

## COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF REGULAR AND CONTRACT TEACHERS AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was aimed at investigating the performance of regular and contract English teachers at government elementary schools located in southern Punjab province of Pakistan. As students' achievement was taken as measure of teachers' performance, their test scores were also compared in terms of gender and locality. For this purpose, a test in English subject was administered personally by researchers to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students of four purposefully selected schools in District Rahim Yar Khan. The students' obtained test scores were analyzed by working out mean values, standard deviation and applying t-test of independent samples. It was concluded that there was significant difference in achievement of students taught by regular and contract teachers, and contract teachers performed relatively better than regular teachers. Comparison of performance of regular and contract teachers revealed that in both cases urban school students scored higher than students belonging to rural area. It is recommended that government of Punjab should not rely perpetually on contract policy for achieving the goal of enhancing financial efficiency and academic productivity, and appropriate measures may be taken for enhancing quality of school management and supervision, introducing effective reward and compensation system, and training teachers in modern teaching strategies.*

**Keywords:** Contract teachers, Contract appointment policy, School management, financial efficiency, Academic performance, Student achievement

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher is considered to be one of the important components of teaching-learning process. That is why; nations throughout the world make huge investments on training and recruitment of teachers for education sector. For several reasons, the practice of hiring contract teachers along with regular teachers is on the rise globally. For example, use of contract teachers has been significantly increased lately in Africa, Latin America and South Asia (Kingdon, Aslam, Rawal & Das, 2013). Contract teacher may be defined as a teacher who is offered job "on a fixed-term rather than a permanent contract" (Kingdon et al., 2013, p.8). Four major characteristics of contract teachers identified by Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2008) include: (i) their appointment is made on the basis of annual renewable contracts, but renewal not guaranteed, (ii) they are likely to have less qualification and formal training as compared to regular teachers, (iii) their remuneration is much less than regular teachers, and (iv) they are generally residing in the area close to school.

The question as to why contract teachers are preferred over regular teachers may be looked at on equity and efficiency grounds. Kingdon et al. (2013) explain three possible reasons for

policy of hiring contract teachers: increasing access to education in underprivileged communities; abolishing single-teacher schools trend and getting rid of multi-grade teaching; and decreasing student-teacher ratio. Zafeirakou (2007) also identifies three broad categories of causes for recruiting contract teachers: i) financial reasons: lacking resources to appoint permanent teachers; ii) deployment reasons: contract teachers can easily be inducted from the local community; and iii) accountability reasons: accountability may be increased by engaging local community. In most countries, shortage of resources coupled with lack of competencies and local initiative is a probable rationale to hire teachers for a short period of time (Bourdon., Frölich & Michaelowa, 2007).

Like other developing countries, the policy of hiring employees on contract was also adopted in Pakistan. Government of Punjab specifically started contract appointments on large scale in health sector from 1997 and this mode became more visible in education department from 2000-2001 and onward (Mahmood, 2011). Keeping in view its past experiences, Government of Punjab formally approved and announced Contract Appointment Policy (CAP) in 2004 which gave public organizations mandate of appointing employees on fixed term contracts and removed to great extent legal complexities that could affect implementation of contract mode of employment (Cyan, 2009). Financial constraints on the part of government mainly provided rationale for preference of CAP over regular appointments; however the contract policy was also expected to yield administrative benefits. Some of administrative factors that paved way for contract policy may include increased trend of absenteeism among regular government employees, relatively poor work performance of regular servants, complexities in accountability process under Efficiency and Discipline (E&D) rules, massive managerial costs on transfer of regular employees, neglecting job performance in regular employees' promotion to next grade, and comparatively better performance of private organizations' employees who are appointed on contract generally (Government of the Punjab, 2004).

With the adoption of contract policy in education department of Punjab province, the nomenclature of school teachers' positions were changed with new titles. Previously appointed Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) teachers were replaced by elementary school educators (ESEs) and senior elementary school educators (SESEs), whereas secondary school educators (SSEs) substituted secondary school teachers. Contrary to regular teachers, monthly salary and annual increment of contract teachers were fixed but the required general and professional qualifications were increased (Mahmood, 2011). In order to attain 100% enrollment and retention, the recruitment of educators on contract was made in the subjects of science, mathematics, computer science and English (Government of the Punjab, 2011). In June 2008, the number of contract teachers hired for elementary and secondary schools reached 48,730, which was 16.26% of total school teachers in Punjab (Cyan, 2009).

As "the relative effectiveness of contract and regular teachers is one of the most policy-relevant and quality-focused issues in education today" (Kingdon et al., 2013, p.8), several researchers (e.g. Atherton & Kingdon, 2010; Duflo, Dupas & Kremer, 2009; Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2008) have attempted to investigate the contract teachers' performance at schools. In Pakistan, a few studies addressed issues related to contract teachers; especially their academic performance with relation to students' learning outcomes is not given due attention by the researchers. In the background of CAP adopted by Punjab government, an important study was conducted by Cyan (2009) to analyze the implementation of the policy. For this purpose, the opinions and perceptions of the contract employees were surveyed in health and education departments. In his Ph.D. research, Habib (2010) examined teacher absenteeism in the context of Pakistan's national teacher contract policy reform. Mahmood (2011), in his Ph.D. study, also explored the attitude of contractual and regular teachers

towards job satisfaction and job performance at government secondary schools of Punjab province. The present study is an attempt to fill the gap, and make comparison of performance of regular and contract teachers with reference to students' achievement.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was aimed at investigating the performance of regular and contract English teachers at government elementary schools located in southern Punjab province of Pakistan. As students' achievement was taken as measure of teachers' performance, their test scores were also compared in terms of gender and locality. Delimited to government elementary schools of Rahim Yar Khan District, this study endeavored to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any difference in the performance of regular and contractual English teachers working at government elementary schools?
2. Is there any difference in the test scores of male and female students taught by regular teachers as well as contract teachers?
3. Is there any difference in the test scores of rural and urban students taught by both the groups of teachers?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Since comparison of performance of regular and contract English teachers was desired by measuring students' achievement, the population for this study included all the students studying in government elementary schools of Punjab province. For this purpose, four elementary schools (where regular teachers were teaching English) and other four elementary schools (where contract teachers were teaching English) were chosen purposefully from urban and rural areas of District Rahim Yar Khan. All the 7<sup>th</sup> class students of these schools were included in the sample of the study. As a whole, a test in English subject was administered personally by researchers to 309 students at their respective schools. Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), students' obtained test scores were analyzed by working out mean values, standard deviation and applying t-test of independent samples. Statistical significance for t-test was determined at 0.05 alpha level.

#### **The Research Instrument**

A test having multiple choice questions (MCQs) was used as an instrument for data collection. Pertaining to 12 chapters of 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, 50 item test was self-constructed and validated in the light of two subject specialists' judgment. For each MCQ, three options for an answer were given to the students. In final version of the test, five questions were taken from each of chapter 1 and 2 whereas four questions were included from each of 3 to 12 chapters. Students were given maximum 40 minutes to take the test. Personal information such as age, locality and gender etc. were also collected from the students.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic data shows that out of 309 students who took test, 159 (51.5%) were male and 150 (48.5%) were female. One hundred and fifty five (50.2%) students were taught by contract teachers whereas regular teachers were teaching 154 (49.8%) students. One hundred and seventy nine (57.9%) students belonged to urban area while 130 (42.1%) students were residing in rural area. Age of 149 (48.2%) students was 12 years, 109 (35.3%) students were of 13 years and 51 (16.5%) students were 14 years old.

Table 1 shows that there was significant difference in achievement of students taught by regular and contract teachers. It may be implied that academic performance of regular teachers was significantly different from that of contract teachers. It is clear from mean scores that contract teachers ( $M = 42.55$ ) performed relatively better than regular teachers ( $M = 27.66$ ). The results of this study are in line with the findings of several researches undertaken especially in Africa (Bourdan, Frolich & Michealowa, 2007; De Laat, & Vegas, 2005; Duflo, Dupas & Kremer, 2009) and India (Banerjee, Cole, Duflo & Linden, 2007; Kingdon et al., 2013; Muralidharan & Sundararaman 2010). For instance, Atherton and Kingdon (2010) collected non-experimental evidence through a school survey in two states of India, and found contract teachers more efficient as compared to regular teachers. Bourdon Frölich and Michaelowa (2007) investigated effect of contract teachers on students' performance and concluded that as compared to civil servant teachers, contract teachers were better in responding to the needs of learners having serious academic deficiencies. In an experimental study including schools in Kenya, Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2007) identified increase in performance (measured by test scores) of students taught by a contract teacher. However in a small scale study conducted by Jayakumar (2011) involving municipal schools in Delhi India, no difference was observed between performance of contract teachers and permanent teachers. In the same line, a study conducted in West Africa reported no difference in achievement of students taught by contract teachers and regular teachers (Fyfe, 2007).

**Table 1. Comparison of students' scores taught by regular and contract teachers**

<i>Demographic Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Job Status	Regular	154	27.66	7.39	-23.377	.000*
	Contract	155	42.55	2.881		

$\alpha = 0.05$

The weaker performance of regular teachers, observed in this study, may be attributed to several reasons. High absenteeism rate and low teaching effort on the part of regular teachers may be the critical factors that are generally resulted by weak supervision and accountability at schools. Kingdon et al. (2013) maintain that permanent teachers in developing countries are virtually un-sackable, once they are appointed in government schools. On the other hand, contract teachers with few discipline problems and high attendance rate (Cyan, 2009) tend to work more diligently to give satisfactory performance at schools. It is also required for extension of their contract periods.

**Table 2. Comparison of students' scores taught by regular teachers**

<i>Demographic Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender	Male	79	31.06	7.650	6.651	.000*
	Female	75	24.07	5.076		
Locality	Rural	65	25.22	6.259	-3.640,	.000*
	Urban	89	29.44	7.671		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 depicts comparison of students' scores taught by regular teachers on gender and locality variables. It is interesting to note that male ( $M = 31.06$ ) and female students' ( $M =$

24.07) achievement was statistically different. The same pattern was observed for achievement of students studying in rural ( $M = 25.22$ ) and urban schools ( $M = 29.44$ ). Better performance of male students and urban students reflect that male regular teachers specifically working in urban schools performed higher than female teachers and rural school teachers.

Comparison of students' achievement taught by contract teachers is reflected in Table 3. It is evident from the data that female students ( $M = 43.11$ ) scored significantly higher than male students ( $M = 42.04$ ), and urban students' test scores ( $M = 43.88$ ) were significantly better than their rural school counterparts ( $M = 40.72$ ). It may be derived from these results that unlike regular teachers female contract teachers demonstrated comparatively more improved performance. On the other hand, similar to regular teachers the performance of urban contract teachers was better than rural school teachers. One common thing has emerged from the comparison of performance of regular and contract teachers that in both cases urban school students scored higher than students belonging to rural area. It may be due to the fact that urban schools compared to rural schools have relatively better facilities, learning environment and student intake.

**Table 3. Comparison of students' scores taught by contract teachers**

<i>Demographic Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender	Male	80	42.04	2.749	-2.342	.02*
	Female	75	43.11	2.934		
Locality	Rural	65	40.72	3.080	-7.979	.000*
	Urban	90	43.88	1.823		

$\alpha = 0.05$

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Involving 7<sup>th</sup> grade students of eight urban and rural government elementary schools, this study investigated the academic performance of regular and contract teachers. The students' achievement in English subject was taken as measure of teachers' performance. As a matter of fact, students' test scores may be affected by several other factors than teaching performance of instructors. They may include school facilities, classroom conditions, students' ability, students' socio-economic background etc. It is admitted that the present study was not experimental, and aforesaid factors were not controlled by researchers. However despite this limitation, this study produced authentic data which may give some insight into the issue of contract teachers' effectiveness in Pakistan. The results of the study may help the policy makers to amend and re-adjust the contract appointment policy for school teachers in Punjab. The major conclusion that emerged from this research points out better academic performance of contract teachers as opposed to regular teachers. Furthermore it is concluded that in terms of students' test scores, both regular and contract teachers working in urban schools outperformed their rural counterparts.

In the light of results of this study, it is observed that the contract policy in Punjab may be made more effective "if the incentives and disincentives are aligned within the contracts and effectively enforced" (Kingdon et al., 2013, p.4). Following the viewpoint of Fyfe (2007), it is recommended that government of Punjab should not rely perpetually on contract policy for achieving the goal of enhancing financial efficiency and academic productivity of schools,

and should gradually phase out this policy from education department. For improving the work performance of regular teachers, there is a dire need to motivate and make them accountable. Appropriate measures may be taken for enhancing quality of school management and supervision, introducing effective reward and compensation system, and training teachers in modern teaching strategies. More concerted efforts are required to update and improve the infrastructure of rural schools.

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