom teaching and 19% were not satisfied with their job due to insufficient motivational factors such as salary, status etc. There were 16% teachers who reported to have problem with administration and 14% teachers faced problems related with infrastructure. Along with this, 13% teachers were distressed due to behavior of their students' parents and 12% teachers were annoyed with tasks assigned to them other than teaching work.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

With regards to problems related to administration, 35% teachers reported that higher authorities were indifferent to their problems. About 44% teachers said that the head of their school were authoritarian. There were 30% teachers who stated that they were not given leave easily for higher education and 24% teachers complained for lack of motivation for higher studies by their organisation. Many teachers (27%) faced problems due to underprovided facilities for maintaining the cumulative record of the school. Many teachers (43%) reported that they were not provided with

required facilities/support in want of which they had to face difficulties in arranging activities under CCE.

Teachers stated the problems of absenteeism of teachers as there were rare visits of monitoring teams/inspection teams in remote areas because of which some of teachers acquired casual attitude towards school and teaching consequently performance of students hampered.

PROBLEMS RELATED STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR

In classrooms where the teachers spend most of the time take account of most of the problems for them as 49% teacher reported that the students neglected their homework, 45% teacher faced problems of irregular attendance of students and 41% teachers perceived low economic as an obstacle in the teaching learning process. There were and 46% teacher found it difficult to cater the individual differences in their classroom.

TASKS OTHER THAN TEACHING

With respect to tasks other than teaching, it was found that 90% teachers were given extra duties (like Census duty, Election duty, SSA Surveys etc.) which hinder their routine teaching. The extra duties occupy most of their academic time, so they were not able to devote proper time to their students, due to which the achievement of the students suffered. In spite of being over-loaded with the other duties they believed the maintenance of school records was important.

PARENTAL BEHAVIOR

Parental participation in school is considered to be crucial for academic performance of students. The teachers faced many problems related with parental attitude, as 74% teachers said that guardians of their students were indifferent to the supervision of their children and 70% teachers reported lack of participation of guardians in the studies of their children. About 31% teacher found that parents/guardian did not give importance to the daily attendance and school uniform of their children. Heavy work load due to the different activities like single teacher, paper work load and supervision of mid day meal, etc was also reported to be a problem by a large number of teachers (79%).

SECURITY AND STATUS (MOTIVATION FACTORS)

Though Regular teachers are found satisfied with their salary and are paid timely while the contractual/PAT/PTA teachers (25%) were found to be unsatisfied with their salary. 21% teachers felt insecure in their profession because of their temporary status and 22% teachers reported that teaching profession was not dignified in the society now days and they did not get the respect which they deserved. Along with this, 44% teachers said that lack of provision of leisure time activities lead to monotony.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Most of the teachers did not have much complaint about infrastructure except for few facilities such as computer or laboratories. About 88% teachers reported that there was no computer facilities in their schools and 73% stated that laboratory facilities was not there in some schools they had equipments for lab but there was no space for laboratories.

MULTI-GRADE TEACHING

Besides these, there were some other problems as reported by teachers (41%) such as low strength of students because of that they had to go for multi-grading teaching where they could cater the individual needs of students which hinders the teaching learning process.

DECLINING STRENGTH IN SCHOOLS

During interviews with teachers, some teachers reported that declining strength of students was the major problem for them as they were blamed for low strength and were forced to attract students to government schools but students from well-off families were shifting to the private schools. Students who could not afford the fee for private schools remained in government schools. A teacher remarked “sarkari school garibokiwajah se chahrahehain...” (Government schools is for poor).

To deal with the issue, a couple of teachers quoted that they had to manipulate the age of students. They stated that many times manipulated the age of the students to fulfill certain criteria; so that the school of the locality would not be closed as at least there must be a strength of 20 students to run a school. Therefore, in some cases they had to place children of lower age group to higher class (than their age group) to avoid closure of their school for example, in 1st class the age of student must be at least 6 years but they admit student of age 5 or even 4 or in 6th class the minimum age is 11 years but they had to admit students of age less than 11 years if the required number of students of particular age group did not take admission. To secure the required strength of students in a school such manipulations were done but it led to adverse consequences poor learning as well as adjustment of such students in a class.

POOR PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS

Some teachers believed that low socioeconomic status and illiteracy of parents is contributing to the problem of low achievement of the students as the parents of such children have indifferent attitude towards the studies of their wards and they did not participate in various school activities like SMC meetings etc. A few teachers reported that sometime they had to face the violent behavior of these parents.

Many teachers blamed RTE act “No child should be held back” for poor performance of students. They stated that students were not taking interest in studies because they could not be held back or failed. Not only students, their parents also were reluctant to motivate their students for studies because of this act of RTE as they believed that their child would get through eight class by all means and they need not to worry about their studies. Thus lack of interest of students as well as their parent towards studies led to the crisis. Without the collaborative effort of teacher, student and parents, desirable educational outcomes cannot be achieved. Shahid and Iqbal, (2011) also viewed that though teachers are like pivot around which the whole process of education revolves but definitely teacher, parents and student’s triangle of cooperation brings the revolution and motivation in the whole process. The parental involvement in school decision making strengthens the education process in the school.

A few teachers of upper primary schools cited their problems that students in primary schools i.e. up to 5th class were not taught properly. They blamed teachers of primary schools for not even inculcating the basic skills i.e. reading, writing and simple arithmetic. According to them, how could they teach such students who did not have proper base for learning, therefore it is important to improve education up to fifth class, the remaining (i.e. after 5th class) would automatically get better. The findings of the study is in consonance with the previous study (Garg, 2014) conducted in schools of

Punjab state, which also reported that the teacher face administrative and supervision problem, problem related to the infrastructural facilities, preparation and maintenance of the school reports, mid-day meal task are difficult to manage, students neglect their homework and are at times irregular in attending the school. Most teacher were found to be satisfied with their salary except novice teachers because they were on contract and were getting very low salary.

CONCLUSION

Teacher is the key factor in all educational development so needs to be professionally equipped with teaching competencies, commitment and determination to perform at their best. But the present study shows the teachers face various problems in the elementary schools of Himachal Pradesh. The previous researchers have established that schools where teachers with satisfied teachers are more productive than those where teachers encounter problems or are not much satisfied. Therefore, it is recommended that higher authorities of the state should address the problems of the teachers and give proper facilities to the teachers for utilizing the skills and potential of the teachers for their academic and professional development and also holistic development of the students.

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