Abstract

The purpose of the research was to explore the Teachers’ Recruitment Policies (TRPs) and processes in Punjab. The study investigated the effectiveness of TRPs and the implementation processes in selecting teachers with regard to the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) in Pakistan. There are frequent changes in TRPs in Punjab; however, there are certain gaps to select competent teachers. The study employed a qualitative research design (semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews) to collect data from Teachers’ Recruitment Policy Designers (TRPDs), Teachers’ Recruitment Policy Implementers (TRPIs), and Newly Recruited Teachers (NRTs). The findings of study show that there are gaps in policy designing as well as implementation processes, i.e., ambiguity in the wordings of TRP documents, absence of a written test for short-listing of competent candidates, low weightage of interview marks (5 marks) in the selection process, lack of sufficient training of TRPIs, and no alignment between TRP selection parameters and NPSTs. It is concluded that there is room to refurbish the TRP and its implementation process for selecting competent teachers.

Recruitment of Teachers in Punjab, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study of Policies and Procedures

Teaching is not a mechanical job and it is not done in isolation. Besides academic qualifications, teachers are supposed to have other personality characteristics to meet the demands of the teaching profession. This study was conducted to explore Punjab’s Teachers’ Recruitment Policy (TRP) and its procedures as they align with the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To investigate teachers’ recruitment processes and policies in order to understand the reported gaps or factors that contribute to the lack of quality of newly inducted teachers.
2. To check the existence of alignment between the national professional standards of teachers and the teachers’ recruitment policy.
3. To inform a new research-based teachers’ recruitment policy.
The following research questions were used to meet these objectives:

1. What factors do the policy designers consider regarding the recruitment of teachers?
2. How are the recruitment policies applied in the process of recruitment?
3. What are the views of newly inducted teachers about the recruitment process?
4. To what extent do the recruitment policies and processes align with the NPST?

**Methodology**

The study was descriptive in nature and employed a qualitative research design. The population of the study consisted of all the teachers’ recruitment policy designers (TRPDs), teachers’ recruitment policy implementers (TRPIs), and the newly recruited teachers (NRTs) in Punjab. Purposeful sampling was used to select three TRPDs, 15 TRPIs, and 30 NRTs for five focus group interviews from five districts: Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Sargodha, and Mianwali. Data were collected by administering (a) semi-structured interviews with TRPDs and TRPIs, and (b) focus group interviews with NRTs at the elementary and secondary levels.

The interview guides contained questions that emerged from the literature and from discussion with the expert persons of the pre-service teacher education program. The TRPDs’ interview protocol covered the salient features of the TRPs, procedure for involvement of stakeholders to design TRPs, alignment of TRPs with the NPST, justification for assigning uneven weightage to qualifications and interview for selecting teachers, expectations of policy designers for the new recruitment policy, and reasons for changing the recruitment policy. The TRPIs’ interview protocol covered their responsibilities as committee members, experience in the recruitment process, strengths and weakness of the policy, and suggestions to improve it. The NRTs’ focus group interview protocol included their knowledge about NPST, experiences as candidates, satisfaction with the recruitment process, and suggestions to improve the process and policy.

The research team conducted 23 audio/video recorded interviews with 3 TRPDs, 15 TRPIs, and 5 NRTs. All but two of the interviews were audiotaped. Prior to data analysis, all interviews were transcribed by research assistants. Data analysis of the study was carried out through an evolving inductive process. Thematic coding was used because this form of coding makes it possible to link individual pieces of data to the research questions. The assignment of thematic codes took place during three consecutive and uninterrupted readings of each transcript in all three types of interviews. The first reading of each interview was a holistic analysis, focused on identifying primary or broad themes and potential quotations. The second reading was an in-depth examination to identify secondary or embedded themes within the broader issues. The third reading was an even more in-depth analysis of the primary and secondary themes, in search of patterns that naturally separated into tertiary subthemes.
Research Findings

The Interviews with TRPDs

Question 1: Salient Features of the Teachers’ Recruitment Policy

Policy designers believed that after the 18th amendment in the Constitution, they were bound to plan for 100% enrolment, retention, and quality of education in all schools. One of the policy designers believed that in the policy development process, “we keep in mind the new trends/changes in curriculum, needs of the schools and foreseeing the future expectation of the department.” For quality education, competent teachers were required; thus, the last two TRPs were developed to accommodate the subject needs of different schools in Punjab, i.e., mathematics, science, English, and IT teachers. The focus was on selecting quality science and math teachers.

Question 2: Procedure for Involvement of Stakeholders to Design TRPs

The Secretary of Education was the focal person for designing the TRP. The Secretary of Education involved officers in the Directorate of Public Instruction who were responsible for sending representatives to each district to collect feedback about the TRP. Before drafting the recruitment policy, teachers’ needs, their working styles, psychology of children, and performance of students were considered and discussed with stakeholders.

Question 3: Justification for Assigning a Higher Weight to Qualifications

The policy designers claimed that they had implemented a merit-based recruitment policy throughout Punjab (see Figure 1). The major strength of the policy was 95 marks for qualifications and 5 marks for the interview, which helped us to ensure merit. Further, to ensure transparent merit-based selection, pre-merit lists were displayed on notice boards and the candidates were invited to point out any discrepancy in their merits. These types of action made the policy and its process crystal clear.

Figure 1. Current Weightings for the Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview plus Computer Assessment</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualifications</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Qualifications</td>
<td>90 marks, as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESE* and SESE*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric marks</td>
<td>25 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSE* 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Total Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mphil, PhD</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ESE = Elementary School Educator
SESE = Senior Elementary School Educator (i.e., general subject areas)
SSE = Secondary School Educator (i.e., specialized subject areas)

**Question 4:**
Expectations of TRPDs from the NRP

The policy designers claimed that as a result of implementing the new recruitment policies, the enrolment of 0.2 million students had been increased. The NRTs could work better for the cognitive development of students because they were well equipped with content knowledge and pedagogical skills. They were hardworking and had backgrounds in science, which was also beneficial for students.

**Question 5:**
Reasons for Changing the Recruitment Policy

The TRPDs pointed out that a significant majority of teachers working in the schools of Punjab had arts backgrounds and were unable to teach math and science due the change of medium of instruction from Urdu to English. Therefore, the last two TRP items focused on recruiting science, math, and English teachers.

**The Interviews with TRPIs**

**Question 1:**
Responsibilities of the TRC Members

The TRPIs described the recruitment policy in different angles and exposed many new dimensions to improve the policy. One District Monitoring Officer (DMO) on the teachers’ recruitment committee thought that his responsibility was data entry, preparing the pre-merit lists, displaying the lists, handling queries and complaints, and finally issuing letter of offer to the candidates. Another DMO respondent believed that his responsibility was identifying and advertising job posts, receiving and entering the particulars of applicants from their applications into computer, and cleaning the data for further processing. One District Education Officer (DEO) believed that his role was to
identify vacant posts at the elementary level, and then collect the applications and send them to the DMO office on a daily basis for data entry and record keeping. He believed the DMO office to be responsible for receiving and readdressing any objections, and supervising the whole process.

According to the TRP guidelines, all committee members were responsible for the whole recruitment process, but in practice they were only partially involved in all steps of the process.

**Question 2: Experience of TRC Members as TRPIs**

The TRPIs remarked that there were ambiguities and flaws in the policy documents. Even the District Coordination Officer as chair of the recruitment committee, and Executive District Officers as senior members of the committee, were not clear with regard to some conditions in the policy document because these conditions were not self-explanatory. The majority of TRPIs admitted that there was no political pressure to select their candidates because 95% of the merit marks were for qualifications. They felt that recruitment was a hectic activity due to its tight implementation schedule and unavailability of special grants for implementation expenses. However, one TRPI thought that the time given to complete the recruitment process was reasonable.

One of TRPIs described the TRPs in an interesting way, as follows: “Friendly speaking, we are government employees. We cannot criticize it. We have no right. But, it hurts me what future dreams we are giving them. They are better than me as far as their qualifications, knowledge, and intelligence are regarded. We are giving 12,000 pay to them but our sweeper in the office is taking 18,000.” This TRPI recommended that all TRPIs be trained at the provincial level for one or two days, which would help them to understand the recruitment policy clearly and would standardize different aspects of implementation across the Punjab. Moreover, proper time is required for the implementation process. The scrutiny teams for candidates’ applications were not properly guided by the TRPIs regarding different subjects and programs at higher secondary and graduation levels. The TRPIs mentioned many problems in the implementation process, i.e., limited time for application processing, load shedding, posting/transfer during the recruitment process, less professionally trained staff, and unclear position vacancies.

**Question 3: Effectiveness of Interviews as an Instrument for Teacher Recruitment**

Most TRPIs felt that the “interview is only a formality for checking the documents of candidates,” because only 2% of the merit marks were assigned to the interview, and the other 3% were assigned to the verbal computer test (or vice versa in some places). Another TRPI shared that the “only things that we ensured during interview were that no deaf or dumb or handicapped candidates were selected for the general seats of teachers.” The TRPIs admitted that all committee members were not present during
each interview. They also provided information that only one member from the recruitment committee, along with two to three irrelevant members – i.e., senior headmasters or IT teachers – conducted the interviews. The TRPIs thought that since the weightage of qualification marks was 95%, the interview committee was not serious in conducting the interviews. The interviews’ weightage did not play a significant role in the selection process. The TRPIs suggested that the written test and computer test be conducted before the interview, in order to screen out the less appropriate candidates.

The Focus Group Interviews with NRTs

**Knowledge of NRTs about NPSTs**

All NRTs admitted that they were not aware of the NPST, and had not heard or discussed NPST during their period of pre-service training programs.

**NRTs’ Views about the Recruitment Process**

Most participants gave the following reasons for their dissatisfaction with the recruitment policy and process: (a) the recruitment process started without written tests of candidates, which burdened the interviewers’ work, b) the interviews were only a formality due to the shortage of time interviewing, c) teaching demonstrations were not included to assess the candidates’ communication skills, so it was difficult to differentiate who could teach and who could not, d) the sole criteria for selection of teachers was qualifications marks, e) lists of candidates were not displayed on the due dates, f) there was equal weightage of academic qualification marks for students who passed through the annual exams and the semester exams, and (g) the overall recruitment process was completed in a hasty way. Only two focus group NRTs were satisfied with the recruitment process and its low weightage of interview marks and high weightage of academic qualification marks. One NRT explained, “Low weightage for interview marks helps to curb favoritism, and the equal scoring of interviews has ensured merit.”

**Discussion**

The research findings indicate clear strengths and weakness of the current TRP. These findings have implications for the TRPDs and TRPIs who design and implement the policy.

**Strengths of the Current TRP**

Most implementers noted a main strength of the recruitment policy as being 100% merit based, with heavy weighting of qualification marks. One participant pointed out that vacant posts were being filled, and that the recruitment of science graduates will help to improve the quality of education because science teachers can teach science as well as arts subjects very well at the primary level. One implementer added that the strong point of that policy was the selection of science and math teachers for schools in remote areas.
Weaknesses of the Current TRP

Policy implementers remarked that the policy document was not self-explanatory with regard to rules of policy, i.e., Bachelor of Science courses, marks (CGPA), and shortage of time to scrutinize applications. Moreover, the marks from different universities may vary, i.e., the semester exam system versus the annual exam system – a problem that could be overcome by administering a written test to the teacher candidates. The TRPIs thought that the TRP had more merit than the National Testing Service (NTS) test.

Suggestions for TRPDs to Improve the Teachers’ Recruitment Policy

Most of the policy implementers recommended (a) improving the software provided by PMIU to convert marks in the merit list, (b) training the scrutiny committee, (c) administering the NTS test for screening out less desirable candidates before the interviews, and (d) weighting marks differently for the academic qualifications of candidates based on whether they came through a semester exam system or an annual exam system. The TRP should be realistic, not idealistic. There must be clarification of subject area combinations and their relative weighting in the policy document. The TRPIs believed that they needed one or two days of training for any new recruitment policy.

One TRPI believed that “policy designers are good and competent people. Some flaws were in the TRP but they can be removed it by decreasing number of applicants by administering written test in each district and recruitment schedule be flexible and from district to district according to number of applications for recruitment.” During the interviews to select candidates, they could be asked to demonstrate their teaching, and the weightage of interview marks could be increased to 15-20% of the total merit marks. One TRPI said, “I think special allowance may be given to teachers who are working in remote areas.”

Constraints Faced by the TRPIs Who Implement the TRP

Policy implementers pointed out that there was no special budget for stationery and other recruitment resources. A few administrative posts, i.e., deputy DEOs and DEOs, were vacant during the recruitment process, which created hurdles that prevented a smooth implementation process of recruitment. The clerical staff of Executive District Officers and DEOs were not trained in computer skills to handle the huge activity of recruitment along with other routine work of the offices. Moreover, a reasonable number of computers should be given to the DMO during the recruitment process, especially to female DMOs who are posted in far-flung areas, because they currently often refuse to join or use political or any other pressure to transfer into the city.

Conclusions and Recommendations
The major focus of the TRPDs with regard to the most recent prior TRPs was to develop a merit-based policy to stop favouritism for selecting science, mathematics, English, and IT teachers. Therefore, they assigned 95% weightage of merit marks to qualifications and only 5% weightage to the interviews for selecting teachers. This rubric for selecting candidates diminished the likelihood of favouritism by the members of recruitment committee, staff of the offices of Education Department, and politicians who wanted to pick incompetent teachers. However, realistically, these recruitment policies were only partially successful in sorting and selecting quality teachers from the available candidates. The selection criteria for selecting competent teachers in the TRPs were not valid, because they ignored many important traits of teachers in the recruitment process, i.e., aptitude toward teaching, communication skills, pedagogy and content knowledge, and performance as teachers. The TRPIs were not appropriately educated to implement the recruitment policy. The policy document content was not self-explanatory, and as a result the TRPIs faced many problems.

Therefore, it is recommended that the following criteria be adopted in future TRPs: (a) 20% for the NTS test, 50% for academic qualifications, 10% for professional qualifications, and 20% for the interview (see Figure 3). The NTS test would help to sort out competent candidates and decrease the interview committee’s workload. The reasonable weightage of interview marks may help to select competent teachers. The TRPIs may be properly involved while designing TRPs and the training that is needed before implementation of the recruitment process.

Figure 3. Recommended Weightings for the Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Testing Service written test</th>
<th>20 marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Qualifications</td>
<td>50 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualifications</td>
<td>10 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview cum Demonstration</td>
<td>20 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous and current TRPs were not aligned with the NPST, because these policies were designed by recruitment policy designers without considering the NPST. The policy designers should keep the NPST in mind for developing more operative teachers’ recruitment policies. The alignment of the recruitment policy and the NPST will be helpful for faculty in pre-service teacher training institutions, to draw their attention to educate prospective teachers according to these standards. More research is needed to assess the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education programs with regard to their alignment with the NPST in Pakistan. A specific study is also needed to compare the teachers’ recruitment processes of well-reputed private institutions and government institutions. The study may be replicated for assessing the effectiveness of teachers’ recruitment policies and processes in other provinces in Pakistan.