

Effect of Teachers' Professionalism on Classroom Engagement at Primary School Level

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Abstract

Education is an essential process for human resource development. In this rapidly changing world things and processes are under swift transformation. Teacher, teaching and the classroom can't remain unaffected from these worldly changes. Teaching is a systematic and well thought purposeful process to make the environment favorable for learning. Quality of learning is always linked with the quality of teaching in general terms. This causal-comparative study was designed to explore the effect of teachers' professionalism on their quality of teaching and engagement in the classrooms. Two self-developed questionnaires were used for data collection from sampled primary school teachers (N=1230). The analysis of data revealed that teachers' professionalism has a positive effect on teachers' classroom engagement as well as quality of teaching. On the basis of results of this study it is proposed that during the process of teachers' recruitment the attitude of teachers towards teaching and level of their professionalism may be taken care of before offering them entry in the school system. The pre- service and in-service training may be based on such activities that can boost the nature and level of professionalism among primary school teachers.

Keywords: Professionalism, physical engagement, emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, social engagement, primary school teachers

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Introduction

Teaching is an essential process for achieving educational goals because learning is associated with different techniques of teaching adopted by teachers. Schools are such dedicated places that provide platforms to teachers for involving in the teaching learning process. Quality schools play an important role in provision of quality education to the learners. Teachers and their ways of teaching are major factors that determine students' learning dimensions. Education not only serves as a key to academic achievement and success but also contributes for the development of personality and cognitive power of learners (Farooq, 2016). Teachers offer such types of opportunities to students during classroom interaction to make them responsible and interactive (Murtaza & Akbar, 2019).

Primary education provides essential life skills to learners for the social and economic adjustments in the society. Teachers' professionalism is considered as one of the serious concerns in the field of education. The good teachers at all levels are those who have strong intellectual and emotional identities and commitments both to their subject(s) and to their students. Their competence in content knowledge and pedagogical skills make them different from each other. Teachers' professionalism is considered as an important element for the quest of quality education. Fantahun (2014) said that professionals always show different set of traits and potentials towards their expected roles and responsibilities in the society.

In the classroom through engagement students are involved in emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioral activities and tasks (Saks, 2006). Such innovations are needed in the field of education because such hands on activities lead the individuals to compete in the challenging worlds (Shuck, 2011). Teachers' classroom engagement enhances students' social, emotional engagement and they take more interest in class (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014; Luckner & Pianta, 2011). It is based on the mutual relationship of teachers and students because it is a crux of teachers' abilities that fulfill students' developmental needs (Hamre & Pianta, 2010; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Teachers' instructional abilities and students' outcomes are interrelated because teachers affect students' cognitively, socially and emotionally. Developed countries focused on the teaching profession and carefully set standards for professionals to develop twenty first century skills among young learners (Kane, Taylor, Tyler & Wooten, 2011). Engaged personnel are considered more responsible and more efficient so, they are highly associated with their tasks (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011).

Quality schools play an important role in the provision of quality education to the nation. In Pakistan, many educational reform programs have been launched time and again to improve the quality of education but still, there is a gap in the produced and desired outcomes. There are many factors inside and outside the school that directly and indirectly influence the quality of education. Many reforms have been implemented in Pakistan for the improvement of education but still, the public sector schools are unable to produce a quality product and to attract students (Farooq, 2016).

There were hardly such type of studies in Pakistan to gauge the effect of professionalism of primary school teachers on their classroom performance in terms of students' engagement. This study was an attempt to explore a causal relationship between the proposed constructs. It was to determine the effect of public sector primary school teachers' professionalism on their classroom engagement. The concerns about difference on the bases of teachers' gender and experience for their ability of engagement, level of professionalism in teaching were also addressed in this study.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach for exploring the causal relationships among the variables through causal-comparative design. The population of the study consisted of all teachers working in public sector primary schools of province Punjab, Pakistan. Six districts namely Lahore, Kasur, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sheikhupura and Khanewal were randomly selected from 36 districts of Punjab. Schools in each selected district were divided into two stratas i.e. boys schools and girls schools. Total number of primary school teachers selected as sample was N=1230 (Male= 589 & Female= 641)

Table 1

Experience of Respondents

Groups	Frequency	Percent
5-10 years	286	23.3
10-20 years	694	56.4
20-30 years	240	19.5
others	10	00.8
Total	1230	100.0

Table 1 shows that 286 respondents (23.3 %) have 5 to 10 years of experience, 694 respondents (56.4 %) have 10 to 20 years of experience in their jobs and 240 respondents (19.5 %) have 20 to 30 years of experience. Others were 10 people (.8 %). The total number of respondents was 1230 for the study.

Teacher Professionalism Scale (TPS) comprised of Professional parameters, Professional Behaviours, and Professional Responsibilities. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert type scale from Strongly agree = 5 to Strongly disagree =1.

Teacher Classroom Engagement Scale (TCES) consisted of four areas: Physical Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Cognitive Engagement and Social Engagement. Before administering the instrument, a pilot study was conducted on 210 primary school teachers to test the reliability of the instrument. The instruments were validated by national and international experts. The reliability of the instruments was determined by calculating the values of Chronbach α .

Table 2
Reliability of the instruments

Scales	Dimensions	No of items	Reliability
Teachers' Professionalism Scale		54	.906
	Professional Parameters (PP)	20	.925
	Professional Behaviors (PB)	22	.942
	Professional Responsibilities (PR)	12	.897
Teacher Classroom Engagement Scale		55	.913
	Emotional Engagement (EE)	14	.902
	Physical Engagement (PE)	11	.867
	Cognitive Engagement (CE)	19	.940
	Social Engagement (SE)	11	.891

Table 2 shows that Teachers' Professionalism Scale (TPS) has 54 items with an overall reliability value of .906. It has three dimensions i.e. professional parameter has 20 items with a reliability value of .925, professional behavior has 22 items with a reliability value of .942 and professional responsibility has 12 items with a reliability value of .897. There were 12 items that have been deleted from teachers' professionalism due to poor factor loading values.

Teacher Classroom Engagement Scale (TCES) has 55 items in total and the reliability value of the overall scale is .913. It has four dimensions i.e. emotional engagement has 14 items with a reliability value of .902, physical engagement has 11 items with a reliability value of .867, cognitive engagement has 19 items with a reliability value of .940 and social engagement has 11 items with a reliability value of .89. The items that have been deleted because of poor factor loading value were 09.

Results

These data were analysed in order to answer the questions and hypotheses of the study.

Table 3
Difference between Teachers' Professionalism and Teachers' Classroom Engagement

Groups	Variable	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Male	Teachers' Professionalism	3.91	.60	-0.891	1228	.373
Female		3.94	.64			
Male	Teachers' Classroom Engagement	3.91	.58	1.185	1228	.236
Female		3.87	.59			

Table 3 shows the comparison of two groups; male (N= 589) and female (N= 641). The mean value of teacher professionalism for males is 3.91 (SD= .60) and females is 3.94 (SD=.64) for females. The mean value of teacher classroom engagement for males is 3.91 (SD= .58) and 3.87 (SD=.59) for females. The t-test value is under the given value which is <1.96, the male and female group for teachers' professionalism had $p>.05$, it is $p=.373$. The male and female groups for teacher classroom engagement had $p>.05$, it is $p=.236$. The values are indicating that there is an insignificant difference between the male and female group regarding teacher professionalism and teacher classroom engagement.

Table 4

Difference in Teachers' Professionalism (TP) and Teachers' Classroom Engagement (TCE) w.r.t Qualifications of Respondents

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TP	Between Groups	12.297	3	4.099	10.908	.000
	Within Groups	460.712	1226	.376		
	Total	473.009	1229			
TCE	Between Groups	.304	3	.101	.291	.832
	Within Groups	427.776	1226	.349		
	Total	428.080	1229			

The results show that teacher professionalism has a significance value is 0.000 (i.e., $p=0.000$) which is statistically significant and teacher classroom engagement has also an insignificant p-value ($p=0.832$) which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the results show that teacher professionalism has a significant difference between groups but teacher classroom engagement has an insignificant difference in the mean difference between the different groups of qualifications. The results of the study showing these kinds of differences of qualification are presented in the following table.

Table 5

Tukey HSD Test among TP and TCE based on Qualification

Dependent Variable	(I) Qualification	(J) Qualification	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	
TP	B.A	M.A	.13864*	.003	
		M.Phil	.25738*	.000	
		others	-.05231	.977	
	M.A	B.A	-.13864*	.003	
		M.Phil	.11874	.053	
		others	-.19095	.444	
	M.Phil	B.A	-.25738*	.000	
		M.A	-.11874	.053	
		others	-.30969	.083	
	Others	B.A	.05231	.977	
		M.A	.19095	.444	
		M.Phil	.30969	.083	
	TCE	B.A	M.A	-.07489	.247
			M.Phil	-.01720	.984
			others	-.19220	.445
M.A		B.A	.00625	.998	
		M.Phil	-.03457	.868	
		others	-.00876	1.000	
M.Phil	B.A	.04082	.807		
	M.A	.03457	.868		
	others	.02581	.997		
others	B.A	.01501	.999		
	M.A	.00876	1.000		
		M.Phil	-.02581	.997	

*. The mean difference is significant at <0.05 level.

Table 5, Multiple Comparisons, shows which groups differ from others. The Tukey post hoc test is generally the preferred test for conducting post hoc tests on a one-way ANOVA, but there are many others. There is a statistically significant difference in qualification between the groups for all variables in the study. Based on this table it is concluded the teacher professionalism hypothesis is not rejected and the teacher classroom engagement hypothesis is rejected.

Model Testing

Figure 1 and Table 6 show the results of Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) software. This analysis was done by using the Maximum likelihood method which is the default function of this software. The estimated (beta) value which is reported to test the effect of each variable impact on the dependent variable. Critical Ratio (CR) which is also denoted t-value is also present in the table, C.R value is acceptable if the value is $> \pm 1.96$ (95% level of confidence). In the table p-value can be reported as three asterisks (***) , < 0.01 or < 0.05 for the significance of the relationship. P-value > 0.50 shows that the particular variable has an insignificant effect on the dependent variable.

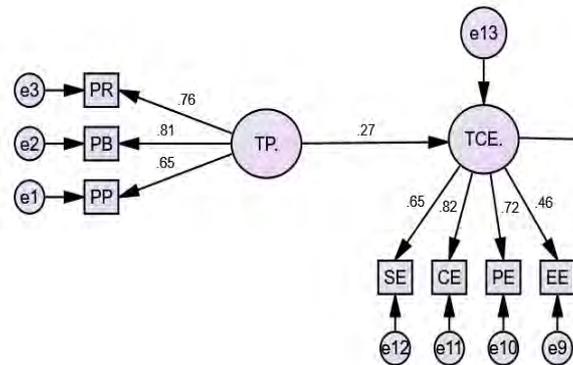


Figure 1. Model Testing (TP, TCE)

The SEM results show that teachers' professionalism has a positive and significant effect on teachers' classroom engagement (beta= 0.27, $p < 0.001$), the beta value of 0.27 shows that if one unit increase in the teachers' professionalism it will bring 27% positive effect in teachers' classroom engagement. There is a statistically significant effect of the teachers' professionalism on their classroom engagement at the primary school level so, the null hypothesis is accepted. The table 6 shows the results of SEM.

Table 6
SEM Regression Weights

IV	DV	Estimate	C.R.	P
TP →	TCE	.270	6.858	***

Conclusions and Implications

It is concluded based on the results and above discussion that teachers' professionalism is the fundamental nucleus to the goal of teacher's classroom engagement according to the findings of this study. For teachers' professionalism, professional behavior is the leading quality for a teacher then professional responsibility is measured. After both the two (behavior and responsibility) professional parameters are considered in this research from the responses of teachers. According to the results of this study cognitive engagement is the foremost one, then physical engagement, then social engagement, and emotional engagement the lowest one. Teacher professionalism has a significant difference but teacher's classroom engagement has an insignificant difference in the mean difference between the different groups of qualification. The SEM results show that teachers' professionalism (TP) has a positive and significant effect on teachers' classroom engagement (TCE).

Disciplinary practices, professional improvement, and teaching-related attitudes have a great impact on teachers' classroom behavior (Stupnisky, Hall et al., 2019). This research is also similar to the present study. Similarly, the educational background of teachers and teaching pedagogies influence students' learning. Teachers with less teaching experience are more emotionally and socially engaged than other teachers. This is also supported by Klassen et al (2013) that teachers who have just started teaching may experience high levels of social engagement, but their cognitive engagement could be less than experienced teachers. A recent study indicated the scope of Klassen et al. (2013) highlights that behaviour of teachers contributes towards encouraging and positive student relationships (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

By asserting the results of this study, it is recommended to create a healthy and positive environment where students feel comfortable in interacting with each other and with the other staff members. Teacher recruitment policy may focus on the evaluation of candidates for the position of primary school teacher on level of professionalism and attitude towards teaching before giving them opportunity to serve as a teacher.

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