



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#. 6597-6618

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22160870>



Role of District Education Officers in Effective Functioning Of The Government Secondary Schools in District Shikarpur

Namatullah Chandio*

Lecturer in Education at Sindh Muslim Govt. Arts & Commerce College No.1, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

Email: nematchandio@gmail.com

Oojala Tasneem

High School Teacher at Government Girls High School Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan

Email: oojala.danish@gmail.com

Rida Zohra Balal

High School Teacher at Government Girls High School Makli District Thatta, Sindh, Pakistan

Email: rida14tl39@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author: Namatullah Chandio

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the pivotal role of District Education Officers (DEOs) in the effective functioning of the schools under their jurisdiction. Education system in the province of Sindh relies on the DEOs who act as an intermediate between schools and higher management of the department, and are assigned the duties of implementing policies and curriculum, providing facilities and guidance, and ensuring effective functioning of the schools as per the best standards. Upon a comprehensive literature review and observed evidence, this research explores multifaceted responsibilities of DEOs and challenges and factors they face, and their impact on the effective functioning of the schools. The research was exploratory by using approach of thematic analysis for which the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The population chosen was the teaching, school heads and administrative officers of government secondary schools, SELD district Shikarpur comprising of all Talukas. 05 education officers, 04 headmasters/principals and 16 teachers from district Shikarpur were chosen purposively. Data analysis shows that several factors contribute to ineffective school management, including budget constraints, political interference, and limited authority. Political influence is a major issue, with political parties and affiliated individuals controlling transfer posting, school funds, new school openings, and appointments of education officer. This leads to unqualified appointments, poor management, low staff morale, and subpar education. The study emphasizes the need to reduce political influence, appoint

meritorious education officers and equip them with the managerial qualifications and skills to manage schools effectively for effective functioning of the public schools.

Keywords: Effective Functioning, Secondary Schools, Education Officer, Factors,

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the backbone of any society and its economy. Education provides man force, boosts industry and brings in positive changes in the social and economic spheres of the society. It is proven across the globe that the quality education is responsible for producing quality of economy and improves quality of individuals (Astakhova et al., 2016). The effective management and administration of schools have remained a very crucial, and therefore has remained a question for its targeted achievement due to several internal and external elements (Bellei, 2020).

Although it has been observed empirically that the school leaders are crucial role player in the provision of quality education and developing and maintaining the nature and quality of pupils' learning experience, but they are always strongly influenced by the circumstances in which they work. The education quality is directly proportional to the effective administration and management.

After the 18th amendment, the devolution of authorities and devolution of power at the district level have further enhanced the role of District Officers in education. He/she has to perform variety of functions including general administration of the district, Monitoring and evaluation, planning and development, quality assurance, co-curricular activities, financial management, procurement and community involvement are some of the key roles that the District Officers in education play (SELD, Job Description of District Education Officer, 2017).

As per a report, 75% of schools' management of the surveyed schools did not provide any learning material to the children. Under ages 5 to 16 years, average 26% students could read sentences in Urdu/Sindhi, English words and were able to do subtraction sums (ASER Pakistan 2021). Out of 40,000 schools, 10,073 schools were permanently closed and 1,943 schools were temporarily closed making it 12,000 non-viable schools in Sindh (Directorate General Monitoring and Evaluation, 2021). Among the functional schools, average of 49% schools have basic facility of drinking water, electricity, toilets and boundary walls (Profiling for Government Schools 2019-20). The survival rate among male and female students in government schools of Sindh reaches 32% at secondary level (Pakistan Education Statistics 2017-2018).

The data insights show gloomy picture of viability and productivity of the schools in Sindh and require study to investigate the role of education officers and identify key areas that affect both the functioning of the schools and role of education officers in this regard.

Although there is a plethora of research available on the role and responsibilities of education officers locally and globally yet the data available on the condition of schools and their effectiveness, day to day changing demands of educational management and new targets set by the international and national educational organizations necessitated the new study to be carried out to find out the factors affecting the school effectiveness in relation to the district education management. The insights are useful in gaining first-hand knowledge on the role of education officers and effective functioning in the result of their role.

The study also examined the factors that contribute in challenges and opportunities caused by the factors that affect this role in attaining the effectiveness of the secondary schools of the district under study.

1.1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In Sindh, during 2020-21, 47,551 schools were monitored, revealing: 33,348 functional schools, 12,000 non-viable schools (permanently or temporarily closed) and only 49% of functional schools had basic facilities like water, electricity, toilets, and boundary walls.

This highlights the crucial role of District Education Officers in ensuring quality education and effective school functioning, which is the focus of this investigation in Shikarpur District. During the data collection phase from the selected population, the community appeared to be one of the important factors that contributes in the effective schools.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role of District Education Officers in effective functioning of schools in secondary education in district Shikarpur
2. To investigate the elements which affect the role of district education officers with relation to the effective functioning of schools

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of district education officers in the effective functioning of the schools?
2. What are factors that affect the role of district education officers in the effective functioning of schools?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research provides comprehensive empirical insights from the point of district education officers and delivers valuable insights in understanding the internal and external factors influencing the performance of DEOs. By identifying the factors that contribute to the effective or ineffective functioning of schools, the study can help DEOs and other education stakeholders take target-oriented actions to improve school management and overall educational outcomes. This ensures that schools receive the necessary support to improve teaching and learning environments. The findings of the study highlight areas of additional qualifications and professional training for EOs, thereby enhancing their ability to support schools and bring improvements. The study promotes collaboration among various stakeholders such as top management in the education department, DEOs, school heads, and teachers. Although the study focuses on Shikarpur District, the findings can be inferred to other districts with slight variations. Overall, the study is significant as it sheds light on the pivotal role of DEOs in managing and supporting secondary schools, offering data-driven insights that can enhance educational quality and equity across districts.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is restricted to the role of district education officers in the effective functioning of the secondary schools of district Shikarpur. The study has focused on the discernments of District Education Officer, Deputy District Education Officer, Assistant Education Officers and Taluka Education Officers in the effective functioning of the secondary schools in district Shikarpur. The research also investigated the role of education officers by analyzing the perceptions of Head masters/Principals and Teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In his research Tony Bush suggests that good education leaders need to know what education is for. Education leaders plan, organize, and use resources like people, materials, and money to help students achieve their goals and have a good learning experience (Bush, 2020).

According to a research, handling of several other school dimensions such, provision of congenial atmosphere, safe and secure atmosphere, maintaining effective relationships with stakeholders are an inevitable tool for quality education can be provided (Ali et al., 2019). There are numerous problems that the education officers face. These problems range from personal management and administration, centralized ministry structures that may result in ineffective working of systems in terms of human resource management (Rani et al., 2019).

In order to improve efficiency of the education system, the key issues in the productivity and in the provision of the public service are the management and governance. This configuration is prone to bureaucratic inefficiencies, ineffective resource allocation, and poor personnel management, which can hinder the successful implementation of policies (Yusoff et al., 2018).

Anjum et al., (2019) reveals that in an educational setting, while exercising their powers, the District Education Officers face mounting pressure. The agenda behind the creation of the pressure is transfer posting, somehow recruitment, allocation, utilization and accountability of funds, mostly on the decision making and on the disciplinary action being taken against the staff. This mounting pressure on the district education officers is associated with MPAs, representative of local government, community, and colleagues and sometimes from their families (Anjum et al., 2019).

Marzano (2012) is the one who has designed one of the latest models of school success. In his theory, he postulates that the effective schools are the ones which maintain a safe and conducive environment, implements effective framework of instructions and curriculum, is regularly monitoring and reporting student progress. Successful schools leverage data analysis and interpretation to frequently assess their progress, identify areas for improvement, and make data-informed decisions that propel them towards achieving their goals (Marzano et al., 2012).

After the 18th amendment, the education subject moved to the province of Sindh and the devolution of powers have further asked for the role of officers at district level. The District Officers in education then execute the policy and plan among the schools. In doing so, the District Education Officers in education are not free and have limited authority who in the return cannot realize their confidence when they make administrative decisions (Yusoff et al., 2018).

In the views of Catin and Karsantik (2022), Effective education plans are crucial for sustainable school growth. To achieve this, school leaders must play a key role in managing and improving organizational dynamics through effective decision-making processes, and by fostering a culture of learning and teaching excellence (Catin & Karsantik, 2022).

The education managers at certain level (Taluka/District) use planning to design curricula, set academic goals, allocate resources, and create schedules for classes, exams, and extracurricular activities (Mukherji et al., 2022). In order to gain fruitful results and effective administration of schools, Henri Fayol's principles of management theory can be applied in educational settings such as schools to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. (Hyata et al., 2023).

Weber's ideas on management revolve around the concept of bureaucracy, which he viewed as the most efficient form of organization for achieving organizational goals (Byrkjeflot, 2018). This approach helps organizations run smoothly and fairly, without being influenced by personal opinions or emotions (Sager & Rosser., 2021). As Heckscher further explains, the education officers can divide major tasks in to smaller achievable targets as EOs in case of education setup, who can fulfill the tasks on time (Heckscher, 2021). Modern organizations require a mixture of managerial expertise and leadership vision to overcome challenges. Managers bring objectivity and analysis, while leaders inspire and motivate with their vision and commitment. When combined, these strengths enable organizations to achieve their goals and succeed (Bush, 2020).

The available data provide potential malfunctioning of the secondary schools across Sindh including district Shikarpur. During the Academic year 2020-21, the permanent and temporary closure of 10,073 and 1,943 schools respectively shows weakness and inefficiency of the management at the district and division level. Among the functional schools, average of 49% schools have basic facility of drinking water, electricity, toilets and boundary walls (Profiling for Government Schools 2019-20). Out of 4,515 absconders and 8,198 habitual absentees identified by Directorate of monitoring and evaluation with the overall percentage of departmental proceedings concluded by the DEOs remained 38% (Directorate General Monitoring and Evaluation, 2021). In this report, there is no significant data that indicate the role of district education officers in the matters pertaining to the functioning of the schools.

In 2021, a report published by UNESCO on the education in a post-COVID world highlights the global challenges faced by education systems during the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasizes the need for effective leadership and crisis management at all levels, including district-level administration (UNESCO, 2020). This report emphasizes on the educational management at the district level but yet doesn't provide comprehensive insights on how the district education officers could alter the system of education in the times of crisis.

Iqbal Ahmed et. al, (2014) discusses various possible solutions to the problems in education management and quality of education. From financial management to professional development, the recommendations present significant solutions to the issues (Ahmed. et al., 2014). Iffat Ara Hussain and Nawab Gul, (2020) have deeply studied the factors affecting the coordination between district educational management and provincial educational administration in Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa in which the researchers highlighted the element of political interference in the day-to-day affairs of the educational setup in the province (Azeem. et al., 2020).

There's a general perception that private schools offer superior education compared to public schools, largely due to advantages such as Adequate staffing with competitive salaries, sufficient funding and budgetary support for development plans. However, a key concern is that public schools often lack effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, highlighting the need for improved oversight and checks and balances (Awan, 2015).

Another research focused on the managerial skills of district education officers in which the insights remarkably radiated the insights related to the lack of professional development programmes. There are no programmes for the professional development programmes which create hustle and bustle in managing

office matters and communication systems from district to upper or district to lower level of management (Din. et al., 2023).

The existing literature highlights the challenges faced by the education sector, including school closures, inadequate facilities, and absenteeism. Despite the emphasis on effective leadership and crisis management, the role of district education officers remains unclear. A significant research gap exists in understanding the impact of district education officers on school functioning, particularly in terms of their leadership, management, and accountability. Further research is needed to explore the factors influencing the effectiveness of district education officers, including their training, professional development, political interference and relationships with provincial and local authorities.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

POSDCORB framework explains that planning is the process of making a clever decision about the resolve of a task, and this process of decision making is highly monitored and supported with feedback, and is used here as the framework of this study to investigate the management of EOs at district level including Talukas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative research in order to explore the perceptions and experiences of the district education officers, school heads and teachers about the role of education officers in the effectiveness of the secondary schools because the qualitative methods are specifically designed to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues (Mills & Gay, 2019).

3.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Since the research was qualitative and therefore, this research collected participants' views, which were transcribed into text and later analyzed to bring new insights that represent the meaning of the experience under investigation (Bolderston, 2012). The research was carried out using semi-structured interviews which are generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intend to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & David, 2018). Magaldi and Berler (2020) explain that the semi-structured interview is referred as a guide of questions to collect relevant data and it primarily directed towards the main topic that provides a general pattern.

3.2 POPULATION

The population of district education officers, heads/principals and teachers at secondary level in District Shikarpur is given below.

Table 1: Population of education officers, heads/principals and teachers at secondary level

S. No	Designation	Number
1	Education Officers (General)	13
2	Heads/Principals	64
3	Teachers	2,368

(Directorate General Monitoring and Evaluation, 2021)

3.3 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

For this study, the purposive technique of sampling was used because purposive sampling. The following size of the sample has been listed in a broader context of the saturation in data collection when

no additional issues or insights are identified by the researcher and data began to repeat signifying that an adequate sample size is reached. The education officers, school heads and teachers were selected from within the secondary level of the district of Shikarpur (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Table 2: Sample for the study

S. No	Designation	Number
1	Education Officers (General)	05
2	Heads/Principals	05
3	Teachers	16

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The research was carried out using in-depth semi-structured interviews which are open-ended questions. There were three different types of interview protocols for three distinct groups of participants (teachers, headmasters/principals and education officers respectively) on the following areas: For the teachers, there were seven (07) items in the interview protocol, the interview protocol for headmasters/principals contained eight (08) items, whereas that of the district education officers, the interview protocol comprised of ten (10) items.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Since the data was qualitative collected through semi-structured interviews, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set; it often leads to new insights and understanding (Naeem et al., 2023).

Step 1: Interviews were recorded, stored safely, and important points were noted and added during transcription.

Step 2: The researcher read the transcripts carefully to understand the data, identify important ideas, patterns, and quotations.

Step 3: The data were coded by assigning words or phrases to important parts of the participants' responses.

Step 4: Similar codes were grouped together to identify patterns and develop major themes related to the research questions.

Step 5: The themes were given clear names and divided into sub-themes to organize and explain the findings.

Table 3**Example of Themes and Sub-themes**

Objective 1: To identify the role of District Officers in education in effective functioning of schools in secondary education in Shikarpur	
Interview protocols from teachers and head teachers/principals	
Themes	Sub-themes
Functioning of schools	Education officers rarely visit the schools for the purpose of effective functioning.
Community	They face law and order situation.

Step 6: In this step, the themes and descriptions were developed from the data that conveys multiple perspectives from the participants. (Braun & Clarke, 2006), (Creswell & David, 2018). In the report of this study (See Report Section), the researcher has argued the patterns or themes supported with the data extracts to present the prevalence of that themes and have chosen particular examples the essence of the point he is demonstrating. The extracts are embedded with the narrative that is related with the research question and objectives of the study.

4.2 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure the study's results were both accurate and trustworthy, the researcher used Triangulation, which involved interviewing three different groups—teachers, school heads, and education officers—to get a complete picture of school management from multiple angles (Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the researcher's own background as a former education employee and two months spent conducting in-depth field interviews helped provide a deep, authentic understanding of the local school system in Shikarpur.

To test the reliability and consistency of the study, the researcher used a “test-retest” method, interviewing 20% of the participants a second time after several months to ensure their answers remain stable (Creswell and David, 2018). Finally, to prevent personal bias, the researcher strictly followed a scientific six-step analysis process and recorded all interviews word-for-word, ensuring the final report was biased entirely on participants' actual experiences rather than researcher's own opinion (Arslan, 2022).

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS – ALIGNED WITH RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

4.3.1 OBJECTIVE 1

To identify the role of District Education Officers in effective functioning of the schools in secondary education in district Shikarpur

Theme: Functioning of Schools

In summary to this section about the perceptions of teachers, school heads and EOs, the researcher concludes that the main role in EFS comes from school heads (HM/PR) who are responsible teamwork, expertise management, implementation of teaching method and assessment and maintain and control on the attendance inside the school. Furthermore, it is the school heads who correspond with EOs for financial, physical and academic facilities. The evidence presented above suggests that this EFS can be achieved when EOs perform effective and regular monitoring and supervision of the schools falling under their jurisdiction. The evidence also submits that the teachers and principals perceive the role of EOs is not being played as it should be.

Theme: Facilities

At the recapitulation, the researcher finds that the views of EOs and school heads provide sufficient evidence that EOs do not have their own budget for provision of any facility and learning material. The EOs play role in verification of constitution of the school management committee and bank details of the schools for the smooth transaction of the funds, and supervise and audit the use of these funds inside the schools. Their statements provide indication that these funds are short and are mostly used in renovation work, purchase of furniture and in the salaries of privately hired janitorial staff whose sanctioned posts are not filled by the government. The data also indicate that many schools in district Shikarpur, the aforementioned funds are not released due to which there is direct effect on the functioning of the schools.

Theme: Communication

In the summary, the above-mentioned statements present evidence of communication and coordination of EOs not only with their subordinates and superiors but also with the officials of other departments in order to implement an intervention or conduct exam or survey. But the most important element is the use of time, energy and human resources of the education department to perform the duties and tasks of other departments which causes serious impact on the performance of the education officers, school heads and teachers and cast a negative effect on the overall performance of the school. The statements of HM1 are clear proof that the EOs have turned to be “just data collectors” under compulsion and do not focus on the quality of education and overall school functioning. The compulsion refers to the orders of the higher authority or “command” inevitably to be obliged at any cost due to this engagement and graveness of the situation, the EOs divert their all energy, efforts and human resources to achieve the new goals, and in this way the routine supervision and monitoring of quality of education and EFS stay neglected.

Theme: Supervision

In the summary of this section, the researcher concludes that the supervision and monitoring of the schools, staff and teaching and learning process is highly demanding and sheds positive impressions on the EFS. He achieves that there are two simultaneous but counter-perspectives related to the monitoring and supervision of the secondary schools by EOs. One perspective is evident from the statements of EOs which shows a bright side of their role in the monitoring and evaluation process and the other side presents a gloomy picture-rather a dark side of the role of EOs in the same process. There is enough evidence that the school heads and teachers regard annual inspection and visits of the schools

by EO not significant and effective but is just a formality and neither of the key areas as mentioned above from the JD and recent notification issued by SELD are taken under consideration and no attention to the quality of education and school buildings is paid by EOs.

Theme: Staffing

To summarize this section, it is concluded from the excerpts that the powers of DEOs are limited and the authority in this regard is affected and compromised at political and union pressures used by teaching and non-teaching staff. The STR ratio is not followed and teachers and school heads use various sources including money to get posted at a nearby school in the city or their town. As a result, some schools get far a greater number of teachers than STR and others get very few or even no teachers. Consequently, those schools stop functioning effectively and are ultimately closed. The extracts also indicate lack of training for the staff which is essential for their professional grooming.

4.4 OBJECTIVE 2

To investigate the elements which affect the role of District Education Officers with relation to the effective functioning of schools.

Theme: Authority

In the summary of this section, it is concluded that there is evidence of the data that district education officers have limits in their due powers and authority in creating an effective and successful learning atmosphere in his jurisdiction. The data indicates that their routine official correspondence and handling of school matters are apparently affected by the political involvement whether from politicians or from unions. The researcher has also witnessed such involvement in his short service tenure which had been disturbing the smooth functioning of the school. The data also determined that there is shortage of budget for the school and the physical facilities such as renovation or construction works is managed by EWD meanwhile the EOs can just communicate the matter to the concerned authorities. These elements serve as few of the biggest factors that affect the role of EOs and EFS.

Theme: Budget

To summarize this section, it is concluded from the statements of the education officers, school heads and teachers that there are incomplete funds for the schools for routine functions and development programs carried out by EWD. It is also evident that there is element of corruption in the release and utilization of these funds and the corrupt practices and demand of share is linked with the district education office, treasury and EWD leading schools towards devastating situation. The data indicates that the limited SMC and Contingency funds are merely for carrying out regular school activities and repair of furniture, but are utilized in renovation and salary purposes. The incomplete and limited budget followed by corruption in various offices for its release becomes a challenging situation for EOs at Taluka level and district level to play their role in providing physical facilities, implementation of curriculum and assessment system and making schools function effectively.

Theme: Community

In the summary of this section, it is concluded that the perceptions of EOs, school heads and teachers evidently prove that the law-and-order situation, tribal clashes, unawareness and irresponsible attitude of the community are some of the elements that affect EFS and the role of EOs in the school matters. The data also indicate positive role of community where they joined hands in hands with EOs

and teachers for the EFS. From the comments above, it can also be concluded that the EFS in these areas also depends on the vision and position of EOs which they undertake with aim to make schools functional and efficient.

Theme: Interference

To summarize this section, the researcher concludes that the data extracts indicate that involvement politicians have so far greater intervention in the routine matters of the department at district level. The landlords and staff members having connections with politicians try to affect the role of EOs. The data reveal that the involvement of EWD officers in the planning and development works, CMO in the monitoring the attendance and engagement of school staff in other national cause are hurdles before the role of EOs and in front of the EFS. The excerpts of the participants claim that the schools have been shown closed in the data are because the elected members MPAs and MNAs influenced and got established those unnecessary and extra schools in the district for their personal and political gains. The data extracts give enough evidence of tribal clashes and law-and-order situation being one of the reasons of the non-viability of the schools.

Theme: Curriculum

In the summary, the evidence is achieved that there are fundamental issues with the curriculum implementation where the unavailability of the textbooks, and the length of the content of each course and incomprehensibility of the content along with race of completion of course without formal procedures of assessing the learners turned to be another drawback of generating well informed students. The absence of transparent examination system and cheating culture in the examination are two core hurdles before an EO to support congeniality throughout the district. The data extracts also submit proof that the weak foundation level from primary level and change of medium of instructions from Sindhi to English also count a remarkable hurdle in student academic achievement in particular and in the effective functioning of schools and monitoring and supervision of EOs in general.

Theme: Appointment

In the summary of this section, it is determined from the statements of the participants that the posts of EOs are not filled meritoriously and apparently contain involvement of political factors in the process of appointment. The extracts produce enough evidence of lack of due qualifications and trainings in the candidates who have been working as TEO or DEO in district Shikarpur. There are clear indications in the data extracts that the EOs appointed on these grounds neglecting merit and qualifications will cause damage to the true spirit and values of these administrative posts, and rather than serving for the quality of education, implementation of policies, curriculum in true sense and working for the EFS, these officers will serve the vested interests and as a result the number of dysfunctional and poorly functioning schools will increase in district Shikarpur.

5. FINDINGS

In the light of the gathered data, the following findings are drawn.

- The findings from participant statements indicate that achieving Effective Functioning of Schools (Effective Functioning of the Schools) depends on Educational Officers (Education Officers)

executing thorough and regular monitoring and supervision of schools within their jurisdiction, in collaboration with school heads.

- Evidence coming from the teachers and school heads suggests that Education Officers often neglect classroom observation, assessment, and extracurricular aspects crucial for school effectiveness. Education Officers are portrayed as primarily engaged in bureaucratic tasks, sidelining their responsibility for ensuring effective school functioning.
- Bureaucratic hurdles hinder effective communication and resolution of issues, including shortage of budget, and malpractices within administration. The involvement of Education Works Department (EWD) officers in school planning and development is viewed as disruptive, further complicating the role of Education Officers.
- Community factors such as social attitudes towards education, school properties and law-and-order issues also contribute to challenges in school functioning
- Shortages of human capital and resources, further hinder Education Officers' ability to maintain Effective Functioning of the Schools, leading to dysfunctional schools.
- Curriculum implementation issues, including textbook availability and examination integrity are additional hurdles to Education Officers striving for educational effectiveness.
- Political and union pressures further limit the authority of District Education Officers (DEOs), impacting decision-making processes and intensifying challenges in school management. Political interference, particularly in the appointment of education officers, further weakens the integrity and effectiveness of educational leadership.
- Evidence raises concerns regarding the meritocracy and qualifications of individuals appointed as Education Officers, suggesting a potential decline in the quality of education administration. The actions and effectiveness of Education Officers significantly influence the success of Effective Functioning of the Schools,
- There were found some potential biases of the respondents based on their personal or professional differences which led to extreme version of negative comments one another (i.e. teachers blamed education officers while EOs blamed teachers).

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the extensive findings from the research, the following conclusion has been drawn regarding the effective functioning of schools (EFS) in district Shikarpur:

The data analysis and findings suggest that the perceived ineffectiveness of education officers in the effective operation of secondary schools in the Shikarpur district can be attributed not to merely single factor but to multiple factors. These factors include budget limitations, political interference, limited authority, and challenges in curriculum implementation, law and order issues, community conflicts of interest and lack of certain qualifications and trainings in the educational framework of the Shikarpur district.

The political influence is observed throughout the data as leading factor, highlighting individuals affiliated with political and religious parties, as well as staff unions that are supported by large groups of people who affect the role of education officers in the day-to-day affairs of the schools. The data suggest that the appointment process of education officers which appears to be heavily influenced by political

dynamics. The politically affiliated individuals are appointed on these posts who are not meritorious and lack the due managerial skills, individual capacities and visionary approach which impact the efficiency of secondary schools in the district, therefore, presents gloomy data in the literacy and functionality of the education system district Shikarpur.

The insights delve into the deficiency of eligibility and qualifications of the education officers appointed to run the affairs of education in the district, and as a result the EOs fail to maintain key performance indicators and the managerial framework mentioned in their own job description and as suggested in the POSDCORB framework. In spite of implementing the educational policies, standards and interventions, they take efforts to please the person behind their appointment and as a result the schools do not receive effective management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting and ultimately the schools suffer seriously.

7. WAY FORWARD

Number of researches in the other parts of the world exploring the role of EOs in EFS in several variables. In Pakistan, the researchers have constantly been finding the inadequate resources, unskilled workforce, outdated curricula, poor examination system and interference of various agencies as leading elements affecting the education system in the country.

The educationists across the globe stress on the independence and empowerment of the management from external and internal factors respectively for the effective functioning of the organizations. The independence and empowerment of organizational management are crucial for the effective functioning of any institution, including educational organizations. Autonomy in decision-making, leadership development, accountability and transparency, collaboration and stakeholder engagement, resource allocation and financial management and resistance to external and internal pressures are some of the key areas related with the education officers. By granting education managers and leaders the autonomy to make decisions and implement strategies that align with the institution's goals and values, educational organizations can thrive and deliver exceptional outcomes for all stakeholders.

The researches have produced potential and tested the rule of 'right person for right job' for the effective functioning of the educational organizations. The appointment of meritorious and capable individuals on the managerial posts is the fundamental key to the progress and effectiveness. Those individuals convert the challenges and threats into opportunities and put maximum of their efforts to achieve the set goals and uplift the organizations. Choosing an experienced and skilled individual can foster positive changes in the organization. The management and leadership courses coupled with additional trainings and professional development are few of the grandeurs that can refine and redefine the role of education officers and can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of the schools at a larger scale.

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Appendices

OBJECTIVE 1

To identify the role of District Education Officers in effective functioning of the schools in secondary education in district Shikarpur

Theme: Functioning of Schools

The following extracts represent the views of EO1, EO2, EO3 and EO4:

We visit elementary, secondary and higher secondary schools on daily wages. Due to these visits, we get to know the attendance of the students, teaching and non-teaching staff whether they are regular or not. We coordinate with HM/principals, supervise the issues and help them solve whether it is matter of furniture or staff or other administrative issue.

The remarks of the HM1 are:

Sometimes there is sports week. They issue a circular for its celebration. If the sports are going on in the entire district, then obviously they cannot attend everywhere. They will send their representative in other places. During the visit, the DEOs do pay attention for the quality education and cooperate with the HM/principal and give suggestions for betterment. Their visits have positive impact.

HM2 remarked that: *In the school matters the DEOs have no role, the headmaster or principal is wholly solely responsible for the improvement, innovation in education. All depends on the school head. The DEOs can direct only HM or Principal.*

HM3 and a PR are of the same opinion that the DEOs monitor the schools of entire district by using TEOs, AEOs and Dep. The remarks of HST1, HST2, HST3 and HST4 also gave the similar point of view.

Theme: Facilities

Below are data extracts from the sample that present the role of district education officers in the matter of finance and facilities with aim to make schools function effectively. EOs expressed that:

We seek reports from HM/principals about the funds and from TEOs about the HMs/Principals and discuss all the matters at DRC meeting where all the stakeholders CMO, Engineer Works Department, DC and Acs join. But many schools do not have buildings, boundary walls, electricity but the work is stopped due to elections. This is because the budget is short.

HMs & PR told that DEO visits and collects data. *Providing compound wall and washroom's is the job of EWD. The DEOs will communicate this information to them. HMs write them (DEOs) what is needed for the improvement, they try according to their authority. They will communicate the needs of furniture, books to the higher authorities.*

HST2 shared that: *If it is related with EWD, they can contact them and get the work done. If any building needs any renovation, they can play a big role. A DEO can convince them via letter writing or using source of higher authority.*

HMs and PR commented that:

The EOs have no specific budget with which they could help in providing missing facilities or learning material. These funds are too short and sometimes not released to the schools due to corruption or any other policy and decision of the government.

Actually, effective schools mean, all the stakeholders work properly. There must be lab expert. There should be tasks for the students. After that there must be check and balance system. As you know that, ours is higher secondary school so the main person is our principal.

The main role is of the school head. All responsibility goes to the head and class teacher. For the quality of education, they should make more and more official visits so that they may get first-hand knowledge about the attendance of the staff and performance of the schools. The school heads, DEOs/TEOs and Directors have very important role, which they are not playing.

There are additional remarks JESTs below:

The DEOs /TEOs have very important role in the quality education. These posts are not just desk posts for the teleoperation but they must visit the schools physically, listen to their problems and solve them or write to their higher authorities for the required facilities or material. If they perform their responsibilities honestly, the education can improve. (JEST2, JEST4)

Theme: Communication

The comments of EO5 presented below are the representative of comments of all EOs, teachers and school heads who were interviewed on this topic.

We do communication, send instruction through circular. We send scheme of studies to the HM/Principals and later inquire from them how much course is done and then conduct tests.

HM1 in the regard of coordination with other department and communication purposes said: *I will say that they cannot play the role in the quality due to any compulsion. The reasons are that there is*

not a single day on which there is no data collection/documentation made. After we submit one information, there is another information required.

The comments of HST1 present important data insights:

First of all, the administration of school must be good. If a small matter arises, it starts from TEO, then DEO, then Director and then reaches the Secretary and till then two academic sessions are passed. Even then the problem is not solved. As I have observed, our education must be free means there must not be interruption. For example, the duty of polio duty is the function of health department, national causes in which the teachers are engaged and the disturbance is created. The teachers are engaged in them for one or two weeks for the. They also affect administratively.

Theme: Supervision

There is a mix of perceptions from EOs, school heads and teachers for this theme. When we look at the views of EOs, the comments reflect a smooth and effective process of monitoring and supervision is carried out on regular basis.

EO5 said: We supervise the schools and our job is to supervise. We visit the schools in the entire schools. We have to do at least 20 visits. We see the cleanliness; we check enrolment and facilities. We discuss the matters of teachers who are absent and solve there. We check how the allocated funds are utilized. Then we observe the teaching method.. We visit the spot and inquire about the issue and try to settle down the issues on the spot. If not, then we legal take action and give explanation call to the people who have been found guilty. For quality education, the teachers are bound to oblige the head of the school.

The remarks of all school heads are given below.

They visit and the way they should do the visit, they are not doing for the reasons I told you. They have meeting on different places. Sometimes with DCs, with CMO, director and other times in Karachi. These are many causes. During the visit, the DEOs do pay attention for the quality education and cooperate with the HM/principal and give suggestions for betterment. In six months TEO or DEO does not visit the schools or if they visit, it is only formality so we must focus on our schools. A DEO is the district administrator who covers over schools in his supervision in relation to the education and his monitoring is very much important for us. Why the DEOs cannot achieve their main task? If the DEOs are allowed to work free hand. They can achieve it. But as of the power of the chair they are unable to perform well but just complete the formalities of routine matters. (HM1, HM2, PR)

Apparently in this five-year service, we have not seen their role for quality education but they only do transfer posting or approve the leaves. (HST2, HST3).

The role of DEOs has vanished completely. With their visits in the schools, there will be impact on the institutions. There will be quality education. They DEOs are only managing their office. They are not doing other job. What are they doing for the institutions? Nothing. You see our () Sahab has been working as DEO for last three years, what has he done? (JEST4).*

*Note: The participant took the name of an EO apparently which was hidden under ethical considerations.

Theme: Staffing

Here are some of the views of Education Officers:

Previously DEOs could appoint; even the head of the schools appointed the sweepers and peons, but now DEO has limited powers. We ca not do transfer and postings. The DEOs must be empowered. They (DEO) cannot appoint or transfer the director does. Any schools need sweeper or peon, and DEOs transfer a peon there, the peon goes to the politicians and they call the DEO for the cancellation of the order. The teacher training is offered and monthly feedback of lessons is conducted and reported to DEO.

You see in our school, there are no science teachers for 10 years. Our principal has requested to DEO but there is no result. In our high school () for last fifteen years, there is no sweeper appointed. Now, it is 11 years this is school is it upgraded a higher secondary and there are not appointed qualified teachers qualified teachers for first year and intermediate classes, so who will teach them? We come to know that in particular schools, there are more than 3 watchmen working and this is a higher secondary school but here is not appointed any watchman. (HM1, HM2, HM3, PR)*

*Note: The name of the school is hidden in order to maintain the confidentiality promised in the ethical considerations.

Below are the perspectives of the teachers:

As I told you, most of the functions of DEO nowadays are only approving leaves and doing transfer and postings. There is political pressure on DEO where certain politically influenced people get work done and the management gets weaker. They get postings at the places of their choice specially. Schools in villages suffer because the teachers get posted at town school or city schools. (HST3, HST1, HST4)

Theme: Authority

The following extracts represent the views of Five EOs, Four HMs/PR and 8 teachers from the secondary level.

According to EO3,

Previously DEOs could appoint even the head of the schools appointed the sweepers and peons, but now DEO has limited powers. We ca not do transfer and postings. On DEOs, there are some political pressures where the DEO is powerless in many things. The authorities are also helping us in many matters but they are also powerless sometimes before a minister.

As said by HM1, HM2 about the powers EOs that:

DEOs and TEOs only can start rallies for admission campaign. These poor people do not have powers. They have limited authority and funds. But main thing is the political influence here is hindering. The reasons are: they are neither in the powers of heads. The DEO does not help for the washrooms or walls.

*Note: The name of the school is hidden in order to maintain the confidentiality promised in the ethical considerations.

A JEST4 gave feedback on the authority of district education officers:

They conduct the meeting with HMs where they share the problems of school from which some problems are resolved and others are not because of the limited power of DEO, later they are forwarded to the secretariat. Whatever the DEOs can do with his powers, he will do. I think their authority is limited to provide us everything but they can write to the higher authorities.

Theme: Budget

Here are some of the comments of EOs:

We have shortage of budget. There are many schools in which the enrollment is more than 2000, and the SMC budget in higher secondary schools is 80k rupees per year, and for high school it is 60k. How the repair work is managed? How the routine work is managed? We don't have enough facilities. The government is issuing money but it is misused. Billions of rupees were spent on the furniture, but come with me and see students are sitting down even in the schools in this city. From this fund, 20% is taken away as corruption by the treasury officers. The running of schools faces many issues and can meet all needs with this small amount. The schools demand so much for proper functioning, but the limited contingency fund or SMC hardly completes the needs. (EO1, EO2, EO3,EO4,EO5).

School heads tell us that:

The main scarcity is the shortage of budget. How will the institutions function without it? Now when they do not have such budget, how many schools can the DEOs facilitate? They will help us according to their financial budget. If we just want to get repaired the old furniture, the whole budget will be utilized on twenty desks. There is no extra money for other learning material. There are some financial issues that the DEO face i.e. in the conduct of exams, paper printing or provision of answer copies. There is incomplete budget.

The remarks of the teachers go here:

Other factors are budget. The DEOs do not have budget. For infrastructure, the DEOs have no budget. For the construction of washroom, wall, the government has created another departmentthe second thing is the budget is not properly received. There is top to bottom illegal share in the school budget. So, when it reaches the school, it is incomplete. There is budgetary problem also. The DEOs do not have enough budget and hence the schools suffer and get closed. (JESTs/HSTs).

Theme: Community

EOs told that:

Brother, these schools are closed due to many reasons. One reason is law and order situation. There are many schools in rural areas which are not functioning because there are tribal clashes. The teachers and officers cannot go there for the fear of life. What can DEO do? He will not go to the places where tribal clashes are going on. It is the matter of the government to control law and order situation. A DEO will just report to the government.

There are mixed perceptions of EO1 and EO2 on the role of community.

I told you some schools were closed in my circle. I put efforts and restarted those closed schools. High school Budhal Faqeer was reopened with my efforts, villagers support and teacher's role. The schools closed in rural areas are because of law-and-order situation. We call it NO-GO areas. There is a high School in Sher Ali Jatoli or if you go to the side of Khanpur. There the teachers are robbed, that's why these schools are closed.

School heads shared that:

The second scarcity is the scarcity of the cooperation of the parents. No parent is ready to take care of their children. If they wake up, then no school will be closed and turned into animals' lock.

.....If you can see the ground realities so you will find that it is we people who are breaking the walls of the schools are you are taking away the metallic property of the school so it is we who can run the school properly. Who will come then the dacoits will come and they do this all no. We don't consider the schools as our home. (HM1, HM2)

The following are the comments of secondary school teachers:

The external involvement such as involvement of reporters, and other social sectors should not be allowed in the proper functioning of the school. The problem is that if the community does not cooperate.. So, when the problem happens the community people charge on the school. In achievements of the school the community of the school does not appreciate us.The politicians of the area have stopped visiting the schools. With their visits in the schools, there will be impact on the institutions. There can be a big impact on the attendance, neatness and environment of the school.

Theme: Interference

The following are perceptions of teachers:

There is political pressure on DEO where certain politically influenced people get work done and the management gets weaker.There are reasons that the politicians are influencing the EWD, and everyone pushes it to get the work done and the work is done (or school is opened) in places not necessary or more than three schools are opened and the funds are not utilized in the schools where necessary.....After that there is census and many other national causes in which the teachers are engaged and the disturbance is created. Many functions of other department are got done by the education department.

The CMOs have further spoiled the overall atmosphere. They come and take biometric attendance once a month, and after that the teachers may come or not, they are not concerned. Now a CMO takes money from the teachers appointed in the rural areas for not coming to the schools.There is some pressure of staff unions but the most comes from politicians. There are influences on the DEOs from his higher authorities like director and secretary too. They cannot play the role in the quality due to any compulsion. Sometimes with DCs, with CMO, director and other times in Karachi. These are many causes. There are some political reasons too,... There are some schools in the rural areas where prevails the feudalism. The feud lords are establishing schools with the help of MPAs or MNAs, then they convert those schools into their go-downs. That is the main issue. (PR, HM1).

The data extracts from EOs are represented below:

There are many challenges with relation to the staff because there is political interference. There are many peons who do not do their duties. The political people claim that this employee belongs to their bungalow or the bungalow of another political person so he will not do the duty. He is deputed as driver or servant in that bureaucrat or political person.

Theme: Curriculum

The views of EOs represent issues in the task of curriculum implementation.

Now if you get only 35% books for the given strength, how can you distribute 100%? We get the books likewise. 50% or 40% books only. Which is why the learning material is not provided.

Below are the comments of school heads:

The main reason I think is the culture of cheating in the examinations. The students believe in copy culture to pass and hence the uneducated minds are coming out. This is why only 10% of the students in the class can cover their topics well but not all. The courses are too lengthy and are not covered properly.

The remarks of teachers are represented below:

The child is much ahead of this course. We teach the children: this is mouse; this is CPU; this is keyboard. Okay. Whereas in real life, the same child is using android/smartphones or laptops for any purpose..... Second thing is medium of instructions. For example, a child studies three languages Sindhi, Urdu, and English. when the child joins first year or inter, all of a sudden, the language changes which you take that a mountain falling on the children. (HST1, HST2, JEST4)

Theme: Appointment

To start with the views of EOs:

Now see these posts are not filled on merit. They are political posts. Now those appointed politically, they draw their own vested interests.

The following are the comments of school heads:

....These are now political posts not meritorious post. The meritorious officers will endeavor to provide innovation and betterment. Those officers backed by political factors will try to meet their personal gains instead of putting efforts on the quality of his organization..... At this time, the DEO is not full-fledged. We can say that it is a political post now. The meritorious person is not posted here according to the seniority or his experience and abilities or a highly qualified person is not appointed on this post. A person having political support cannot take any initiative or action (HM1, HM2, hm3, PR)

The statements of the teachers are represented below:

There is political factor and union factors that affect him (DEO), but if he is honest and clear, no factor can affect him and if he is involved in malpractices such as in corruption, or he is not dutiful person, then people will point out at him obviously.....The solution is that the policy makers design such fair policies on which highly qualified and eligible people are appointed on the managerial post. The teachers who are to be promoted at the administrative posts, there must be proper training and promotional examination which must be passed. At least an eligible person must be appointed or not at least train the person who is to be TEO/DEO (JEST, HST2, HST3, HST4).