

Role of National Education Policy-2009 and National Professional Standards for Teachers in Developing Teachers' Professionalism

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Abstract

Teacher's professionalism is a social construct that is defined through educational policy, practice, and standards. These are considered inevitable for developing professionalism. This paper discusses the role of National Education Policy (NEP) and National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) for the development of professionalism based on the views of experts who had direct experience with the process of formulation of NEP and NPSTs. Six experts; three associated with the preparation of NEP (2009) and three of NPSTs were interviewed through a semi-structured interview consisting indicators of professionalism, conducted, recorded and transcribed. The analysis showed that while preparing NEP (2009) and NPSTs, teachers' professionalism was not considered in true spirit. They declared that there was nomutual coordination between NEP and NPSTs experts for the development of teacher's professionalism and was also not included onto the agenda. It is recommended that teacher professionalism may be focused while developing National Education Policies.

Keywords: National Education Policy-2009, national professional standards, professionalism

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Introduction

A paradigm shift has been seen in the world from the materialistic views to knowledge-based society and economy. To cope with global issues, emerging challenges and to enhance quality, every sort of profession is guided through policies, principles, and standards. Professionalism among employees is necessary for excellent performance (Ahmad, 2011). Although the term professionalism is used in different fields, still it is difficult to define (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). According to Hoyle (2001), professionalism means the quality of services and not the improvement of status. Further, it is explained by Naylor (2001) that professionalism is a multi-dimensional concept which comprised of attitude towards job and achievement of a high level of professional standards. Hence professionalism may be defined as the respectable status of the occupation (Kennedy, 2007), improvement in service quality (Hoyle, 2001), attainment of maximum standards, professional autonomy and self-control (Boyt, Lusch, & Naylor, 2001).

During the last decade, the teacher's professionalism has been focused worldwide by policymakers, researchers and educational leaders to improve the quality of the educational process (Ali, 2001). In this respect, teaching as a profession requires professional knowledge, skills, and disposition. Teachers' professionalism is based on professional qualification and excellence in teaching (Anwar, 2005) which includes the understanding of the teaching process, teaching competencies, and attitudes towards teaching (Anees, 2005). Professional teachers can address issues about teaching, curriculum, students care, assessment and all matters related to the teaching-learning process (Rizvi, 2003).

In developed countries, there are some common policy elements for a successful education system that focus on teachers' professionalism as a significant area of quality education. Education systems of these countries provide many opportunities for continuous professional development, professional collaboration in the teaching-learning process and teachers' involvement in decision making about instructional practices and curriculum (Wei, R. C., Andree, A., & Darling-Hammond, L. 2009). The development of professionalism has become the ultimate goal of teacher education across the globe. It emphasizes the preparation of teacher educators to develop professionalism based on knowledge, skills, and dispositions in prospective teachers (Kramer, 2003). The teacher education process promotes professionalism in terms of understanding of teachers' pedagogic skills through training and teaching experiences (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Jamil (2014) added teachers' professionalism is an important area in education policy to increase the education quality in different countries. A plethora of researches indicated that in many countries the teaching profession is developed by devising

educational policies, benchmarks, and professional standards. For example, the major focus of teacher education policies in Finland is based on a research-oriented approach which will heighten teachers' professionalism (Westbury, Hansen, Kansanen, & Bjorkvist 2005). In the United Kingdom policy-makers put efforts to develop standards and linked them towards the development of professionalism (Webb, Vulliamy, Hamalainen, Sarja, Kimonen, & Nevalainen 2004). In the USA, professional standards for teaching have been developed and "used in quite different ways". They structured for the development of professionalism among teachers and accrediting programs offered by teacher education (Mayer, 2009). The Union of Education Norway has tabled education policies to enhance the status and legitimacy of the teachers' professionalism (Mausethagen & Granlund 2012). In the Australian context, professional standards for teachers contribute to the development of professionalism (AITSL, 2011). Consequently, worldwide efforts have been undertaken to ensure teacher quality in schools. One way to improve the quality of teaching underscores the development of professionalism among teachers based on professional teaching standards. Another way is to use performance management systems in schools that monitor teachers' quality (Okas et al., 2014).

Teaching is one of the largest professions in Pakistan which makes the majority of the workforce in public service education institutions workforce (Hussain, 2005). Since independence, education policies have been focusing on the social, moral and professional development of teachers through certification, standardized training, accreditation and incentives to meet global challenges related to teacher education (Anwar, 2005). To stand with the rest of the world and to strengthen teacher education, National Education Policies and National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) seem to make directorial input in teacher's professionalism. That's why Shami (2015) said that NPSTs and NEPs are inevitable modes for developing professionalism among teachers.

Since inception of Pakistan, eight education policies have been announced and in 2009 National Professional Standards for Teachers were presented to strive for propagation of teachers' professionalism through knowledge, dispositions, and skills in the context of contents of subjects, human development, religious (Islamic) values, instructional strategies, assessment, learning environment, verbal, non-verbal and written communication, and partnership. Quality in teacher education is further ensured by establishing the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE) that has the main focus on continuous professional development. A plethora of studies recommended that knowledge, skills, and disposition should be the center of interest for teachers' professional growth (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011 & NACTE, 2009).

The features of professionalism are displayed and reflected as a result of professional preparation and practice based on policies and professional standards (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). In current working conditions attainment of standards, policy provision and different criterion in different professions are essential. Professional standards develop and maintain a professional environment that observes best practices and policies, creates the system and high operational quality (Krishnaveni & Anitha, 2007). It has been visualized that quality learning depends upon quality teaching by quality professionals (MOE, 2009). The literature further reveals that the professional competence of teachers and standards of education depends upon the qualification and training of teachers (Kulshrestha, & Pandey, 2013). In the Asian context, the involvement of the teaching profession in education policy reforms is a significant component of educational development which is recently undergoing the speedy cultural transformation and socio-economic development (Jamil, Raju, & Mohamed, 2012). Therefore, it can be said that educational policies and professional standards for teachers play a pivotal role in the development of professionalism among teachers. For that reason, NEPs and NPSTs should be supportive towards the development of professionalism among teachers. In this regard association of policy and professional standards towards professionalism is important for professional teachers to carry out the quality teaching-learning process (Shami, 2015).

Literature Review

Professionalism and Teacher's Professionalism

A set of attitudes and behaviors that are appropriate for a specific profession is called professionalism. Professionalism is used in different perspectives which make it somehow difficult to be defined (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). According to Hoyle (2001) professionalism is not regarded as an improvement of status but the quality of services. Furthermore, Boyt and Naylor (2001) stated that professionalism is multi-dimensional which comprised of attitudes towards job and achievement of apex level of professional standards. Hence professionalism is taking respectability and status of the occupation (Kennedy, 2007), improvement in service quality (Hoyle, 2001), attainment of maximum standards (Boyt, Lusch, & Naylor, 2001) professional autonomy and self-control. Demirkasimoglu (2010) has associated the concept of professionalism from different perspectives to the teaching profession and concluded that teacher professionalism is a work field, based on knowledge, disposition, and skills to develop standards in the teaching profession. Teachers' professionalism means expertise in the field of education, at the same time a plethora of literature revealed that professionalism is based on professional satisfaction, commitment, attitude, ethics, practice, knowledge and competence, and professional human relations, supportive culture, and professional leadership.

Professionalism: Policy Perspective

At the time of independence, Pakistan had a few teacher training institutions which were not enough to meet the teachers' demand in the country. Recognizing situational needs, governments fixed priorities and devised Educational Policies for action. Quaid-e-Azam's message for Education Conference 1947, is generally considered as a milestone that has provided directions for the nature of the future to build-up new nation in terms of academic & scientific, technical education and teacher education. The message has categorically highlighted two distinguishing features in this regard that we need professionally trained teachers and the teaching would be a well-paid profession in the country. It is hence obvious that teaching has enjoyed recognition as a profession since the inception of Pakistan and the most important implication of this conference has been the setting of a proper teacher education system for teacher's professionalization and endowment of a suitable salary. Since then many plans and policies have been articulated to accomplish the set vision of teacher education both qualitatively and quantitatively, besides, to bring teacher education further in line with the developmental desires of the country.

Recognizing the unsatisfactory state of education in the country, in 1958 Government of Pakistan constituted a Commission on National Education. Commission emphasized not only for the advancement of teacher education curricula then also proposed restructuring of teacher education in the light of teacher's professional satisfaction, commitment, and attitude. To raise the professional standards of teachers, the commission proposed to change admission requirements for different courses for teachers. Aimed at improving quality, the commission recommended extension in the duration of training from one year to two years for middle and secondary level teachers which were not implemented. After a decade the National Education Policy (1969) appeared registering that professional training and high qualification are required for the preparation of the teacher. This policy was not implemented because of the political situation in the country.

To develop professionalism among teachers more effectively, NEP (1972) stressed on the reconsideration of teacher education curricula. The policy proposed the institutionalization of the formulation of education policy by establishing the National Education Council. Moreover, measures have been suggested to institutionalize the curriculum development efforts at the national level by establishing the National Bureau of Curriculum and Text Books (NBCTB) along with a network of Curriculum Bureaus/CRDC, in the provinces. Later on, NBCTB called Curriculum Wing a part of the Ministry of Education, has enjoyed legislative support to handle the task of teacher education. National Education Policy (1972), also proposed augmentation and enrichment of the teacher education programs to promote professionalism among teachers. To assess the curricula of the pre-service teacher education programs (PTC, CT, B.Ed. & M.Ed) appropriate modifications were recommended.

A step towards the promotion of teacher's professionalism was taken in 1976 when lawmakers passed an act to maintain uniform standards of education across the country. According to the Act, the Ministry of Education was supposed to develop standards for education, developing professional benchmarks for teachers and their assessment. Moreover, curriculum development was nationalized and Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education was given the responsibility to develop curricula up to grade 12 and University Grant Commission (UGC) now Higher Education Commission (HEC) was made responsible for beyond grade 12. Hence the affairs related to certificates of teacher education (PTC & CT) programs and curriculum became the jurisdiction of Curriculum Wing and Degree programs of UGC. But the task remained incomplete. With the change of government, a new education policy appeared in 1979-80 that reflected a paradigm shift from socialism to Islamization and teacher education as well as school curricula were influenced accordingly besides denationalization of nationalized institutions. In National Education Policy (1992) teacher's professionalism was articulated by redefining the role of the teacher as professional and suggested modification in the curriculum, textbooks, teaching methodology, and evaluation techniques. Knowledge of information communication technology (ICT) was also introduced in policy provision as an indicator of professionalism. The policy emphasized on redefining the role of teacher and acquisition of practical teaching skills in terms of professionalism.

Government of Pakistan has announced NEP (1998-2010) and recognized that the quality of education depends upon the instructional quality and role of the teacher is crucial to implement all educational reforms at the grassroots' levels. To enhance the level of teacher professionalism, new reforms are proposed in pre-service training, professional development, pay and allowances, career progression, governance, and management. It proposed to raise the demand of the teaching profession and suggested a bachelor's degree qualification of teachers with a Bachelor's degree in Education (B. Ed) as the lowest requirement to teach at an elementary level and master's degree with B. Ed to teach at the secondary level. Moreover, in-service professional teacher training, accreditation of teacher education programs, certification procedures shall be standardized and institutionalized. Teacher's professionalism can be ensured by the quality of the teacher education program and the Government of Pakistan showed its concern about teacher education in National Education Policy (2009) for example, the introduction of quality assurance and accreditation of teacher education programs and implementation of professional standards for teachers to meet benchmarks of the field. To improve the teacher's professionalism, in collaboration with UNESCO, Policy and Planning Wing, Ministry of Education (MoE) implemented a project named Stretching Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) which was funded by USAID.

Undoubtedly, all the policies realized the quality of education largely depends on the level of teachers' professionalism. Teacher education programs are way forward towards the propagation of professionalism. Policy provisions such as progress and management of teacher education programs, infrastructure, pre-service, and in-service teacher training, revision of curricula, focus on new pedagogies, knowledge, skill, and attitude are key indicators that led to raising the professionalism.

Professionalism: NPST Perspective

Standards are the demands and targets of society and nowadays, a global requirement is to keep uniformity in standards. Shami, (2006) stated that standards are statements that explain expectations and practices about the level of services. Standards provide base for pre-service and induction training, certification system effective professional development. Standards provide a way to ensure quality in teacher education and focus on the relevance of pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers. Standards address the professional needs of teachers and cultivate skills to pay their contribution to developing a knowledge-based economy.

However, the government took initiative and in association with UNESCO, launched Stretching Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) project funded by USAID. Stakeholders from all provinces were consulted for the development of professional standards. Standards were formulated to define essential attributes, skills, and dispositions necessary for teacher's professionalism. It also provides a guideline for policy and procedure essential for accreditation of institutions and teachers because of support for teachers' professionalism, on 7th November 2008 provincial representatives adopted professional standards. NPSTs are not static but evolving and dynamic document that is helpful in the propagation of professionalism among teachers at all levels. Each Standard is translated in terms of:

- Knowledge & Understanding i.e. what does Teacher Know
- Dispositions i.e. Attitude, behavior, or value
- Performance i.e. Skills

Brief details of NPSTs have been implemented in Pakistan are including subject matter knowledge; human growth and development; knowledge of Islamic ethical value /social life skills; instructional planning and strategies; assessment; learning environment; effective communication and proficient use of information communication technology; collaboration and partnership; continuous professional development and code of conduct; and the teaching of English as a second /foreign language.

Objective of the study

As a major concern in teacher educational programs, teacher's professionalism has not been examined in the context of NEP and NPSTs in Pakistan. This study, therefore, was opted to explore the development of professionalism among teachers concerning NEP-2009 as well as NPSTs. The current study was an exploration of views of experts engaged in NEP-2009 and NPSTs in the development of professionalism among teachers. This study was three-pronged: (i) what do policymakers perceive about the status of National Education Policy-2009 regarding focus on professionalism? (ii) what was the role of National Professional Standards for Teachers in the development of professionalism as viewed by experts associated with the formulation of professional standards for teachers?; (iii) does NEP-2009 align with NPSTs in terms of professionalism?

Methodology

Exploratory qualitative research was used to analyze the views of experts involved in the formulation of NEP-2009 and NPSTs. All the experts associated with the process of development of NEP-2009 and NPSTs were the population. A list of experts was attained from the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM). Six experts were taken based on their willingness for interview purposes. Among six, three experts had been associated with the process of development of NPSTs and the remaining three were the part of the NEP-2009 formulation process.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on the indicators of professionalism. In the first step, the initial draft of the semi-structured interview protocol was developed by keeping the indicators of professionalism in focus from NEP-2009 policy provisions and 10 standards given in the document of NPSTs. In second step data were collected to finalize the interview protocol to identify what to include in a semi-structured interview. In this regard, a focus group discussion was arranged with educationists who have had linked directly or indirectly with the development of educational policy and/or standards for teachers, and teacher educators. Focus group discussion summed up in areas including professionalism in NEP and NPSTs, standard mechanism of NEP-2009 and NPSTs, feedback about professionalism, monitoring in respect of professionalism, and alignment between NEP-2009 and NPSTs in terms of professionalism.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted, primarily, in participants' offices, and it took about an hour. Interviews began with a brief explanation and a request to record for the accuracy of their answers. Therefore, all interview sessions were recorded and immediately transcribed. The transcribed data were later analyzed thematically and interpreted.

Analysis of Interview responses

The responses of experts through interview protocol were analyzed as under.

i. Focus of professionalism in NEP 2009:

It was asked how well the NEP-2009 focused on the development of professionalism. Respondents agreed that NEP-2009 ignored the aspect of professionalism. They further added that professionalism is not part of policy provisions; however, policy reflects some of the indicators of professionalism. In this explanation, the expert established that teachers' professionalism was neither part of the white paper nor was focused even.

One of interviewee said that:

As indicators of professionalism are concerned, to some extent National Education Policy addresses it but primarily it was not principle focus of the policy. Even this construct was not part of the white paper.

Another respondent explicated,

Actually, National Education Policy-2009 is more theoretical than practical; it did not address the professionalism as an attribute.

Another respondent reacted,

During preparation of policy framework and white paper for drafting National Education Policy-2009 although, we (experts) have not focused directly on the development of professionalism, however, policy put focused around content/subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management, linking theory to practice, co-operation and collaboration, continuous and lifelong learning and, less prominent, quality assurance, mobility and leadership. These aspects are considered helpful in promoting professionalism.

ii. Focus of professionalism in NPSTs:

It was questioned that whether NPSTs are developing professionalism among teachers? Respondents were of the view that professionalism was not addressed. One of respondent said:

National Standards for Teachers are more academic than addressing the ground realities. These standards are not for professionalism of teachers in Pakistani context". However, some of indicators of Professionalism are there in NPSTs, for example professional ethics, CPD and code of conduct, effective communication etc.

Respondent-2 added that

National Standard for Teachers does not focus on teacher's professionalism, but some of characteristics of professionalism are matched with the indicators discussed in professional standard for teachers. As a whole the concept of professionalism is missing.

On the other side, respondent-3 said that

In broader sense National Standard for Teachers were formulated for development of professional competencies". It is not necessary that standards address the indicators of professionalism

Experts associated in formulation of national NPSTs expressed that indicators relevant to development of professionalism were not focused while devising the professional standards for teachers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in view of the experts, national professional standards are not directly considered in developing professionalism.

iii. Standard Mechanism of NEP-2009 and NPSTs:

When it was asked from the respondents that "would you agree with the notion that in our country, there is a lack of discussion and debate on issues of teacher's professionalism?" the answer of the majority of the respondents was conforming that:

Yes, discussion and debate on the attribute of professionalism was lacking

One respondent was of the view:

Yes I fully agreed. No institution feels responsibility of development of professionalism among teachers. Actually the teachers' professionalism is not discussed as a separate trait in Pakistan.

In the answer of the question about set mechanism of formulation of policy and Professional standard for teachers, one of respondent said that,

In the set mechanism of the policy development, teachers' professionalism was not addressed in any form. However it was considered that indicators like teaching competencies may be sufficient.

Another expert added that

Authorities have no clear vision of professionalism in teacher education. This is due to the lack of effective interaction between stake holders like the ministry of education and policy implementers i.e. head teachers and teachers.

Another respondent said that,

Top-down approach of formulating and implementing policy provisions and devising professional standards is the main cause of ignoring the professionalism.

iv. Feedback about Professionalism:

The implementation yields the feedback for future improvement. In the answer of the question 'any feedback about the teachers' professionalism received after the implementation of NEP and NPSTs? Majority of the respondents said that

Not at all, because of the 18th constitutional amendment, now education is provincial subject, and there is no proper implementation plan and mechanism for policy and professional standards.

One of the respondents opined that

Although implementation strategies were suggested in the documents, however, no proper implementation is carried out by all provinces. Only 10% implementation was observed that is not fruitful for future. However, none of them was related to teachers' professionalism.

Another respondent said that

In Education Policy, implementation plan was suggested for all provinces because every province has different needs, but no feedback was found, neither about NEP nor about NPSTs.

v. Monitoring in respect of Professionalism:

Monitoring is an important part of any structured framework. Final question was about the requirement of professionalism sensed during monitoring of policy or professional standards implementation? Respondents said that there is no special institution in Pakistan to monitor policy and standards implementation. One respondent said that,

There is no agency constituted to monitor the formulation and implementation of policy and professional standards.

In the words of another respondent:

No organization or regulatory authority exists in Pakistan to monitor the processes of policy and standard formulation and implementation. In fact this is a major reason for implementation failure.

When it was asked if there is any system of periodical assessment of teacher education priorities and development of teachers' professionalism?

In this perceptive all respondents stated that,

Not really, our teacher education curriculum committee is the body to monitor the professionalism but she meets after every ten years which is a very long span, whereas in Japan curriculum committee meets every week.

vi. Alignment between NEP-2009 and NPSTs in terms of Professionalism:

In consideration of views of the experts of NEP (2009) and NPSTs were analyzed to explore the alignment with respect to teacher professionalism.

Respondent highlighted that

There is a practice of adhocism is followed in the policy and standard making. A few people join hand at the time and then disperse after the process. Information is never disclosed why they took any particular decision.

Discussion and Conclusions

This qualitative study explored the development of professionalism among teachers with reference to policy provisions as well as national professional standards for teachers. All the respondents were of the view that teachers' professionalism was not considered while developing NEP (2009) and NPSTs. It was also inferred that there was no link and

coordination between both NEP (2009) and NPST teams with respect to the inculcation of indicators of professionalism in policy documents. Experts expressed their opinion that the development of teachers' professionalism was not focused while devising the NPSTs and had not received any feedback regarding the consideration of teachers' professionalism. Many countries have devised teachers' professional standards and at the same time considered them for teacher's evaluation against standards as a mechanism for professionalism, for example in a case study Mayer, Macdonald, and Bell, (2005) suggested that the use of professional standards as tools for developing and extending professionalism. However, Khan and Islam (2015) made the evaluation of NPSTs and found that the majority of teachers showed unsatisfactory performance against NPSTs. They explicated that teachers had a partial understanding of subject matter knowledge, human growth, and development and knowledge of Islamic ethical values, poor skills about instructional planning and strategies, obsolete traditional assessment methods and did not use ICT to ensure effective learning. Teachers showed poor interaction with parents and the community, which is evident that the professional development approach was missing among teachers.

It is further found that NEP (2009) and NPSTs are not compatible to make any contribution in developing professionalism among teachers due to improper implementation and lack of policy evaluation agencies. Moreover, a top-down approach to formulate policy provisions and devising professional standards is the main cause of ignoring professionalism. Both NEP (2009) and NPSTs should have the reflection of teachers' professionalism but views of experts are showing the professionalism construct was not included in an agenda item that's why no alignment between the NEP (2009) and NPSTs with respect to teachers' professionalism is found. Research findings of Ahmad and Rauf (2012) were in favor of this conclusion. They found the gaps between policy development and situation analysis process, the communication gap is prevailing in the sense that all stakeholders are not involved in the policy formulation process and also found that there were no policy evaluation agencies in Pakistan.

Recommendations

It is quite obvious that teachers' professionalism is playing robust role in quality of teaching and students' all-round development, therefore, it is recommended that development of teachers' professionalism may be focused rigorously and to ensure the alignment between National Education Policy and National Professional Standards for Teachers in terms of professionalisms, same group of experts may be assigned the task of making education policy and in case of revision of professional standards in future.

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