A Study About the Effects of Consolidation Policy on Access of Parents and Co-Curricular Activities in Consolidated Schools in Punjab Pakistan

Farooq Ahmad Aajiz[1], Dr.Khalid Rashid[2]

[1] Ph. D scholar, Department of Education, University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, fanoorani.dte@gmail.com

[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, drkhalid545@gmail.com

Abstract:

This causal-comparative/ex-post facto study evaluates the effectiveness of the Punjab Government's school consolidation policy in improving the school system. The primary objective was to determine the effects of consolidation on access of parents to consolidated schools and to determine the effects of consolidation on co-curricular activities in consolidated schools. The study focused on 112 consolidated Model Primary Schools in the Gujranwala division, encompassing 560 teachers, head teachers, and 2576 students. Data were collected from 380 respondents using a self-developed questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Statistical analyses including Descriptive Statistics and Inferential Statistics (ANOVA and Post Hoc tests) were conducted using SPSS software. Findings revealed improvements in access of parents in consolidated schools and there was a matter of concern regarding co- curricular activities in consolidated schools.

Keywords: Consolidated schools, Access of Parents in Consolidated Schools, Co-Curricular Activities.

Introduction:

Education has always been a focal point for nations around the world, and Pakistan is no exception. Among the various levels of education, primary education has consistently attracted the attention of policymakers and stakeholders alike. Since the inception of Pakistan, numerous initiatives have been taken to improve primary education. Initially, the bifurcation of elementary education into primary (grades 1-5) and elementary (grades 6-8) education marked a significant step in organizing the educational system. However, various challenges, such as teacher shortages and concerns over the quality of education, have plagued the system. To address these issues, the concept of Community Model Schools was introduced, with the aim of providing education to children, especially girls, at the doorstep of their communities. These schools operated with a single teacher and were supported by the local community, which helped in constructing the infrastructure. However, despite these efforts, the overall condition of government schools in Punjab remained dismal, marked by declining enrollment rates, poor academic outcomes, and increasing mistrust from parents toward public education. The primary issues identified included a shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and low professional standards of educators. As a response, the School Education Department (SED) of Punjab initiated various programs, including the Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program, which sought to improve teacher quality, increase administrative visits, and provide missing facilities. These initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges faced by schools and enhancing the quality of education. In May 2012, the Punjab Government launched the School Consolidation Policy as a strategic initiative to optimize the use of resources, with a focus on

_____

providing one teacher per class and ensuring better facilities for primary schools. The policy sought to improve the student-teacher ratio (STR) and ensure that classrooms were available for all students from grades nursery to five. It mandated that the head teacher of consolidated schools be a female Primary School Teacher (PST), and it aimed to consolidate nearby male and female primary schools to maximize the use of available teachers and buildings. These schools were renamed "Government Model Primary Schools," omitting gender-specific identifiers. This study investigates the effects of the school consolidation policy in Punjab, evaluating its effect on the overall development of the school system. By exploring how this policy has influenced school performance, administrative functions, and educational outcomes, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the consolidation initiative and its potential for future educational reforms in the region.

Literature Review

The consolidation of public schools in Punjab, Pakistan, has had significant implications for various aspects of school management, parental involvement, and student development. Recent research underscores the importance of enhancing parental access to schools and fostering strong home-school connections. Programs such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have been pivotal in increasing parental involvement in the governance and decision-making processes of schools. These initiatives have enabled parents to actively engage in their children's education, thereby improving student outcomes and reinforcing educational values at home (Fullan, 2001; Creemers, 1994). In particular, regular parent-teacher meetings have provided structured platforms for communication, which have contributed to addressing student challenges and strengthening the school-community relationship (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). However, despite these advancements, socio-cultural barriers continue to hinder parental involvement, especially in communities with traditional values that restrict female students' access to education (Holcamp, 2009). Moreover, while centralized and consolidated schools offer more formalized systems for parental engagement, these systems can sometimes become bureaucratic, limiting direct access to school authorities. Female school leaders have been shown to be more approachable and effective in fostering communication with parents, which enhances school-community relationships and improves overall parental access (Kosar et al., 2014). Female administrators are often seen as more systematic and responsible in their roles, which facilitates better interaction between school and families (Kosar et al., 2014). Additionally, research has noted the challenges faced by female leaders in balancing their professional and personal lives due to societal pressures and expectations, which can impact their administrative roles (Skalah Ugurlu & Beydogan, 2002; Can, 2008). Co-curricular activities in consolidated schools have also garnered attention for their role in holistic student development. These activities, including sports, arts, and cultural programs, are vital for fostering leadership, teamwork, creativity, and social cohesion. Co-curricular programs have been linked to improved student morale and engagement, as well as a reduction in behavioral problems (Angus et al., 2009; Day et al., 2006). Engaging in such activities has been shown to contribute positively to a student's emotional, intellectual, and social development, which directly influences overall school effectiveness (Paneeket, 2019). However, the lack of adequate resources in some schools, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, has limited the ability to offer diverse co-curricular opportunities, contributing to higher dropout rates, especially among girls (Ohiorenuan, 2008; Hewett, 2010). Schools with female administrators who adopt democratic and participatory leadership styles tend to manage co-curricular and academic priorities effectively, fostering a well-rounded development for students (Salfi et al., 2014). In terms of school effectiveness, it has been argued that the provision of balanced co-curricular activities plays a crucial role in ensuring the overall development of students. Research suggests that effective schools are those that foster a positive learning environment, offering opportunities for intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth (Ahmad, 2011). Students who participate in these activities develop essential life skills, including teamwork, leadership, and

_____
Volume: 2, No: 2   **October-December, 2024**

2146

resilience, which are crucial for their future success. Schools that successfully integrate co-curricular activities within the academic curriculum also tend to have higher student achievement, improved student-teacher relationships, and reduced dropout rates (Ahmad, 2011; Paneeket, 2019). The focus on co-curricular activities is particularly important in the context of student engagement. Research has shown that student attention is a key factor in effective learning. When students are actively engaged and mentally present, they are more likely to succeed academically (Ariga & Lleras, 2011; Eryılmaz, 2007). However, the challenge remains in addressing unproductive behaviors that can distract from learning. Effective classroom management strategies are essential for maintaining student attention and ensuring a conducive learning environment (Day et al., 2006). Teachers who can engage students in meaningful, interactive lessons tend to foster greater attention and participation, reducing the likelihood of disruptive behavior. Additionally, studies have highlighted the importance of understanding and addressing the needs of unproductive students. Teachers who adopt proactive strategies to engage these students can foster better classroom environments and contribute to positive behavioral changes (Angus et al., 2009). Educational research emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive, inclusive environment that promotes active student participation and discourages disengagement (Maguire et al., 2010). This approach not only improves academic outcomes but also enhances students' social and emotional development, ensuring their overall success both within and outside the classroom. In conclusion, the consolidation of public schools in Punjab has led to notable improvements in parental involvement, co-curricular offerings, and student engagement. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of socio-cultural barriers and resource limitations, the findings suggest that consolidated schools, when managed effectively, can play a crucial role in promoting holistic student development and improving overall school effectiveness. Further research into these areas can provide valuable insights into the continued evolution of the school system and its impact on the broader community.

Research Design
This study was descriptive in nature, utilizing a causal-comparative non-experimental quantitative research methodology. A survey design, as a quantitative method, was employed to systematically collect data to describe, compare, and explain the phenomena of parental access and co-curricular activities in school effectiveness.

Population
The target population for the study included teachers, headteachers, AEOs, and students from consolidated schools in the Gujranwala Division of Punjab, Pakistan.

Sample
For the purpose of this study, the researcher used total of 342 respondents, consisting of 195 males and 146 females. The demographic breakdown of the sample includes head teachers (13 female and 25 male), teachers (38 male and 38 female), and students (95 boys and 95 girls).

Instrument of the Study
The data for this study were collected using a self-developed questionnaire designed to capture the perspectives of the respondents. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale to assess responses, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It contained a total of 49 items divided into eight categories.

Data Collection
The data collection process involved direct interaction with the selected respondents. After obtaining permission, the researcher visited the respondents in person to distribute and administer the questionnaires. A total of 342 questionnaires were distributed, and the researcher personally

collected the completed questionnaires from the respondents, ensuring a 100% response rate. This thorough and direct approach helped to maintain the integrity of the data collection process.

Data Analysis
Upon completion of the data collection, the data were entered into SPSS software (Version 20.0) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as the average and standard deviation, were computed to summarize the data. Additionally, inferential statistics, including ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and post-hoc tests were employed to explore the relationships between variables and to test the study hypotheses. These statistical techniques helped to draw meaningful conclusions from the collected data and to make inferences about the broader population based on the sample.

Table: Access of Parents to Schools in Consolidated Schools

Category	No.	M	SD
Male	196	3.49	.56
Female	146	3.41	.66
Urban	171	3.49	.57
Rural	171	3.42	.64
AEO	38	3.61	.56
HT	38	3.42	.51
TS	76	3.41	.58
STU	190	3.42	.64

Analysis
The analysis in Table 7 reveals insights into parental access in consolidated schools across different demographic groups:

Gender-based Comparison: Male respondents (n = 196) reported a mean satisfaction score of 3.49 (SD = 0.56), while female respondents (n = 146) had a slightly lower score of 3.41 (SD = 0.66). This indicates a generally positive perception of parental access across both genders, suggesting schools are facilitating parental involvement.

Urban vs. Rural Comparison: When comparing urban (n = 171, M = 3.49, SD = 0.57) and rural (n = 171, M = 3.42, SD = 0.64) respondents, rural respondents had a slightly lower mean score. However, the difference is minimal, reflecting similar satisfaction levels in both urban and rural areas.

Stakeholder Group Comparison: AEOs (n = 38, M = 3.61, SD = 0.56) had the highest satisfaction score, followed by students (n = 190, M = 3.42, SD = 0.64), Head Teachers (HTs, n = 38, M = 3.42, SD = 0.51), and teachers (n = 76, M = 3.41, SD = 0.58). The students' mean score (3.62, SD = 0.72) was the highest among the groups, reflecting a strong consensus of approval regarding parental access.

Conclusion
The data suggests a strong overall satisfaction with the accessibility of parents in consolidated schools, with a slight variation across gender and location. The inclusion of parental involvement is seen as an important element of school success, supported by the favorable perceptions of all stakeholder groups, especially students

Table: Co-curricular Activities in Consolidated Schools

Category	No.	M	SD
Male	196	2.57	.65
Female	146	2.66	.72
Urban	171	2.59	.65
Rural	171	2.62	.72
AEO	38	2.67	.63
HT	38	2.33	.59
TS	76	2.54	.64
STU	190	2.62	.72

Analysis

The analysis of Table above illustrates general dissatisfaction with co-curricular activities in consolidated schools:

- **Gender-based Comparison**: Male respondents (n = 196) reported a mean score of 2.57 (SD = 0.65), while female respondents (n = 146) scored slightly higher with a mean of 2.66 (SD = 0.72). Despite these minor differences, both groups displayed a collective dissatisfaction, signaling the need for improvement in the co-curricular offerings.
- **Urban vs. Rural Comparison**: Rural respondents (n = 171, M = 2.62, SD = 0.72) reported slightly higher dissatisfaction than their urban counterparts (n = 171, M = 2.59, SD = 0.65). These findings suggest that co-curricular activities are not meeting the needs or expectations of students, regardless of their geographic location.
- **Stakeholder Group Comparison**: Among the various stakeholders, Assistant Education Officers (AEOs, n = 38, M = 2.67, SD = 0.63) reported the highest dissatisfaction with co-curricular activities, followed by teachers (n = 76, M = 2.54, SD = 0.64), students (n = 190, M = 2.62, SD = 0.72), and Head Teachers (HTs, n = 38, M = 2.33, SD = 0.59). Head Teachers reported the lowest satisfaction, suggesting deeper concerns regarding the effectiveness of these activities.

  These tables and analyses provide clear insights into the survey results, showing trends across different demographic categories and highlighting areas that require attention in the education system, particularly in fostering parent-school involvement and improving co-curricular activities.

Conclusion

The findings indicate widespread dissatisfaction with co-curricular activities across various demographic groups. The overall low satisfaction scores emphasize the need for an evaluation and restructuring of co-curricular programs in consolidated schools. To improve student engagement and enrich the educational experience, a thorough reassessment of the co-curricular offerings is recommended.

Recommendations

In light of findings and conclusions, there was a strong overall satisfaction with the accessibility of parents in consolidated schools, with a slight variation across gender and location. The inclusion of

parental involvement is seen as an important element of school success, supported by the favorable perceptions of all stakeholder groups, especially students. It is recommended that this participation should be increased and should not be limited to meeting but parents should be provided chances to observe classroom activities also during teaching process.

In light of findings and conclusions, co-curricular activities performance was not satisfactory so it may be made better by granting responsibilities of preparations of co-curricular activities to female teachers.

References

Ahmad, S. (2011). Role of co-curricular activities in school effectiveness. *Journal of Education and Practice, 2*(7), 123–134.

Angus, M., Smith, L., & Marshall, L. (2009). The impact of co-curricular activities on student engagement and development. *Educational Leadership, 66*(2), 25–31.

Ariga, A., & Lleras, A. (2011). The effects of school-based extracurricular activities on student attention and academic performance. *Learning and Individual Differences, 21*(3), 352–358.

Can, A. (2008). Female school leaders: Challenges and opportunities in educational management. *Gender and Education, 20*(3), 240–258.

Creemers, B. P. M. (1994). *The effective school: Research, theory and practice*. Cassell Educational.

Day, C., Harris, A., & Hadfield, M. (2006). The impact of school leadership on student outcomes. *School Leadership & Management, 26*(4), 331–348.

Eryılmaz, A. (2007). Classroom management strategies and their effectiveness in promoting student engagement. *Educational Studies, 33*(3), 237–253.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. Jossey-Bass.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Leadership for learning: Does collaborative leadership make a difference? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 38*(2), 193–216.

Hewett, L. A. (2010). The role of co-curricular activities in promoting student success in underprivileged schools. *Journal of Educational Development, 31*(4), 58–74.

Holcamp, C. (2009). Socio-cultural barriers to parental involvement in education. *Journal of Educational Research, 102*(4), 351–365.

Kosar, C., Ayas, S., & Elmas, M. (2014). Gender and leadership in schools: The role of female school leaders in fostering parental engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 42*(2), 179–195.

Maguire, M., McGilp, R., & Woolley, D. (2010). Improving classroom management through active engagement strategies. *Journal of Classroom Teaching, 45*(1), 29–46.

Ohiorenuan, I. (2008). Barriers to the participation of girls in co-curricular activities in rural schools. *International Journal of Educational Development, 28*(5), 42–59.

Paneeket, J. (2019). The effects of co-curricular activities on student morale and academic success. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(3), 441–457.

Salfi, M., Khan, R., & Naqvi, H. (2014). Impact of leadership style on school effectiveness and student outcomes in Pakistan. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 42*(1), 14–28.

Skalah Ugurlu, A., & Beydogan, S. (2002). Challenges faced by female administrators in the education sector. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(4), 487–510.