



RESEARCH PAPER

Factors Affecting the Quality of Education at Primary School Level

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors affecting the quality of education at primary school level. These factors include qualified and well-trained teachers, curriculum and teaching material, attendance and class size, teacher-student ratio, parental and community involvement, socioeconomic and cultural background, teacher training and professional development, and educational policies. This study was also aimed at investigating the teachers' views about the reasons for these factors and to find out how these factors may be solved. The quantitative research method was used for this study. A questionnaire composed on 40 close-ended statements was developed on a five-point Likert scale. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample of 300 teachers from the Lahore district. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and an independent t-test was used through SPSS to find out the difference between genders' views. The findings of the study indicate that these factors exist and have a great affect on the quality of education at the primary school level. It is highly recommended that continuous professional development programs must be start at primary school level on regular basis to enhance the teaching skills of teachers.

Keywords: Affect, Education, Factors, Primary School, Quality

Introduction

Primary education refers to the first stage of formal education that children typically receive, usually between the ages of 5 and 12, although this can vary from one country to another. It serves as the foundational level of schooling and aims to provide students with essential knowledge and skills in subjects like reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. It promotes cognitive development by encouraging curiosity, problem-solving, and analytical thinking (Zeb, 2004). Learners develop the ability to reason, understand concepts, and make connections between different subjects. Primary education typically covers the early years of a child's educational journey. It is a crucial component of the overall education system and aims to provide foundational knowledge, skills, and social development to young learners (Suleman, 2008). The quality of education at the primary school level is a crucial determinant of a child's overall academic and personal development. It lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning and impacts an individual's future prospects. Several factors play a significant role in shaping the quality of education at this level, and understanding these factors is essential for improving educational outcomes. The quality of education at the primary school level is influenced by complex demographic variables such as the interplay of various factors (Bhatti et al. 2010). Recognizing and addressing these factors is essential for creating an educational system that empowers students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their future endeavors. By focusing on these factors, we can work towards ensuring that every child receives a high-quality primary education. Primary education equips learners with fundamental literacy and numeracy

skills. It provides them with the ability to read, write, and perform basic mathematical operations, which are essential for daily life and further learning (Toshtemirova, 2020). Primary education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It encourages learners to question, analyze, and find solutions to various challenges, which is a valuable skill for their personal and professional lives (Khan, 2002). Many factors are related to qualified and well-trained teachers, curriculum and teaching materials, adequate funding and resources, class size and teacher-student ratio, parental and community involvement, socioeconomic and cultural factors, teacher training and professional development, education policies and Governance that are directly affected on the quality of education. All these matters are very sensitive as well as problematic for the quality of education. In primary education, therefore, this research will investigate the different types of factors that must be not only addressed but need to be resolved.

Literature Review

Primary education sets the stage for further education and is a crucial part of a child's overall development. It lays the foundation for more advanced levels of schooling, such as secondary education and higher education, where students can specialize in specific subjects and career paths (Saleemi, 2000). The structure and curriculum of primary education can vary from one country to another, but it is universally recognized as a vital component of a child's educational journey. Primary education holds significant importance for learners due to its pivotal role in a child's overall development and future prospects (Shami, 2006). Primary education helps children to develop social skills including communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution, which are essential for building positive relationships. It also fosters emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and resilience. It equips learners with the foundational skills and knowledge necessary for personal growth, lifelong learning, and active participation in society. As such, it is a fundamental building block for an individual's success and a cornerstone for the development of a society as a whole (Shami & Hussain, 2005). Primary education typically covers basic subjects such as mathematics, language (including reading and writing), science, social studies, and arts. The curriculum and specific subjects can vary from one country to another. Primary education is an essential step in a child's educational journey, as it equips them with the essential knowledge and skills needed to progress to more advanced levels of education, such as secondary or high school. The quality and availability of primary education can significantly affect a child's future opportunities and prospects. Many factors are being explored in this study such as qualified and well-trained teachers: The competence and dedication of teachers are paramount in determining the quality of education. Qualified and motivated teachers can effectively impart knowledge, foster critical thinking, and provide individualized support to students. The competence and qualifications of teachers are critical to the quality of education. Well-trained and motivated teachers who are subject matter experts and use effective teaching methods can have a significant positive impact on student learning. The quality of teachers is a crucial factor (Shah, 2004). Many studies have consistently shown that well-trained, motivated, and experienced teachers have a significant impact on students' academic achievement. Continuous training and development opportunities for teachers can help them stay updated with the latest teaching methodologies and improve their ability to meet the diverse needs of students (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Kazmi (2005) stated that "The quality of education mostly depends on teachers' qualifications and professional skills". Most teachers at the primary school level are untrained. The majority of primary school teachers, especially women, have had far less than ten years of education. Kousar and Shoukat (2020) found that essential factors such as improved facilities, a supportive home environment, parental cooperation, a qualified teaching staff, and recognition and encouragement from both teachers and parents significantly influence the delivery of high-quality education. They frequently have not studied middle subjects, and as a result, they regularly lack situational interest, have trouble remembering big amounts of facts, and are unable to speak efficiently. Indeed, a teacher's

educational qualification, mastery of demanding situations, capabilities and training competencies, and intellectual longevity all play a role in developing academic techniques (Govt. of Pakistan, 2010). As per Shah (2004), a powerful teacher goals a selected result. Because education is a hobby, the teacher needs to understand what he or she needs to expand other than the school's fashionable goal, which is splendid schooling. In simple phrases, an effective teacher is someone who is ready and knowledgeable about training. His or her education creates a distinction among the various newcomers. Zafar, Mustafa and Jameel (2016) identified that curriculum and teaching material is more affecting factor on the quality of primary education. The content of the curriculum and the availability of up-to-date teaching materials influence the quality of education. A relevant and engaging curriculum that aligns with the needs of students and society is vital. The curriculum and teaching materials should be up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with the educational needs of the students. A well-designed curriculum can help students develop essential knowledge and skills. Curriculum design and pedagogical approaches play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of primary education. Research indicates that a well-structured, up-to-date curriculum and innovative teaching methods positively impact student learning (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008). Adequate Funding and Resources is also an important factor. Access to well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and other educational facilities can significantly affect the learning environment. Adequate infrastructure contributes to a more conducive atmosphere for learning. Sufficient funding is necessary to provide schools with the necessary resources, including textbooks, teaching materials, and technology, to support effective teaching and learning. Adequate access to teaching materials, textbooks, and technology significantly contributes to the quality of education. Schools with better resources can offer a more enriching learning environment (World Bank, 2018). Ahmed et al. (2013) revealed in their study that primary education constitutes the most neglected segment within the entire education system. This sector faces inadequate funding and suffers from poor management. Awour, Okere and Odero-Wanga, (2018) discussed that class size and teacher-student ratio is the factor that badly affects primary education. Smaller class sizes often lead to more personalized instruction and better student-teacher interaction, which can enhance the quality of education. Smaller class sizes and lower teacher-student ratios can lead to more individualized attention and better learning outcomes for students. The classroom atmosphere, including factors like class size, discipline, and safety, can affect the learning experience. A positive and orderly classroom environment is conducive to teaching (Fisher & Frey, 2007). According to Abbas (2002), a dropout from school is also a main cause of factor that affects the quality of education. The programs and guidelines devised through successive governments and donor organizations did not emerge as aware of the premise reasons for negative enrollment and immoderate dropout prices. Attendance and dropout costs are the cause of primary troubles that have a terrible effect on primary education's overall performance. The dropout rate of children badly affects the quality of education and mostly in rural areas, parents do not take seriously this issue. At the primary school level, the dropout rate is in all likelihood, surprisingly immoderate which is why many school students fail to complete their education. Parental and community involvement plays a vital role in primary education. Support from parents and the local community is crucial for a child's educational success. Active involvement in a child's learning process and school activities can positively affect their educational experience. Active engagement of parents and the local community in the education process can enhance student achievement and school accountability (Abbas, 2002). Another most important factor is socioeconomic and cultural Factors. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and access to healthcare, can impact a child's ability to learn. Cultural factor also plays a role in shaping the educational experience, including language and cultural sensitivity in the curriculum. A student's socioeconomic background can affect their access to resources, nutrition, and overall well-being, which, in turn, impacts their ability to learn. Addressing these disparities is essential for improving the quality of education. Interacting with peers and teachers in a structured educational environment helps learners develop social and emotional skills. They learn to collaborate, communicate, and manage their

emotions, which are important life skills. Primary education serves as a preparatory stage for higher levels of education. It provides the necessary foundation and knowledge for learners to pursue advanced studies and career opportunities. Primary education is of paramount importance for learners as it not only imparts essential knowledge and skills but also shapes their character, prepares them for future challenges, and contributes to their personal and societal growth. It is a cornerstone of individual empowerment, community development, and the overall progress of a nation (Toshtemirova, 2020). Cultural attitudes towards education and societal values regarding the importance of schooling can influence a child's motivation and commitment to learning. Low socioeconomic status can lead to disparities in educational outcomes (Sirin, 2005). Government policies and regulations play a significant role in shaping the quality of primary education. Well-structured policies and effective governance mechanisms can ensure that education is of high quality and accessible to all. Government policies and funding allocations influence primary education quality. Equitable and adequate funding is essential to provide equal opportunities for all students (Baker & Green, 2008).

Material and Methods

This research study was based on a quantitative method. All the male and female teachers of public primary schools in the Lahore district were the population of the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample of 300 male and female teachers.

Instrumentation

Self-developed questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale consisting on two parts was used to collect the responses from the respondents. The first part of the questionnaire was about demographic information of teachers like name, school, gender and the second part included 40 closed-ended statements about the factors that are affecting the quality of education at primary school level.

Reliability and validity of the Instrument

The reliability of the instruments was checked by Cronbach Alpha and it was found 0.90. The instrument was validated by five (05) educational experts before data collection.

Data Collection

The data was collected from 300 teachers (males & females) from public primary schools in the Lahore district by the researchers themselves.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and an independent t-test was run through SPSS to find out the statistically significant difference between male and female teachers of public sector primary schools.

Results and Discussion

The summary of data is presented and discussed in the following section

Table 1
Mean scores of factors that affect the quality of education

Factors	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Qualified and Well-Trained Teachers	4.16	.641
Curriculum and Teaching Materials	4.14	.696

Adequate Funding and Resources	4.24	.795
Class Size and Teacher-Student Ratio	3.98	.644
Parents and Community Involvement	3.60	.837
Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors	4.06	.590
Education Policies and Governance	4.01	.679

This table shows the mean score of factors that affect the quality of education. About seven factors were explored in this study and all the factors were gone in strongly agreeing and agreeing options. The highest mean score is 4.24 on the factor of Adequate Funding and Resources. It means that the majority of teachers strongly agree with this statement.

Table 2
Mean scores of teachers' perception about the quality of education

Sr. No	Statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	Quality of education depends on learning outcomes.	3.81	1.135
2.	Teaching aids are insufficient and have poor quality.	4.01	.685
3.	Teachers are not professionally trained at the primary level.	4.10	.987
4.	Learning resources are not sufficient according to student needs.	4.12	.665
5.	Primary school teachers face problems with instruction due to non-availability of quality textbooks.	4.01	1.068
6.	Primary schools do have not adequate infrastructure.	3.99	1.154
7.	Administration in primary school is poor and unsatisfactory.	4.04	.967
8.	Lack of physical facilities badly affects the quality of education.	4.04	.785
9.	The availability of physical resources enhances the quality of education.	4.16	.952
10.	Cultural diversity is also a major factor that affects the quality of education	4.12	.832
11.	Poverty is a serious cause of to fall in the quality of education.	3.98	.687
12.	Primary school teachers face problems with instruction due to non-availability of quality textbooks.	4.01	.856

This table indicates the results of teachers' perceptions about the quality of education. All the statements were gone into strongly agree and agree on options. The highest mean score of statement 9 Availability of physical resources enhances the quality of education is 4.16. It falls in the highest category. It means that all the teachers strongly agree with this statement and it means that all the factors affect the quality of education.

Table 3
Independent Sample T-test for Gender Difference

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Male	130	3.90	.636	-1.532	398	.126
Female	170	3.99	.568			

This table shows that there was no statistically significant difference exists between the perception of male and female teachers ($p>.05$). . This table presents that equal variance assumed and there was no significant difference in scores for males ($M = 3.90, SD= .636$) and female, ($M = 3.99, SD= .568$); $t (-1.532), p= .12$ (two-tailed).

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the factors that affect the quality of education at primary school level in the Lahore district. The first objective of this study was to find out the factors that affect the quality of education at primary level. The research question of this objective was what are the factors that affect the quality of education at the primary school level? For this purpose descriptive statistics were applied to check the teachers' opinions, following factors were explored such as qualified and well-trained teachers, curriculum and teaching material, adequate funding and resources, class size and teacher-student ratio, parent and community involvement, socioeconomic and cultural factors, teacher training and professional development, education policies and governance. The second objective of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions about the quality of education at the primary level. The research question of this objective was what is teachers' perception about the quality of education at the primary level in public schools? For this purpose, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to check the teachers' opinions the mean score of 4.16 showed that these factors existed and that affect the quality of education.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to explore the factors that affect the quality of education at the primary school level in the Lahore district. Several factors influence the quality of education. Key factors within the school include teachers' training, qualifications, teaching methods, curriculum and teaching materials, student-teacher ratio, professional development, educational policies, attendance, and class size. Additionally, factors outside the school, such as parental and community involvement, socioeconomic status, and culture, also play a significant role in affecting the quality of education. The perception of teachers indicates that all the above factors have a high affect on the quality of education at the primary school level.

Recommendations

- The government must increase its budgetary allocations for primary education.
- Continuous professional development (CPD) must be implemented at the primary school level
- Medium of instruction English as well as Urdu may be implemented as per the needs of the society and regions at the Primary School level
- Teachers must be trained in the languages, especially in English and Urdu.
- Teachers' salaries may be increased to motivate them.
- Parents Teacher meetings (PTM) must be arranged every month to overcome problems.
- Parents must take keen interest in their children education.
- Teachers should create a positive and friendly classroom environment for all students.

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