

“Teachers' absence in govt schools increases: WB”

*The News* (Pakistan)

April 21, 2008

Islamabad: A World Bank (WB) report reveals that the absenteeism in public sector schools increased at senior level owing to various reasons including election duties or participation in district level meeting of education department.

But this absenteeism of public sector school teachers also resulted into increased pay and other perks and privileges rather than reducing it, thus quality of education compromised when teachers are not present in schools.

The World Bank arranged a dissemination conference of Learning and Educational Achievement in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) report here at the Bank's office on Saturday.

The LEAPS team included Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, Ijaz Khawaja, Tara Vishwanath and Trsistan Zajonc. The LEAPS team conducted survey of 112 villages of Punjab to assess the quality of education in Pakistan.

The participants of the conference pointed out that the private school owners are exploiting teachers by giving them too much low salaries thus there is requirements to bring regulation in this sector.

However, the WB experts were of the view that there was no need of such regulations because it would result into discouraging the private investors to provide education facilitates where the government remained unable to deliver in an effective manner.

The LEAPS team pointed out that the public sector teachers are more qualified and trained compared to private sector. The private sector teachers having qualification of MA are just 4 percent whereas MA degree holders in public sector are around 90 percent.

The private school teachers are mostly female and a major chunk of them dropped out after their marriages.

The WB team also found that the salaries of government school teachers are five time more than the private school teachers. Despite this fact that the teachers are more trained in public sector but there is no positive impact on learning of students. “More training of public sector school teachers resulted into increased increments and salaries and there is no benefit to students in terms of improved learning,” they added.

The LEAPS team also asked the government to focus more on improving the performance of teachers rather than constructing infrastructure. There should also be accountability mechanism for checking the performance of the teachers, the team further said.

While overall enrolments increased by 10 percent between 2001 and 2005. The report says quality of education is lagging and children perform significantly below curricular standards for common subjects and concepts at their grade-level.

Children in private schools score significantly higher than those in government schools, even when they are from the same village. In fact, it will take children in government schools 1.5-2.5 years of additional schooling to catch up to where private school children are in class 3. Better learning results in private schools do not arise from higher costs, it costs half as much to educate a child in a private school (Rs1000 per year) compared to a government school (Rs2000 per year).

The report advances a modified role of the government for discussion and debate. This modified role of the government would focus on policies complementary to, rather than in competition with, the private sector.

One strand of this modified role would be for the government to provide information. The report suggests, for instance, that information on the quality of every school - public or private - would enable households to make informed decisions and increase beneficial competition between schools. The suggestion is based, in part, on the results of an ongoing Randomised Control Treatment Experiment.

It also proposes that the government corrects the imbalances arising from unequal geographical access to private schools, and ensures that all children acquire a set of basic competencies.

Lastly, it urges the government to become an innovator willing to experiment with and evaluate “out-of-the-box” reforms such as public-private partnerships where financial support is given to children regardless of the school chosen.

Details:

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Document Source: The News (Pakistan)