

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICY PROVISIONS IN SINDH, INFLUENCING THE ROLE OF THE PRIMARY TEACHER IN THE CONTEXT WITHIN THE OLD AND NEW SCHOOL HIERARCHIES

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ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to draw a comparative analysis of the policy provisions in primary education system of Sindh in an attempt to measure the implications of administrative hierarchy alteration to the professional role of the primary school teacher. Traditionally, ruling and Dominant systems have involved the reflective Primary teacher as in **isolation** model, which is exemplified by strict bureaucratic systems that disadvantaged teachers of agency, professional development possibilities and decision making (Lortie, 1975). As a solution to the institutional failures of the previous hierarchy system, the Government of Sindh implemented the Cluster-Based School Management (CBSM) policy focusing on decentralising the authority, ensuring equity in resources and offering academic support at localized levels. This paper uses a Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) approach based on a Social Constructivist Framework to make a critical comparison of the particular policy texts of the old district-based hierarchy and the new cluster system. This analysis in particular examines how the language in such documents forms the identity and professional autonomy of the teacher. Results indicate that there is a major policy contradiction, namely; although the new system is effective in bringing mentoring mechanisms, the requirements about financial autonomy (DDO powers) only shift administrative power to the Principal of the Cluster Hub, instead of actually devolving power to the primary teacher. Such structural incompetence threatens to strengthen the role of a teacher as a mere implementer and can have a harmful impact on professional morale. The research ends with specific suggestions to the SELD and policymakers to amend the policy text, in such a way that the authentic empowerment initiatives can be implemented on the basis of a humanistic and an efficient implementation model.*

Key words: *Analysis of Policy Provisions, Hierarchies, Primary Teachers, Old, New, School*

INTRODUCTION

Equity and quality of educational provision are the two main challenges that the educational system in Pakistan still struggles with that establishment (World Bank, 2019). In the past, education in Sindh has been ruled by a strict and centralized administration that emphasized on administrative dominance and loyalty rather than academic support and as such, a supervisory attitude that would not enhance educational development has been refined (Brohi, 1991). Recent research proves that the systemic problems remain existing in the given traditional model, as it reveals the following concerns: low levels of student competencies, high level of out-of-school children (OSC) rates, and the systematic misuse of resources (Nazakat, 2023). In addition, other scholars like Rizvi have highlighted how this **old** administrative system actively stands the performance and professional growth of teachers; by continuously overloading primary teachers with the non-academic tasks, the system effect with the quality of the primary teaching practices. Such a structural system failure highlights a demanding to reform the system (UNESCO, 2021). Thus, the primary education system in Sindh started to shift to a new form of governance which is the Cluster-Based School Management (CBSM) rather than the old administrative hierarchy. This model shift takes into consideration policy provisions that are specifically intended to deal

with deeply rooted critical academic and administrative faults with a view to enhancing wider societal growth and significant reforms.

1.2 POLICY CHANGE: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLUSTER BS SYSTEM.

With a direct response to these concentrated systemic issues, the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD) of the Government of Sindh undertook a major reform that led to the official establishment of the School Clustering Policy. Pilot implementation started in 2016, and it was formally revised in 2021 (SELD Notification, 2021). The Cluster-Based School Management (CBSM) system is aimed at achieving a multi-layered goal: it aims to reduce the impact of geographical isolation, more resource equilibrium among schools, and enhance Continuous Professional Development (CPD) with the newly decentralized systems. This policy has succeeded in changing the administrative model of a centralized hierarchy to a delegated governance model, which is based on the identified Cluster Hub Schools (CHS) (SELD Notification, 2023).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The current research represents a research Gap that is extremely significant on the policy provisional Text that are applicable to the primary education system in Sindh. Even though the CBSM system can be give an important policy changes that proposed to solve the systemic problems. Academically the observations are still extremely limited on highlighted on the major issue of Primary teachers that, how an old and the new administrative hierarchies specifically enhance the worth of primary teachers as autonomous and Independ in her/his radius. There is also a need to have a qualitative critique to carry out a particular review on the policy provisions regarding financial accountability (DDO powers) and the changing administrative demands of the primary teachers. There is a necessity to go beyond the mentioned purpose and determine whether the new system actually reinforces the professional identity of the teacher, or it creates further administrative load and reporting systems.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to accomplish the research problem, this study has three objectives that are interrelated. It **first** embraces an organized study of the structural variations between the Old District-Based Hierarchy and the New Cluster-Based System to determine the way reporting lines of the primary teachers have changed. **Second**, it makes a critical examination of certain policy articles in regard to the practice of Mentoring (through Guide Teachers) and Resource Allocation (through DDO powers) to establish whether the mechanisms are successful in bringing down teacher isolation and meaningful guidance in supporting. **Finally**, the study conducts the assessment of the development of professional Teachers identity, trying to understand whether the language of the new policy reflects for the primary teacher as an Autonomous Professional and will be empowered to make decisions or remains as a Local Implementer with new administrative reporting.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question of the given study is the following: What are the ways of the new policy framework compensate in the professional role and responsibilities of primary school teachers of Sindh in the comparison of past / old hierarchy of administration and New Cluster-Based System Model?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study makes **three** contributions to the existing literature in the field that are both constructive and effectiveness. On the **one** hand, that define the scope of the study methodologically is limited to a demanding Comparative Policy Critique based on document analysis, which would adequately address a critical gap in the existing research that still fails to pay much attention to the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy. In **other** hand, the

explicit emphasis on the importance of the teacher role to understand how system give favor, on the contradiction, and form actual professional status of the primary teacher. **Lastly**, the policy suggestions of the findings are that they offer specific and evidence-based recommendations to the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD) and stakeholders engaged, which can be applied directly to affect the target audience in order to note areas where policy may need to be clarified and then implemented with strength to ensure that written policy is translated into a positive way of practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

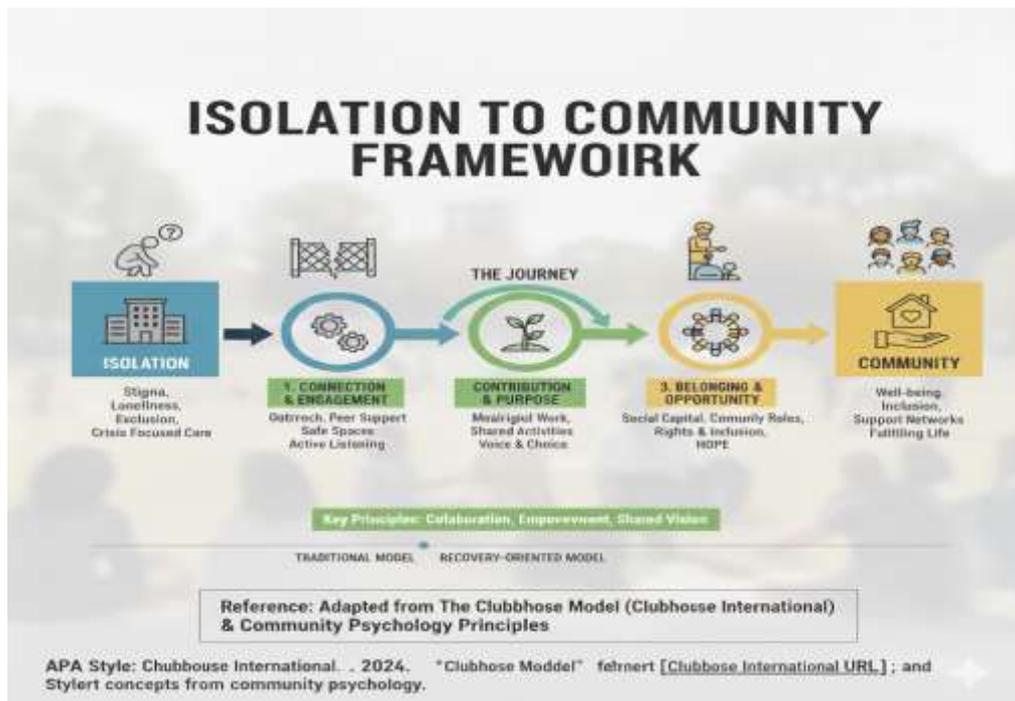
2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ISOLATION TO COMMUNITY.

The present study emphasized the theories of Isolation and communities, where the Dan Lortie (1975) wrote the famous quote about teaching as a lonely profession, The most notable sociological scholar researcher argued that in traditional bureaucratic system a teacher practically gets into the classroom, shuts the door and works, alone without being in contact with others and with significant institutional support (Ex.one classroom School Teacher). To understand the main Sindh Education CBSP policy tried to change on the concept of “Isolated Teacher”.

This paper uses the theory of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) as a perspective through which to cut the changes induced by the policy change. This is a strong theory because professionals can strive to achieve maximum growth and development in a situation where they interact frequently with other professionals and share practical strategies, resolving challenges together, and collectively offering emotional support to each other. Applying this paradigm in the Sindh Education system the situation evident the a clear dissimilarity: where the previously existing old hierarchal system, which introduce a teacher as isolated or Isolate Teacher, as described Theory by Lortie and the newly established Cluster Policy, which is aimed at creating a community of practice, as perceived by Wenger.

2.1.1 HOW SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM IS APPLIED IN POLICY ANALYSIS.

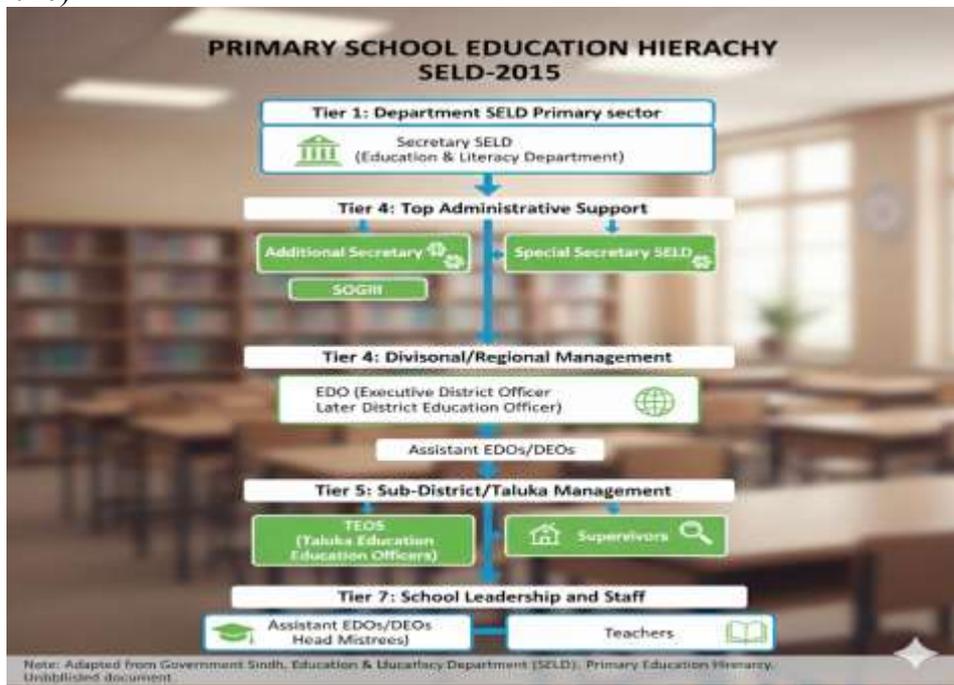
To deepen the analytical level of the framework of Isolation to Community, this study suggests the Social Constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978). This philosophical perspective assumes that even such social ideas like professionalism, autonomy, and even the community are not fixed



(Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As a result, of the achievement of the Cluster-Based School Management (CBSM) policy depends not only on its structural realization, but on a critical basis framing of teachers identity and professional realities. The main argument used in this section is that in case the policy dialogue manages, the role of teachers, must be change otherwise the old policy will remain same where the teachers were as a isolated and bound in a single classroom.

2.2 THE OLD SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION.

Before the cluster system introduced, the primary education system in Sindh was highly centralized in a hierarchy of District-Based hierarchy. This system came to a great extent inherited during the colonial period and was internally oriented on centralized control and obedience fixed on static nurturing of the educational growth or teacher empowerment (Rizvi, 2016).



THE TRADITIONAL MODEL EXPERIENCED WITH SYSTEM FAILURE'S:

- A Taluka Education Officer (TEO) could often have dozens or even hundreds of geographically scattered schools under their charge and supervisions. The Sindh Education Sector Plan & Roadmap (SELD, 2019) recognized that proper supervision and large assistance was logically approved that impossible in this unmanageable range of control under the TEOs.
- The visits from School Education Dept. were showing as the officers are not coming for the betterment of quality education but they visit for their own presents before the teaching staff as “officers” as Inspection and Mentoring, the School officers were mostly visited to check administrative attendance records and compliance, and seldom was involved in any form of work designed to enhance the quality of instruction and pedagogy (Memon, 2016).
- The notes of other organizations like Alif Ailaan (2014) indicated that the primary schools under the old system frequently lacked the basic facilities due to the absence of their own financial resources. Even the simplest of the repairs required the approval of the district offices. So this act demoralizing the value of Primary teachers who left to work in degrading environment that significantly reduced the professional job satisfaction.

2.2.1 THE DECENTRALIZATION THEORY

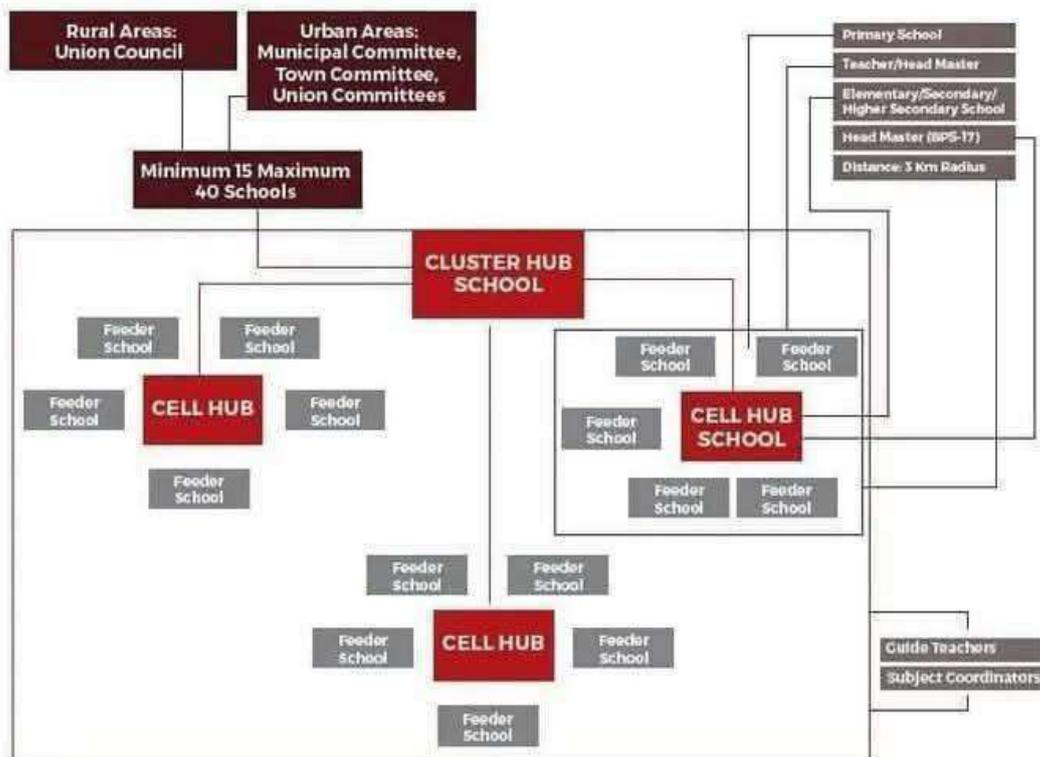
The shift of a centralize system to decentralize system or District-Based system into Cluster-Based system is a fundamental step towards administrative decentralization. Generally,

decentralization theory assumes that the tendency to shift power, resources, and decision-making authority nearer to the service delivery point increases the efficiency of this or that service delivery, including the local accountability (Rondinelli, 1981). But the major studies compare and warn that simple flattery or favoritism during the duties and power of Financial distribution on one only side, as Centralized (Ribot, 2002) than This decentralized theoretical is the summary of new DDO predicts as the key question of whether the control has been shifted to the Cluster Hub Principal or not changed and the professional status of the primary teacher is autonomous in any real sense or still depend on others.

2.3 NEW CLUSTER-BASED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT (CBSM)

To specifically discuss the Traditional issue of the old hierarchy, the Government of Sindh officially presented the Cluster based School Management (CBSM) policy. This policy was announced officially in 2016 and significantly reinforced with new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in 202 (SELD, 2021), and aims to reorganize the system on the principles of resources sharing and localized support.

School Clustering Model



The major provisions which aim at countering historical isolation are:

- The Guide Teacher Position: The policy defined the position of the so-called Guide Teacher which is an academic senior who will give the necessary mentoring service to other teachers regarding lesson planning and teaching techniques (Talpur et al., 2022). This change in the structure is supposed to transform the system where punitive monitoring is replaced with supportive mentoring.
- Decentralized DDO Powers: The policy produces the Principal of the Hub School with considerable powers as a Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO). This is to make sure that

critical financial decisions such as the minor repairs and resources are made at a quick pace and locally as opposed to the slow district education officers.

- **Compulsory Local Learning Circles:** The policy is actively involved in the establishment of compulsory local academic and professional development groups.

This is specifically the provision that tackles the concept of isolation as developed by Lortie because it requires that teachers convene regularly, and that they discuss issues and learn with one another under the supervision of a Coordinator (Subject Specialists).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Philosophical Viewpoint. This question has a Social Constructivist paradigm basis. It is based on the main argument that the professional reality of a primary teacher in Sindh is not an objective fact, but it is constructed actively with the help of a certain official governmental policy Dialogues. When the policy speech involves the use of these words like control, or monitoring, it creates a reality of compliance and fear indirectly. On the other hand, the use of language that prefigures the support and collaboration creates a reality that is favorable to professional development and community construction. In order to examine this phenomenon, I chose to follow the Interpretivist Epistemology that places greater emphasis on the derivation of profound sense and the authorial purpose, rather than numerical gathering. I aimed to be able to hear the policymakers, i.e., by using legal language to determine whether they actually reflect teachers as empowered professionals or as simple implementers (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: In this study, the research design will be based on **qualitative document analysis (QDA)**. In line with this philosophical position, I have used Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA). According to Bowen (2009), QDA is not merely a passive reading of texts but rather an active and a systematic inquiry into texts. The strength of this approach is that it is the ability to go beyond hollow political discourse and unravel the substantive legal imperatives and institutional processes that determine the day to day practice of a teacher. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) advocate this qualitative imperative according to which critical examination of written law is considered the only rigorous course of action that allows to compare the proposed designs of the antecedent and modern systems.

3.3 DATA SOURCES:

In order to make the study authentic, objective and sound in terms of its methodology, I used only primary government documents as the sources of data. I examined original notifications of the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD) of the Government of Sindh, which were legally binding. I swapped the foundational documents that laid down the basis of the Old System directly with the active notifications and standard operating procedures that make up the current New Cluster System to allow a clear baseline (Patton, 2015).

3.4 Analysis of Data Process: Thematic Comparison. I used a systematic Thematic Content Analysis on the policy texts. This was done through a three step process, which was aimed at revealing the underlying determinants and effects of the policy: Step 1. Coding the Old: I selected and placed keywords as well as phrases systematically which denoted the "Isolation Model" within the old system (e.g., Inspection, Monitoring, Control, Subordinate). Step 2. Coding the new: I then coded and identified keywords that denoted the Community Model that the new policy had (e.g., Mentoring, Collaboration, **Decentralization**, Guided Teacher). Step 3. Synthesis and Comparison: At last, I contrasted these coded themes with already known sociological theories of Lortie (Isolation) and Wenger (Community) to assess the real change of professional identity.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Accuracy: Research quality and validity of this research was not based on statistical measures but was based on the given qualitative criterion of Trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The Accuracy of this study is met based on two criteria: **Credibility:**

This is achieved through the use of official, legally published government documents as the only source of data hence offering an irrefutable basis to be analyzed. **Confirmability:** All the conclusions made in the course of the analysis are directly related either to a particular policy provision or to a known theoretical framework so that the conclusions made by the authors are based on verifiable evidence in the texts instead of being rooted in personal judgment or opinion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 MAJOR RESULTS: THE COMPARATIVE REALITY.

The qualitative review of the policy provisions demonstrates that there is a complicated relationship: although the new Cluster System has the mechanisms that are absolutely necessary to provide academic support, it also introduces new and important layers of administration load and reporting to be brought to the primary teacher. The major results are as follows:

PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Old System: Teachers had no autonomy as far as the curriculum implementation or financial decisions were concerned, disturbed.

- New System Autonomy is at the Cluster Hub Principal level not at the individual primary teacher level. The teacher is also a policy implementer, not environment-based decision maker. Professional Development (CPD) Support (Strong Positive Shift)

Old System: No official guidelines regarding the continuity of academic advice and pedagogical support existed.

New System: The policy formally establishes the formal position of the so-called Guide Teacher as the peer-to-peer mentor and teacher (Talpur et al., 2022). This is a definite and favorable change of an attitude of surveillance to an academic mentoring on written intent.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY (NOT TRUE DECENTRALIZATION, TRANSFER)

- **Old System:** The financial control was concentrated in the remote TEO/DEO office (Alif Ailaan, 2014), which generated a huge amount of delays.
- **New System:** Cluster Hub Principal representatives drawing and disbursing officer (DDO) power. Although the primary teacher is closer, he/she has no direct authority to offer minor expenses, he/she merely waits until a different, yet closer, authority figure comes.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPECTATIONS (INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES)

Old System: The agreement was majorly centered on physical attendance checks and simple reporting.

New System: A new system formalized requirement exists of regular submission of data and elaborate reporting to the Cluster Hub School. All these new administrative duties have measurably increased the overall non-teaching workload of the primary teacher.

4.2 DISCUSSION: THE POLICY CONTRADICTION.

All these findings show that there is a severe Policy Contradiction of the current reforms. Formally, the Cluster Policy is aimed at breaking the historic isolation model (Lortie, 1975) and creating a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Nevertheless, the analyzed written provisions simultaneously involve the new types of centralized control that contradict the decentralized attitude or ethos.

THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF FINANCIAL DECENTRALIZATION.

One of the key aspects of the reform drive is the delegation of the DDO powers to the Hub Principal. In theory this is in line with the traditional theory of **Decentralization** (Rondinelli, 1981). Yet the qualitative document analysis (QDA) suggests a severe flaw the policy delegates but in fact, it does not actually allocate power (Ribot, 2002). This gives a strong impression of financial **Decentralization** since the main teacher who is the professional directly involved with the classroom setting remains to have no formal authority to commence trivial, significant costs. Power has been simply shifted away to the remote TEO, on to the local Hub Principal, and has further strengthened a new local administrative centralization point.

THE NEW SYSTEM IS SUPPORTIVE, BUT POWERLESS.

The revelation of this research is the most important as it has been established that the new policy text does not provide the primary teacher with genuine professional autonomy that is widely accepted as the key to a sound professional identity. The policy effectively brings in the mechanisms of community (e.g. the Guide Teacher role) at the expense of the mechanisms of centralization (e.g. new burdens on the administrative reporting). Since there is no real delegated financial responsibility or decision-making authority of the teacher, he or she is not allowed to elevate his/her professional status beyond that of a mere subordinate implementer.

IMPLEMENTATION GAP (REALITY VYGOTSKY)

Using the social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) the language of the policy continues to create a world where the main teacher is mainly a data collector and follower of the procedure. The direct effect is that the new administrative loads evidence a considerable offset of the possible benefits of mentorship and support. This discussion throws light on a traditional implementation gap namely that the potential of the policy to enhance professional status may be completely lost in the structure of its own elaborate and taxing administrative specifics (Lipsky, 1980).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 CONCLUSION

It is shown that, despite the fact that the Cluster-Based School Management (CBSM) policy has brought the administrative hierarchy closer to the primary teacher, physically, it has failed to essentially redefine the professional role of the teacher as it was initially intended. The policy is good in that it brings about the idea of academic support, leading to the Community of Practice model developed by Wenger, but, at the same time, it strengthens and increases the administrative requirements and reporting channels. This seemingly contradictory fact is what ends up keeping the teacher as a mere implementer who is subordinate instead of a professional who is an autonomy. The systemic contradiction between the assumed support and legal authorization of administrative control by the policy is still a major structural hindrance to the professional dignity and efficacy of the primary education system of Sindh.

5.2 POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS (SELD).

As the results of this textual analysis show, there are three of such, practically applicable recommendations that can be given directly to the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD) to address the identified policy gap:

- **Restate the Mandate of the Guide Teacher:** The policy here is to be reformulated, such that it explicitly requires that the Guide Teacher is only academic, pedagogical in his/her mandate and with the intention of teaching in the students a friendly atmosphere of learning. Supervisory or punitive will not be a power that should be abused and should be specifically forbidden. Such a legal definition of responsibilities is critical to make primary teachers feel not misused but really supported.
- **Grant Real Financial Independence:** It is suggested that the DDO policy should be revised, to allow the individual primary school teachers (or the school management committees constituted locally) to directly and specifically authorize minor and essential operating expenses (up to PKR 5,000). Such a calculated empowerment would shift the teachers to not being passive applicants, but active, empowered in charge of their classroom situation, and would go a long way towards bolstering professional ownership.
- **Revise Administrative Burden:** SELD needs to embark on a full-scale review of administrative burden in an attempt to simplify and streamline the new information collection and reporting requirements by the cluster hubs. The collection of data must be aimed at evaluating academic achievements and progress and thus, the administrative level must be removed and micro-management eliminated.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATIONS.

This paper has focused on the written policy text. Then, future scholars must shift to the analysis of lived experiences and practical consequences of these policies:

- The researchers are advised to change the current research into the traditional concept of teacher isolation and instead conduct an empirical study on the administrative fatigue demonstrated by the overwhelming and unique new reporting demands of the hub principals.
- It is recommended that qualitative interviews and ethnographic studies be carried out on primary teachers operating in different clusters in order to address the basic question: Do you see the hub principal as a mentor or a controller?

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