
Investigation Of the Causes of High Performing and Low Performing Secondary Schools of Public Sector: Multiple Case Studies

Majida, Khatoon

Ph.D. Scholar (Education)

majidaqamar@gmail.com

Prof Dr. Abid Hussain Ch.

Abid.ier@pu.edu.pk

Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab

Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the causes of high-performing and low-performing secondary schools of the public sector. It was a qualitative research based on a case study design. Data were collected from multiple sources, e.g., administrative observation, documents, schools' records, and 2 head teachers, 16 secondary school teachers, and 575 students of 10th class from the 2 secondary schools that were selected by applying purposive sampling technique with the assumption that both the schools had many similar characteristics. Data were collected by using a mixed-method technique via self-developed interview protocol and self-developed questionnaire. Both types of data were arranged, coded, entered into the computer to be analyzed. The quantitative data were analyzed by applying inferential statistics with the help of SPSS (version 20) and qualitative data were analyzed by thematic analysis with the help of NVIVO (version 12) software. The result of the present research shows that the causes of high-performing schools' good performance are the head teacher's vision, leadership style, interpersonal relationship, instructional techniques of the head, and heads' innovative mechanism of management style. From the teachers' side, proper use of teachers' pedagogical and classroom management techniques, teachers' motivational techniques, assessment criteria, techniques of record-keeping, and teachers' relationship with the students and their parents were key factors. From the students' side, the causes of high performing school are creating students' interest, school and classroom environment, teachers' behavior, teachers' triangulation with the students, and parents, and coaching system. The findings showed that the causes of low-performing schools' substandard performance were the lack of or misuse of all the above-mentioned factors and the most common factor was found to be vague administrative observation and supervision.

Key Words: Causes of Secondary School Performance, High performing School, Low performing School, Public Sector School

Introduction

Institutional performance has always been a matter of great importance. Ranking of the institutions is done on its basis; it gives a good or bad reputation to an institution. It is a national level issue of great value, if not the greatest and that is why, huge amount of money is spent on the policies to improve it. An important review of the education sector was carried out in the analysis of educational policy by the Government of Punjab. For the development and empowerment of people, education is essential and plays an important role. No-one can deny the importance of education especially in the context of playing a role in people's progress and avoiding any form of destitution or poverty in the future. For the progress for any country in the field of economic development, the development of the socio-economic status of the people, or making holistic progress is significant and education becomes a prerequisite of policy initiative regarding it (Malik, 2011).

Program Monitoring & Implementing Unit (PMIU) and all its attached departments are making great efforts to develop and implement the Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP). All this is to check and improve the institutions' performances. Among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) regarding eliminating hunger and poverty from the world, and the achievement of universal primary education is directly or indirectly, related to education (Cates, 2010).

However, with the extension of MDGs in form of 17 SDGs, majority SDGs are based on and related to the institutions' performances and the duties which these are performing to play their role to eradicate poverty, achieve the target of zero hunger, economic development, good health, sanitation, clean water, well-being, healthy work, and all above are based on the quality of education being rendered in the country (Sheikh, 2016).

The development of a country depends on the quality of education it imparts to its individuals; it is the most valuable legacy that a nation can endow its citizens with. It provides its individuals a chance to grow, develop, earn better, and contribute to their homeland positively in return (Lipton, 1977). The development of human resources can be a trustworthy element for poverty reduction other than its direct contribution to increasing knowledge, skill development, and critical thinking. The better the institutions, the better all these things have been. (Bebbington, 1999).

Students' grades and aspirations have a direct or indirect effect on the performance of the institutions. For the academic institutions or community, the major problematic challenges are students' poor performance that has widespread consequences for the development of any nation. The non-conductive and non-accommodating school environment becomes the cause of the poor performance of many students. (Osaikhiuwu, 2014).

An institution's performance is mainly measured by examinations, which are considered an integral part of the educational system. It provides ground to judge the students' ability that leads to the institutional performance. Most of the students do not perform well in final examinations in many countries around the world and it is directly attributed to the students, teachers, or the institution. In this research, institutional performance is analyzed based on certain criteria, monthly 14 Indicators by PMIU that are also there to evaluate the monthly performance of the secondary schools and yearly performance is tested via BISE results (Geuna & Martin, 2003).

The success of a plan or the performance of the workers depends on the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed, between the leaders and the followers. If there is harmony and transparency, the performance would be good otherwise on the contrary. The same is the problem which the researcher is going to investigate, by adopting the design of multiple case studies consisting of the two schools which showed different performance levels despite being in the same big city. Differences of thought, vision, attitude, and dealings of the heads of the institutions may create a difference in the performance of the institutions (Townsend, 2010).

Investigation of the causes of institutional performance is not a haphazard task; it has always been planned and thought over. Improvements have also been made with the consultation of the stakeholders and policymakers to set certain professional standards for education. It was realized at the very beginning of the creation of Pakistan that the task of nation-building would not be achieved without educated personnel. Due to unskilled and illiterate manpower, the mission of apt nation-building has not been achieved in Pakistan. Soon after the recognition of this precious information, a National Education Conference was held in

the same year in which achievement of universalization of primary education within 20 years was recommended. Since then, the foremost objective of every government has been the achievement of universal primary education. Universal Primary Education (UPE) leads to the objective of Universal Secondary Education (USE), and it is the most burning issue in the department of education even these days. Although from then to today, numerous schemes and projects have been launched for the provision of new facilities and the creation of new infrastructure by spending considerable resources for the achievement of UPE and USE yet the intended results either quantitatively or qualitatively could not be achieved (Ghai & Vivian, 2014).

It is the foremost desire of the Pakistani government to achieve quality education which depends upon the educational quality of teachers. In February 2009, the Policy and Planning Wing of the Education Ministry of the Pakistani government had developed National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) with the financial support of USAID and by the technical support of UNESCO to enhance teachers' performance and quality of education. Educational Professional Standards 2018 issued by the Government of Punjab is also an effort in the same connection. Nowadays, a meeting is being planned to refresh and update these standards in the Chairmanship of Special Secretary Operations, School Education Department, and Punjab. National Professional Standards for Teachers is not something static rather it is very much dynamic and evolving. That is why, these are modified and improved with time and with the changing conditions. Great efforts have been made by the government as well as by the administrations to have good results, as the survival and promotion of the teachers depend on desired performance based on 'Monthly 14 Indicators' and the BISE results. At least, these should be above board as the conditions at most of the places are not as good as these should be. It may be due to the students' deficiencies or those of teachers or some other factors that most of the secondary schools' performances are not up to the mark. Therefore, the researcher tried, through the case studies, to bring to light the causes which affect the institutional performance and play a role in achieving or abstaining from their targets (Blanchard, 2013).

The researcher planned to cover the secondary school level as it plays a pivotal role in the lives of the young students for the development of their academic, social, mental, and disciplinary abilities. Heads of the high, as well as the low-performing institutions, staff members, students, parents, school, and the society, all are important in this connection. To know what makes the difference, case studies have been conducted to explore the causes of the performance of the two institutions out of which one has been the high achiever and the other is the low achiever. Some of the major causes were deeply analyzed to see the difference and this difference drew a vivid line between the high and low-performing institutions. In future, this will help all those who want to excel in the field of education. Policymakers, researchers, and future leaders will get benefitted from it while seeking appropriate measures to improve institutional performance.

Statement of the Problem

Investigation of the Causes of High Performing and Low Performing Secondary School of Public Sector: Multiple Case Studies

Research Objectives

To explore the perceptions of stakeholders (heads, teachers, students) about the causes which affect the performance of both secondary schools

Research Questions

- What are the causes which influence the institutional performance at the secondary school level in the perception of the school head?
- What are the causes which influence the institutional performance at the secondary school level according to teachers' viewpoint?
- What are the causes which influence the institutional performance at the secondary school level in the lens of students?

Research Methodology

It was qualitative research based on a case study design. The sample comprised of 2 head teachers, 16 secondary school teachers, and 575 students of the 10th class of the 2 secondary schools who were selected by applying the purposive sampling technique. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol for head teachers, a focused group discussion for secondary school teachers, and a self-developed questionnaire for students, both research tools were validated by experts and the research committee. After making some changes according to the observation of the research committee and experts, these were administered to the respondents for final data collection. Data were collected from multiple sources, e.g., administrative observation, documents, schools' records, and head teachers, teachers, and students. Data was collected by using a mixed-method technique via self-developed interview protocol and self-developed questionnaire with the application of the cross-sectional technique.

Data analysis

All these data were arranged, coded, entered into the computer for analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed by applying inferential statistics with the help of SPSS (version 20) and qualitative data were analyzed by thematic analysis with the help of NVIVO (version 12) software.

Results

The Difference in the Perception of Stakeholders (Head teachers and Teachers) about the Causes which affect the Performance of Low Performing and High Performing Secondary Schools

The following table (Table No.1) illustrates that the computed t-value (-.846) is less than the table (4.015 at 16 df) and computed sig-value (0.000) which is less than the p-value (0.05) for administrative causes and the computed t-value (-1.6471) is less than the table (4.015 at 16 df) and computed sig-value (0.008) which is less than the p-value (0.05) for school management causes. It illustrates that significant differences exist in the effective uses of administrative and school management-related factors between low-performing and high-performing schools. It is concluded that high-performing schools use administrative factors and school management factors more effectively than low-performing schools.

Table No.1:

Independent sample t-test for analysis to find difference in the perception of stakeholders about the causes which affect performance of low performing and high performing secondary schools

Factors		Types of Schools	Mean	Std. D	T	df	Sig
Administrative Factors		Low	13.56	3.56	-.846	16	.000
		High	23.89	3.28			
School Factors	Management-related	Low	9.35	2.94	-1.647	16	.008
		High	17.95	1.71			

The Difference in the Perception of Stakeholders (Head teachers and teachers) about the Utilization of Administrative Factors by Low Performing and High Performing Secondary Schools

The following table (Table No.2) illustrates that the computed t-values range (-.891 to -2.461) is less than the table (4.015 at 16 df) and computed sig-values range (0.000-.026) which are less than the p-value (0.05) for school administrative factors e.g., visit of MEA/AEO, provision of funds, checking records by visitors, solution of the school issues, and administering LND tests. It illustrates that significant differences exist in the effective use of school administrative factors between low-performing and high-performing schools. It is concluded that high-performing schools utilize more administrative factors (visits of MEA/AEO, provision of funds, checking records by visitors, solution of the school issues, and administering LND tests) to enhance their school performance than the low performing school.

Table No.2:

Independent sample t-test for analysis to find difference in the perception of stakeholders about the utilization of administrative factors by low performing and high performing secondary schools

Admin Factors	Types of Schools	Mean	Std. D	T	Df	Sig
Visiting of MEA/AEO	Low	6.60	.76	-1.846	16	.000
	High	12.53	.98			
Provision Funds	Low	7.67	1.32	-.974	16	.026
	High	11.91	1.00			
Checking School Record	Low	10.54	.86	-.891	16	.010
	High	16.21	.89			
Solution of School Issus	Low	9.59	.94	-1.746	16	.004
	High	14.36	.70			
Administering LND Test	Low	9.37	1.56	-2.461	16	.002
	High	15.94	.89			

The Difference in the Perception of Stakeholders (Head teachers and teachers) about the Utilization of School Management Related Factors by Low Performing and High Performing Secondary Schools

The following table (Table No.3) illustrates that the computed t-values range (-.886 to -3.169) is less than the table (4.015 at 16 df) and computed sig-values range (0.000-.06)

which are less than the p-value (0.05) for school management related factors e.g., record-keeping, checking attendance registers, school facilities, arrangement of meetings, observational techniques, interpersonal skills, utilization of funds, and mobilization of SC. It shows that significant differences exist in the effective utilization of school management-related factors between low-performing and high-performing schools. It is concluded that high-performing schools utilize more school management-related factors (record-keeping, checking attendance registers, school facilities, arrangement of meetings, observational techniques, interpersonal skills, utilization of funds, and mobilization of SC) to increase their school performance than the low performing school.

Table No.3:

Independent sample t-test for analysis to find difference in the perception of stakeholders about the utilization of school management related factors by low performing and high performing secondary schools

School Management Related Factors	Types of Schools	Mean	Std. D	T	df	Sig
Record Keeping	Low	9.16	2.63	-3.169	16	.010
	High	16.11	1.21			
Checking Registers	Low	10.89	0.93	-.972	16	.000
	High	14.56	0.71			
Provision School Facilities	Low	16.11	1.98	-1.636	16	.020
	High	21.80	2.21			
Arranging Meetings	Low	6.98	2.94	-2.736	16	.030
	High	12.25	1.61			
Observational Techniques	Low	13.78	2.60	-.886	16	.001
	High	19.10	1.21			
Interpersonal Relationship	Low	9.56	.86	-2.149	16	.002
	High	16.68	.91			
Uses of Funds	Low	11.21	1.94	-1.197	16	.004
	High	17.90	1.17			
Administering Diagnostic Test (LND etc.)	Low	14.56	2.56	-.916	16	.000
	High	25.92	1.98			
Mobilization of SC	Low	9.56	.90	-2.671	16	.000
	High	15.90	.97			

Results from the Thematic Analysis

Leadership Factors for Performance

Qualitative data were collected through conducting face-to-face interviews and focused group discussions. Interviews were conducted in-depth. After analysis, two types of causes were found. The first causes were school administration-related factors, and the other causes were school management-related factors. School management-related factors, school leadership were quite different. A clear school vision was observed in school No 1 different leadership styles were observed which are being considered for successful management. Distributed leadership shared vision, interpersonal relationship in shared instructional leadership, and shared instructional leadership integrated with transformational leadership were the key factors that paved path to success. The principal of high performing was equipped with an innovative mechanism of management style as she managed the school infrastructures and environment quite effectively. She used multiple techniques to achieve the goals of the 'pre-determined school vision'. It was clear that leadership of high performing does not compromise with classical techniques, rather she adopted Weber thought of leadership and the school's mission was put at the top dimension which helps to establish common overall goals and provided directions for school's improvement. Academic performances were 100% from the last five years. During a detailed interview with the leader of school 1, the versatile personality was exhibited as she made the profile of old students of high performance and invited them when teachers were on leave. Thus, she filled the gap by calling brilliant old students to work in such way that there was never a deficiency of teachers in the school to support the students to be regular. She developed and maintained interpersonal relationships with not only teachers and students but also with educated parents. Educated parents support teachers in the classroom and it is a progressive technique taken up by the leader of the high-achieving organization. There were registers with regular entries of school committee members. Leader of high-performing institution uses school budget with the active involvement of school committee. High-performing school is also known for its co-curricular activities and overall school environment; all this was due to magnetic and intelligent personality of the leader and training rendered by her. The work of a player starts from the grass-root level. Three regions- district, middle, and local are well-known semi-autonomous levels for the topmost level (policymakers). At the institutional level, operative leaders must be very active to make things standard. Those institutions commonly perform better which are a member of other network systems and represent themselves as a part of larger structures whichever state or districts or both contributing to the bigger picture and benefitting from it. Systems do not progress unless leaders at all levels are involved in system development as the researcher has demonstrated that the leader of high school 1 utilized her casual leaves and otherwise remained there to motivate teachers, students, and parents, as well as the non-teaching staff members. She takes interest in all activities of the school. When asked research questions during the interview, she quickly responded without taking the support of teachers or any staff members.

On the other way, the situation was extremely bad in school 2 i.e., low performing. Leader of low performing responded that infrastructure was not good and performance in results of last 5 years was below the board. She explained so many issues of not only teaching staff but also of non-teaching staff which showed her poor management skills or performance. The furniture present was not sufficient for the number of students enrolled and the water supply was also not regular. There was a lack of collaboration and teamwork in school No 2.

Parent-teacher meetings were rarely arranged in the low-performing school. This shows poor interpersonal relationships with the community even though community and parental support can fill some of the flaws of an educational organization and provide sustainable support for management activities.

Teacher Factors

The findings of data showed teachers' performance varied considerably whereas teachers of both high and low-performing school were equally qualified and experienced. Teacher performance was affected by the leadership capabilities. Teachers were motivated by the leader of high performing school, providing them positive feedback whereas it was questionable in low performing school. There were incentives and strategies adopted by the leader of a high-performing school and at the same time, strict administrative observations were adopted to keep teachers active in classrooms and regulate the behavior of the students. However, in the low-performing school, vague and general sentences were used for teachers by the head, like "Teachers should take care of their duties, I cannot observe their actual context due to a lot of engagements in administrative work. Teachers should be afraid by Allah/" which depicted poor command on teaching and learning activities.

Due to the good experience of the teachers in high-performing schools, they became skillful members of the institution who are ready to face challenges of emerging and thought-provoking academic standards.

Conclusion and Discussion

The present research aimed to investigate the causes of high performing and low performing secondary schools of the public sector. So, the conclusion was drawn from the findings which arrived from the analysis. It is concluded that there are lots of causes of high performing and low performing secondary schools of the public sector. The recognized causes were categorized into two factors, administrative factors, and school management-related factors. Both schools were utilizing these factors differently. The management of the high-performing school was keeping a proper record of their school and fully organized school enrollment campaigns to increase their school enrolment and mobilize the school council to sustain their enrollment. The head of high-performing schools was very active and set a vision shared with the team. She checks their student's performance and teachers' registers, and even non-teaching staff register routinely, at least thrice a month. The head of high performing school properly maintained school i.e., all students and teachers-related facilities were available over there. School fully secured by a colorfully painted boundary wall with functional and clean water facility, functional toilets. All academic facilities such as functional labs, airy rooms with accessible whiteboards were provided in a high-performing school. The head teacher of a high-performing school visited classes when classes were in session to ensure that outstanding teaching and learning process was being conducted. She also organized need-base teacher meetings to resolve academic issues of teachers and students and encouraged the school council to find solutions for school-related issues. Visitors are encouraged visit high-performing school and share positive and lacking points with the head teacher and teachers also and their issues are resolved immediately. The head teachers of high-performing school were more active regarding the provision of quality education by conducting and preparing students for LND tests and regularly uploaded all updates regarding school. Head teachers of high-performing schools were found to be more vigilant in utilizing NSB for the betterment of school, staff, and students.

According to the students, there was a misuse of financial and human resources in low-performing school and there are no proper coaching and rewarding systems over here. Neither check and balance system exist in low performing school nor school leaders had the quality to conduct a meeting to resolve school and teachers, and students-related issues or try to resolve via administrative department but high performing school's headmaster performed these actions quickly and actively. It was also found that administrative and school management-related factors were not properly being used or were being misused in the low-performing school due to school's weak leadership.

The thematic analysis showed that the leader of the high-performing institution uses school budget with the active involvement of school committee. This school is known for its co-curricular activities and overall school environment; all this is due to magnetic and intelligent personality and vision of the leader. The results of this study provided a clear picture that teachers of low-performing schools were not less in qualification and experience, but they had no opportunity to work under a leader with apt management styles. Teachers at both schools also practiced in different students' backgrounds; the socioeconomic statuses of students at School No. 2 were less supportive as compared to School No.1. The teachers repeatedly complained about the problem with the retention of students during the whole academic year. The health of students has also affected the teachers' performance as they mostly remained absent and did not attend the school classes. Based on research findings, it is recommended that head teachers of poor-performing schools should update their knowledge regarding developing leadership skills. He/she should also frequently conduct teachers' meetings to resolve their academic problems. The administrative department should also keep a proper check and balanced to improve the performance of the poor-performing school. The administrative department should also resolve issues on top priority bases of the poor-performing schools. There should be a rewarding system by the administrative department generally for the good performers, especially for teachers at the poor performing school to motivate them if they show improvement in results. Head teachers of low-performing school should mobilize the school council to resolve teachers' and students' issues.

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