

Analysis Of The Role Of Para Teachers In India

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Abstract: *Para Teachers or Contract Teachers are usually the untrained teachers hired by the schools especially in rural areas to fill a vacancy for a temporary period. The future of these hired teachers is not defined & is usually unrecognized. In recent years we have seen a growth in their numbers as it has become very convenient for the state governments to utilize the services of these teachers at a very low cost. This paper tries to analyze the status of such teachers in the society, what the future holds for them & how their future can be secured.*

For the study, teachers from various schools both urban & rural as well as teachers from government & private schools were surveyed and asked to voice their opinion about the role of para teachers in the schools. The role of para teachers is discussed under various parameters & suggestions for improvement in their condition & status is provided at the end of the paper.

Keywords: *Para Teachers, Contract Teachers, Sahayak Shishak, Shiksha Mitra, Shiksha Karmi.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Para Teachers/Contract Teachers also known as Sahayak Shikshak, Shiksha Karmi are appointed by the government at the grass root level especially in rural areas as part of formal schools. The function of para teachers is same as that of the regular teachers but they are appointed for a shorter period & sometimes only to fill in a vacancy created out of retirement, absenteeism or substitution for example a vacancy created due to Maternity leave.

The state government has found this process a convenient way of recruiting teachers at a very low salary & this has resulted in an increase in the number of para teachers in the state rural areas. The use of para teachers in primary education started on a large scale in the late seventies, but the use of Para teachers in regular primary schools has started only in the eighties, the first initiative being the 'volunteer Teachers Scheme' of Government of Himachal Pradesh, in 1984. Later many states adopted this strategy. There are many challenges in recruiting contract teachers. There is no permanency or job security for them, there is no recognition, although there has been a rise in their numbers in almost all states. The teachers are mainly appointed to teach in the tribal areas or in the

primary schools, which are within one-kilometer radius. Local teachers are appointed so that commuting is not a problem.

At present in different states, more than 220 thousand Para teachers are engaged in full time schools out of which the state of Madhya Pradesh has a share of 53.7%, about 118 thousand. The rest, about 102 thousand Para teachers are distributed in states of Andhra Pradesh (35,000), Gujarat (485), Rajasthan (18,269), Arunachal Pradesh (10,961) West Bengal (8,065) Assam (2,332), Kerala (385) and Orissa (380).

If number of para teachers working in part time primary education programs, is also added, this number will go above 500 thousand. These 220 thousand para teachers have been appointed in the last 5 years and out of this about 180 thousand have been appointed during the last two years.

The para teachers are not qualified teachers nor do they have any formal training in teaching, the minimum qualification is intermediate. In some states like Rajasthan it is as low as 5th standard. In some cases, candidates having pre service training experience get weightage or preference over others in appointment. Salary for the contract teachers is as low as Rs. 900-Rs 3000 per month, which is much lower than that of the regular teachers. Para teachers are appointed for annual period. The contract is renewed annually & there is a

provision of increment in cases where the work is found satisfactory.

Litigation impacting the Para teacher schemes:

These schemes have been challenged legally in different courts. Primarily, there have been three grounds on which these programs have been challenged.

- ✓ Ensuring the provision of reservation for different categories in appointment.
- ✓ Para teachers are being paid low wages in comparison to the regular teachers, for the similar work. Thereby these teachers place the grievances that they are being discriminated. Unequal pay for equal work violates the constitutional provision of right to equality.
- ✓ The third issue is the appointment of local persons as teachers, and in some cases, only women being appointed as teachers.

The appointment of para teachers has helped states in ensuring access for a very large number of remote habitations, mostly inhabited by the deprived communities. It has also helped in providing a second teacher in single teacher schools, as well as filling up teacher vacancies in schools. The requirement of teachers has been substantially large. Filling up all the vacancies with regular teachers would have required major enhancement in the financial provision for education, especially when salaries of government employees have gone up substantially. Without substantial increase in financial allocation for education by the states, ensuring adequate teachers in schools within a very short time frame, can be possible only by appointing para teachers for less salaries. This does provide solutions for the problems of access as well as shortage of teachers for the time being but this dualism of high paid and low paid teachers in the primary education system cannot continue for a very long time without creating tension and distortions in the system.

Apart from filling in a vacancy, the presence of a para teacher has resulted in increase of enrolment of the students. But the concern arises that the quality of education being imparted on the students is compromised, the teachers being not trained & qualified is not conducive for the students. At the primary level this can still be compromised but at the senior level it can be disastrous.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researches have been done with regards to para teacher in the states, *contract teachers in India* by Sangeeta Goyal and Priyanka Pandey raises concern over the involvement of para teachers or contract teachers in the schools. If this process of using the contract teacher system as a by-way to a regular appointment continues, the education system may end up with a large number of non-professional teachers who will have the same weak performance incentives as the current regular teachers. Another research by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, Vandana Sipahimalani-Rao, *Para Teachers in India: Status and Impact*, mentions the similarity of learning outcomes for children taught by Para and regular teachers highlights the fact that the often heard concerns about the harm done by para-teacher schemes to children are misplaced. Those who voice these concerns appear to conflate

the issue of equity (of pay and working conditions for Para and regular teachers) professional status, esteem and security, with the issue of the efficacy or quality of education imparted by Para-teachers. While concerns for equity, professional status and security remain valid, the concerns about condemning children to poorer quality Para-teachers are not borne out by the available evidence.

An important and valid criticism of both regular and Para-teacher schemes is that they do not provide a career progression structure with built-in incentives for the professional development of teachers. Pritchett and Pande (2006)³ argue that the current teacher compensation system in India is unprofessional and anti-teacher, as it does not reward performance. Govinda and Josephine (2004) also have useful practical policy recommendations to reform the Para-teacher program, many of which corroborate the suggestions made by Pritchett and Pande Kingdon and Sipahimalani-Rao (2009). Their suggestions for a single professional development ladder for para and regular teachers deserves serious consideration because building growth incentives into teacher contracts can be helpful in raising teachers motivation levels. They would also help to exit the existing "dual" system of regular and Para teachers, which creates complexes amongst teachers and brings down their morale.

NEED OF THE RESEARCH

This research will try to study the importance of the role of para teachers in the rural & tribal areas. Is it important to retain such untrained teachers in the schools? Not much work has been done in this regard. Whatever little work has been done has got many limitations, as the view of the trained teachers has not been taken into consideration. The status of the para teachers has not been underlined. This paper would try to study the problem faced by the Para Teachers from a different angle and try to fill in the gaps in the existing work.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To find out about the awareness of the conditions of Para Teachers.
- ✓ To find out whether Para Teachers are required in schools.
- ✓ To find what should be the future role of the Para Teachers.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

The primary data has been collected in the year 2016 from 86 qualified schoolteachers. A qualitative analysis was done in which the teachers from various Schools were given a close-ended questionnaire in which they were asked to rate their views on the para teachers under three categories-Yes, No or Can't Say.

SAMPLE: The sample were from trained or qualified teachers from different categories of school both in rural & urban areas as well as government & private schools.

SAMPLE SIZE: Consisted of 86 Qualified Teachers.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

In the first question the respondents were asked whether they think that para teachers are qualified or not. Maximum number of teachers (29/86) said they “Can’t Say” whether they were qualified or not. We can assume here that the teachers were not sure about the qualifications of the para teachers, as the question was general & not targeted towards a particular group or school.

In the second question the teachers were asked whether they thought that the Para teachers were underpaid. Maximum number of respondents (55/86) said “Yes”. The response proved that the teachers were aware of the status of the para teachers on the bases of salary. They agreed that in comparison to regular trained teachers the salary of the para teachers was less.

In the third question it was asked to the respondents whether they considered that teaching by untrained para teachers was disastrous for the students? Maximum number (34/86) of teachers said “No”. This was a surprise as the teachers who themselves are trained are finding no harm for the students to be taught by untrained teachers. It can be a serious hurdle for the students if incorrect knowledge is imparted on them.

In the fourth question the respondents were asked whether the para teachers should continue teaching. Maximum number (42/86) said “Yes” the para teachers should continue to teach in the schools.

In the fifth question the respondents were asked whether they considered teaching by para teachers as part of social work? Maximum number (29/86) agreed to the fact and chose the option “yes” that such teachers were actually doing a social work.

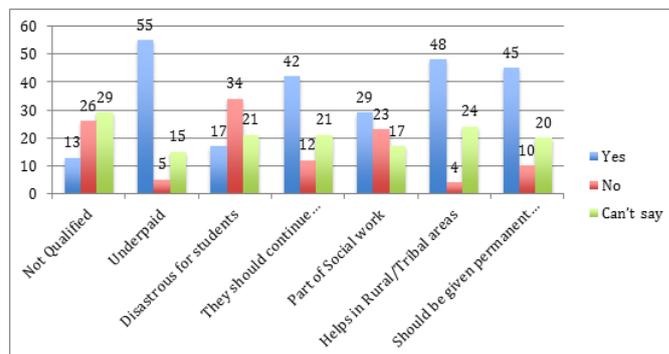
In the sixth question the respondents were asked whether teaching by Para teachers helps in the tribal & rural areas. Maximum number (48/86) said “Yes” they considered that the para teachers were helpful in educating children in the rural & tribal areas.

In the seventh & last question the respondents were asked whether the para teachers should be given permanent status. Maximum number (45/86) of teachers said “Yes” the para teachers should be given permanent status.

	Yes	No	Can’t say
Not Qualified	13	26	29
Underpaid	55	5	15
Disastrous for students	17	34	21
They should continue Teaching	42	12	21
Part of Social work	29	23	17
Helps in Rural/Tribal areas	48	4	24
Should be given permanent status	45	10	20

Source: Primary Data

Table 1: Response of the Teachers: Regarding Para Teachers



Source: Primary Data

Figure: 1 Comparison of Responses

V. RECOMMENDATION & SUGGESTION

From the above findings it can be analyzed that the trained teachers are aware of the conditions of the para or contract teachers, from their viewpoint it is a necessary evil that is prevalent in the rural & tribal areas in the states. The number of such teachers is growing rapidly though no firm efforts are being made to improve the condition of such teachers or to train them. It is the duty of the state government to work towards the following features to improve the condition of the para teachers.

- ✓ Formal Training to be given to para teachers.
- ✓ Work towards enhancing their knowledge & skill.
- ✓ Involve them in other activities of school like supervision of mid day meal & relieve the mainstream teachers from this duty so that they can concentrate on teaching.
- ✓ As the para teachers are fluent in the local languages they should be indulged in promoting the awareness for education in the tribal areas. They should be trained to act as spokesperson for the enrolment in schools.
- ✓ Government should work towards giving a proper status to para teachers & scope for a better future by providing them further education & permanency in job.
- ✓ Para teachers should also be used as health & sanitation ambassadors in their areas. For this also proper training should be given.

VI. CONCLUSION

The above study proves that para teachers are a reality & their importance in the rural & tribal areas cannot be denied. With better facilities, guidance & training they can become an integral part of the education system as the number of para teachers is growing at a rapid stage, they being untrained is a drawback. This definitely is a hurdle for the students, correct knowledge has to be imparted to the students, which can be done only by trained teachers. The above analysis also fulfills the objectives of this paper as it answers all the questions that were concerning the condition of the para teachers. To provide status & permanency for the para teachers government will have to implement firm policies so that the talent of such volunteers is brought to proper use in the schools & some respectable status is given to the para teachers to secure their future.

VII. LIMITATIONS

The limitation of this research is that only the solutions can be voiced, it is eventually in the hands of the government to introduce firm reforms for the para teachers. The sample population consisted of trained teachers, who have a second hand information regarding the condition of the para teachers, but still they have tried to answer all the questions addressed to them in complete honesty. The other limitation being small number of respondents, maybe a larger data could have given a broader input regarding this problem.

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