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A Critical Analysis of Teachers' Autonomy in Public Sector Universities of Balochistan

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Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate the autonomy level of teachers, serving on various levels in public sectors universities of Balochistan. Quantitative research method was used to investigate the research problem. Population of the study include all lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors of 09 public sector universities of Balochistan. From these universities, 04 were selected through simple random sampling procedure as a sample for the study. In the next stage, 116 male and female lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors opinions were sought out through google survey. For data collection purpose, a standardized questionnaire was used and modified according to the local context. As data was not normally distributed thus nonparametric statistics i.e. Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis tests were applied to analyze the data. Results showed that teachers' autonomy level is poor regarding various aspects of their teaching such as assessment, communication with higher authorities as well students' parents and classroom management. Necessary recommendations were made to concerned authorities.

Keywords: Teachers, Autonomy, Assessment, Communication, Classroom Management.

تلخیص

یہ مطالعہ بلوچستان کی پبلک سیکٹر یونیورسٹیوں میں مختلف سطحوں پر اساتذہ کی خودمختاری کی سطح کا جائزہ لینے کے لیے کیا گیا تھا۔ تحقیق کے مسئلے کی تحقیقات کے لیے مقداری طریقہ تحقیق استعمال کیا گیا۔ مطالعہ کی آبادی میں بلوچستان کی ۹ پبلک سیکٹر یونیورسٹیوں میں سے ۴ یونیورسٹیوں کے تمام لیکچررز، اسسٹنٹ پروفیسرز، ایسوسی ایٹ پروفیسرز اور پروفیسرز شامل ہیں۔ مطالعہ کے لیے نمونے

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سادہ بے ترتیب نمونے لینے کے طریقہ کار کے ذریعے منتخب کیے گئے۔ اگلے مرحلے میں گوگل سروے کے ذریعے ۱۱۶ مرد و خواتین لیکچررز، اسسٹنٹ پروفیسرز، ایسوسی ایٹ پروفیسرز اور پروفیسرز کی رائے معلوم کی گئی۔ ڈیٹا اکٹھا کرنے کے مقصد کے لیے ایک معیاری سوالنامہ استعمال کیا گیا اور مقامی سیاق و سباق کے مطابق اس میں ترمیم کی گئی۔ چونکہ ڈیٹا کو عام طور پر تقسیم نہیں کیا جاتا تھا اس لیے ڈیٹا کا تجزیہ کرنے کے لیے نان پیرامیٹرک اعداد و شمار یعنی Mann-Whitney U ٹیسٹ اور Kruskal Wallis ٹیسٹ کا اطلاق کیا گیا۔ نتائج سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ اساتذہ کی خودمختاری کی سطح ان کی تدریس کے مختلف پہلوؤں جیسے تشخیص، اعلی حکام کے ساتھ بات چیت کے ساتھ ساتھ طلباء کے والدین اور کلاس روم مینجمنٹ کے حوالے سے ناقص ہے۔ متعلقہ حکام کو ضروری سفارشات کی گئیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: اساتذہ، خودمختاری، تشخیص، مواصلات، کلاس روم مینجمنٹ

Introduction

The role of teachers in imparting education at university level is very much important because it is the final stage of one's completion of graduation. The students' knowledge, skills and attitude are the main domain which can be positively improved. Therefore, the university teaching faculties rigorously face their autonomy which refers to their professional freedom in their departments, so that to make autonomous decisions about their teaching. Guan (2021) stated that teachers' autonomy means liberty of teachers to teach independently and have freedom to opt matters, content and other materials. Unfortunately, they face issues in their teaching autonomy to devise their own strategies for effective teaching and learning. Moreover, they confront few other challenges, such as autonomy regarding classroom management, communication with high authority of the university, assessment and evaluation of students. Teachers' autonomy became an essential aspect of their professionalism because an autonomous teacher is able to produce autonomous learners (Varatharaj et al, 2015). Thus, Isa et al, (2022) concluded that autonomy in the classroom management and assessment of teachers' requires not to be distracted by others, so that they would be independent to adopt and devise better strategy for effective classroom management and assessment. An another study revealed that autonomous teachers not only managing their teaching effectively but they can also influence students' psychology, learning style and strategy in their classrooms (Fadaee et al, 2021).

Review of Literature

Teacher autonomy is defined as teacher's capacity to freely determine and decide their actions within the specified contextual setting of limitations in which they function (Paulsurd & Wermke, 2019; Wermke & Hostfalt, 2014). Wilch (2007) concluded that the teachers' autonomy hence is a complex, multidimensional, context-specified sensation existing at various levels.

Radel (2020) stated that teachers' autonomy is very essential for their professional development at university level. If they are responsible at their profession, then would not by positive result in the area of teaching and learning. Dikilitas and Griffiths (2017) revealed that teachers' autonomy is basically defined as teachers devising control over their professional competence and practice freely in their own setting.

Moreover, they need to make autonomous decisions how they plan to teach; how they can advance their teaching; and what they practice. Indeed, teachers' autonomy is linked with classroom and institutional management with the given curricula (Benson, 2008). Teachers' autonomy enables them to improve required knowledge, skills, expertise and attitude so that to be self-motivated in their professional field (Sehrawat, 2014). Fachrurrazi (2017) said that the output of teaching-learning completely depends on the teachers at university level. Unless the teachers' autonomy is acknowledged and recognized by the competent or high authority of the university, their professional development can be improved and thereby increasing their output and performance in the classroom which support the success of the university, therefore the teachers need to perform certain duties and responsibilities independently pertaining the curriculum change as per the pedagogical practices, context, classroom management, assessment systems and professional development.

An addition, teachers' autonomy refers to their self-regulation, liberty from outside imposed agendas and professional competence (Castle & Aichele, 1994). Thus, in teachers' autonomy, there is complete freedom for the teachers to act professionally, and to opt the teaching methods, assessment procedures and teaching strategies which help them to improve their professional competence.

Little (1995) analyzed that teachers' autonomy is the ability to participate in self-directed teaching. Moreover, the autonomous teachers can enhance their professional career being self-directed teachers.

Teachers' academic liberty is associated with liability to the concerns of truth and generating of new knowledge which has to continue very pertinent in the organization of

higher education (Prakash, 2011). Teachers' autonomy is one of the significant issues for the empowerment of university teachers (Benson, 2000).

Autonomy in Assessment

Assessment and evaluation have always had strong base in the hands of teachers. A teacher who has taught, understands the children than any other evaluator or assessor (Abdu, 2019). A teacher's academic freedom and autonomy is the most important aspect in teaching learning process (Sehrawat, 2014) that constitutes more significant substructures which are integral to the concept of students' assessment.
According to a study, it has been clear that for students; grading, testing, evaluation and assessment should be the main responsibility of teachers (Rand Education Brief, 2004). Strong (2012) stated that autonomous assessment and testing offer teachers opportunity and freedom to make decisions regarding the content, learning experiences, organization and speed of their student's assessment.

"Assessment' is defined a wide range of methods for evaluating learner's performance and attainment" (Gipps, 1994). For developing, teacher's autonomy regarding students' assessment and testing, we need to comprehend the pressure which exist in higher educational institutes (Abdu, 2019). Teachers have autonomy in assessment processes, would take more positive approach to analyze the students learning and strive to address their existed problems immediately. Contrary, it will not go well with those teachers who do not have positive value about assessment (Varatharaj et al, 2015).

It may be concluded that teachers' autonomy in curriculum and content has become an essential part of teachers' professionalism. In academia, teachers are the best to identify students' learning problems and strive to find remedy for them (Varatharaj et al., 2015).

Teaching Autonomy

In teaching profession, teacher's autonomy is key aspect (Wermke & Hostfalt, 2014) which is completely associated to perceived self-efficacy, positive work climate and job satisfaction (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007; Wermke et al., 2019). In addition, such factors are crucial to teachers' commitment and motivation to provide effective learning prospects for students (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007). Teacher autonomy can be essential for ensuring a good learning environment which addresses students' diverse needs. In addition, the teacher requires freedom, space, flexibility and respect but conversely if there is curricular liberty, teachers do not feel confident to exercise it without being taken to

change by the top management for doing things differently. Therefore, it is pertinent to support and enable them because the classroom requires to cultivate flexible, democratic and accepting culture. The teacher should not only receive information and orders, but the voice of the teachers should be equally heard by those higher authority, who frequently take decisions which affect directly classroom life in the institution (NCF, 2005). Sehrawat (2014) concluded that teacher's autonomy can be driven by a need for professional and personal development, so that autonomous teachers will find out opportunities over the course of their career to improve further. Moreover, autonomous teachers teach very effectively as compared to non-autonomous teachers. At university level, there should be professional freedom among the teachers; the fact is, when they are free to teach, ultimately, they teach more efficiently.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the teachers' autonomy regarding teaching in public sector universities of Balochistan.
2. To study the teachers' autonomy regarding classroom management in public sector universities of Balochistan.
3. To examine the teachers' autonomy regarding communication to authorities and students' parents in public sector universities of Balochistan.
4. To identify the teachers' autonomy regarding assessment and evaluation of students in public sector universities of Balochistan.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of teachers' autonomy regarding teaching in public sector universities of Baluchistan?
2. What is the degree of teachers' autonomy regarding classroom management in public sector universities of Baluchistan?
3. What is the range of teachers' autonomy regarding communication to authorities and students' parents in public sector universities of Baluchistan?
4. What is the level of teachers' autonomy regarding assessment and evaluation of students in public sector universities of Baluchistan?

Methodology

Quantitative research method was used to investigate the research problem. Population of the study includes all lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors in public sector universities of Balochistan. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select the sample. For data collection a standardized questionnaire was used and modified according to the local context. As data was not normally distributed thus nonparametric statistics i.e. Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test were used to analyze the data.

Results

1. Demographic Statistics

Table: 1
Results of demographic statistics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	92	79.3
Female	24	20.7
Designation		
Lecturer	82	70.7
Assistant Professor	34	29.3
Experience		
1-5	79	68.1
6-10	25	21.6
11-15	10	8.6
16-20	2	1.7

The demographic statistics show that male respondents' participation in this survey remained dominant at 79.3% compared to the participation rate of female respondents (20.7%). Based on designation, 70.7% of lecturers and 29.3% of assistant professors responded to the survey. A major number of respondents with experience of 1 to 5 years, the Second largest number of respondents (21.6%) with work experience of 6 to 10 years, 8.6% of the respondents who participated in this survey have work experience of 11 to 15 years, whereas only 1.7% of the respondents were with the work experience of 16 to 20 years.

2. Descriptive statistics

Table: 2
Descriptive statistics (n-116)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
TA	1.38	4.50	2.5043	.525	.72456
ARC	1.20	3.78	2.6141	.414	.64346
ARA	1.15	4.29	2.7699	.696	.83445
ACRM	1.25	4.88	2.8034	.780	.88297

The mean values show the inclination of the teaching faculty's lower autonomy in terms of teaching, communication, assessment, and classroom management in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.

3. Mann-Whitney U test, Gender and Autonomy

The **Mann-Whitney U test** is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous. There is no restriction related to the normal distribution of the data.

Table: 3
Results of mann-whitney u test, gender and autonomy

Teaching Faculty's autonomy	Gender of Respondents	Numbers	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U statistics	P-value
TA	Male	92	63.30	662.500	.003
	Female	24	40.10		
ACRM	Male	92	56.60	929.500	.234
	Female	24	65.77		
ARC	Male	92	63.88	609.000	.001
	Female	24	37.88		
ARA	Male	92	60.29	939.000	.260
	Female	24	51.63		

Results of table 3 shows that the teaching autonomy (U=662.500, p= .003) and communication autonomy (U=609.000, p= .001) of males is significantly higher than females. Whereas, there is no difference in autonomy of males and females related to assessment and classroom management.

4. Mann-Whitney U test, Designation and Autonomy

Table: 4
Results of mann-whitney u test, designation and autonomy

Teaching Faculty's autonomy	Gender of Respondents	Numbers	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U statistics	P-value
TA	Lecturer	82	55.32	1133.500	.113
	Assistant Professor	34	66.16		
ACRM	Lecturer	82	58.44	1389.000	.976
	Assistant Professor	34	58.65		
ARC	Lecturer	82	56.04	1192.500	.221
	Assistant Professor	34	64.43		
ARA	Lecturer	82	58.44	1389.000	.976
	Assistant Professor	34	58.65		

Table 4 shows that there is not significant difference in designation and autonomy. Therefore, the faculty of teachers in the universities of Balochistan is equally autonomous in terms of teaching, classroom management, communication, and assessment.

5. Relationship between different factor of autonomies and different level of experiences

We have used Kruskal Wallis test to determine the difference between different levels of experience and autonomy of the teaching faculty in the universities of Balochistan, Pakistan. Kruskal Wallis test is a rank-based non-parametric test which is used as an alternative to one-way ANOVA. We have applied the Kruskal Wallis test because data were not normally distributed.

Table: 5
Kruskal wallis test and mean ranks

Experience of Respondents		N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	p-value
TA	1-5	79	47.39	28.670	.000
	6-10	25	77.74		
	11-15	10	92.50		
	16-20	2	87.00		
ACRM	1-5	79	53.28	6.787	.079
	6-10	25	66.28		
	11-15	10	76.00		
	16-20	2	80.00		
ARC	1-5	79	49.94	18.206	.000
	6-10	25	76.36		
	11-15	10	83.90		
	16-20	2	46.50		
ARA	1-5	79	57.32	2.405	.493
	6-10	25	55.78		
	11-15	10	73.95		
	16-20	2	62.00		

Results of teaching autonomy (TA) shows that there is a statistically significant (1% level of significant) difference in teaching autonomy score between different level of experience, $\chi 2\ (3) = 28.670, \mathrm{p} = .000$, with a mean rank in experience score of 92.50 for the experience of 11-15 years, 87.00 for the experience of 16 to 20 years, 77.74 for the experience of 6 to 10 years, and 47.39 for the experience of 1 to 5 years.

Results of autonomy in terms of classroom management (ACRM) shows that there is a statistically significant (at 10% level of significant) difference in classroom management autonomy score between different level of experience, $\chi 2\ (3) = 6.787, \mathrm{p} = .079$, with a mean rank in experience score of 80.00 for the experience of 16 to 20 years, 76.00 for the experience of 11 to 15 years, 66.28 for the experience of 6 to 10 years, and 53.28 for the experience of 1 to 5 years.

Results of autonomy in terms communication (ARC) shows that there is a statistically significant (at 1% level of significant) difference in autonomy related to communication score between different level of experience, $\chi 2\ (3) = 18.206, \mathrm{p} = .000$, with a mean rank in experience score of 83.90 for the experience of 11 to 15 years, 76.36 for the experience of 6 to 10 years, 49.94 for the experience of 1 to 5 years, and 46.50 for the experience of 16 to 20 years.

However, we have not found significant results related to difference of autonomy in terms of assessment and different level of experiences.

Discussion

The respondents of the study are comprised on the lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors serving in the public sector universities of Balochistan. The demographic statistics shows that male faculty members are 79.3% while female ratio in these respondents are (20.7%). In addition, 70.7% of the sampled respondents are lecturers and 29.3% are the assistant professors in this survey. Moreover, a large number of respondents have experience from 1 to 5 years because mostly universities have recently been established. According to descriptive statistics the mean values show the preference of the teaching faculty's lower autonomy in terms of teaching, communication, assessment, and classroom management in the province. Secondly, table 03 shows that male faculty members are some extent autonomous in respect to classroom management and assessment as compared to female counterpart. Table 4 shows that no significant difference is found in designation and autonomy. Thus, the faculty of teachers in the universities of Balochistan is equally autonomous in terms of teaching, classroom management, communication, and assessment.

Results of teaching autonomy (TA) shows that there is a statistically significant (1% level of significant) difference in teaching autonomy score between different level of experience, $\chi 2\ (3) = 28.670, \mathrm{p} = .000$, with a mean rank in experience score of 92.50 for the experience of 11-15 years, 87.00 for the experience of 16 to 20 years, 77.74 for the experience of 6 to 10 years, and 47.39 for the experience of 1 to 5 years. Therefore, it is discussed that teaching autonomy vary on the basis of the faculty experiences. The more they are experienced the more they are autonomous in their teaching. Thus the results of autonomy in terms of classroom management (ACRM) shows that there is a statistically significant (at 10% level of significant) difference in classroom management autonomy score between different level of experience, $\chi 2\ (3) = 6.787, \mathrm{p} = .079$, with a mean rank in experience score of 80.00 for the experience of 16 to 20 years, 76.00 for the experience of 11 to 15 years, 66.28 for the experience of 6 to 10 years, and 53.28 for the experience of 1 to 5 years. Similarly, on the basis of experiences, autonomy in terms of communication varies from experience to experience, as mentioned in table 5 where having experiences from 11 to 15 years, are comparatively better mean score of 83.90. Though, no significant difference is found in terms of autonomy in assessment and various level of experiences.

Conclusions

Teaching profession is way to inspire and motivate the students for using their potential in a constructive approach. An approach to acquire knowledge, skills and other competencies but these potentials are molded with the true spirit of teachers. Indeed, teachers are the architects of human. These architects need autonomy and freedom in their professional field to meet the individual and societal educational needs. They need liberty in their teaching methodologies, classroom management, students' assessment and communication with the higher authority. This study investigates the autonomy of teaching faculties in universities of Balochistan. In this province, 09 public sector universities have been established in the past few decades. A large number of lecturers and professors have been engaged in teaching learning process but the fact is, they feel hesitant to initiate practical activities in their classrooms. They are not independent to opt any method which ensure change in the mindset of the learners. Head of the departments, deans and other administrative staff are trying to keep them confined to their classroom with certain assigned tasks. Neither they are allowed to arrange positive activities nor can they bring modification in the assessment criteria. They have been overburdened with other additional charges and their prime responsibilities are neglected.

The major concern of the study was to measure the autonomy level of the teachers in public sector universities of Balochistan province, but it showed from the results that their independence regarding various aspects of teaching is poor. They have meager liberty regarding various aspects of their teaching such as assessment, communication with higher authorities as well students' parents and classroom management.

Recommendations

In our Pakistani society, teachers are financially and socially the most overlooked professionals. Thus, the highly qualified faculty in universities are found more dedicated as compared to other academicians in imparting education at various levels. Therefore, autonomy is strongly recommended at university level teaching, so that they make positive initiatives for better practices in their classroom management, assessment activities and discipline.

Moreover, the university teachers should be given freedom in their classrooms to devise healthy activities for the improvement of students.

It is also recommended to the state to take its responsibility to improvise the status, dignity and prestige of university teachers like other professionals having similar grades in their offices.

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