



Problems Faced by External School Monitors during School Monitoring in Punjab

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Abstract: *The main aim of this study was to identify the external monitors' problems and their influence on their performance in monitoring the elementary schools. The research was a sequential explanatory mixed method. All Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) (male and female) working as external monitors in Punjab were the study population. Firstly, districts were randomly selected, and then 4 MEAs from each sampled section were purposively selected. A self-developed questionnaire on the five-point Likert scale and a semi-structured interview were used as study instruments. The qualitative data were coded, themes were developed, and descriptive interpretation was carried out. It is found that external monitors have a burden of work, a lack of conveyance and inspection allowance, and a budget for stationery. They faced political interference and were not satisfied with the training. Consequently, the lack of facilities influences their performance. To improve their performance, these problems may be solved.*

Key Words: External School Monitoring System, Punjab, Problems, External monitors

Introduction

Monitoring is a form of evaluation that gathers actual information for program improvement (Noh, 2006). A successful monitoring system integrates knowledge at all levels to provide a performance image for the management team and, ultimately, the governing body and helps to promote partner decision-making and learning (Marriott & Goyder, 2009). As with other departments, all countries around the world have their education monitoring systems. Either it is internal or external, or both. It carefully observes the educational program either according to the schedule set or not (Mahmood, 2017).

Appropriate, comprehensive, inclusive, and consistent monitoring and supervision are some of the most significant keys to any

educational program that is effectively implemented (Kiani et al., 2011). Punjab's chief minister launched the monitoring program in four Punjab districts, i.e., Jhelum, Chakwal, Attock, and Rawalpindi, in July 2004 to improve primary education (Kiani et al., 2011; Mahmood, 2017).

There were only four monitoring evaluation assistants (MEAs) to track the whole district school. But this initiative couldn't give the schools the appropriate outcomes for improvement. Later in 2006, Punjab's chief minister launched a free monitoring program to enact improvements and guidance in education. Its goal was to monitor and report directly on school progress. The monitoring team is related to educational institutions in such a way that they can independently observe

the everyday performance. MEAs have a responsibility to report, not the accountability of teachers. Accountability can be practiced by the district government and higher education authorities ([Kiani et al., 2011](#)).

Monitoring and evaluation are important for improvement initiatives, particularly those in the social sector such as education. The Punjab government has set up the Program Monitoring Implementation Unit (PMIU) for monitoring and evaluation of the education sector of Punjab. District monitoring officers (DMOs) directly report to PMIU. Teachers' attendance, participation in the training workshops based on the cluster for ongoing professional growth, textbook and stipend delivery, and Punjab Schools Roadmap overall implementation are monitored by DMOs. Monitoring and evaluation have enabled the department to constantly monitor, and other stakeholders exchange the reports of monitoring too, at district, provincial, and PMIU levels. All the heads of the relevant departments are present during the monthly review meetings. The decisions made at the meetings are followed by Chief Secretary Punjab at the monthly meeting of the Secretaries Committee and the Commissioners Conference for implementation and reporting. This indicates the Punjab government's political and technical dedication to implementing the Punjab School Roadmap. The Punjab government has engaged foreign partners such as the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank not only as sponsors but also as implementing partners. As a result, DFID and the World Bank have given technical and professional assistance to introduce the Punjab School Roadmap ([Malik, 2011](#); [Mahmood, 2017](#); [Nadeem, 2019](#)).

All Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) are responsible for visiting at least three schools in a day, including two schools at the elementary level and one secondary school. They collect information regarding different indicators according to prescribed performance and report it to the DMO office of the relevant district. The data collected by MEAs is entered

and processed daily, and reports are generated about the performance of schools ([Nadeem & Saadi, 2019](#)).

Monitoring and evaluation are the basis for improving the school. Valuable feedback helps to set targets for improving the schools. A school must monitor its activities and review them. The main purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to provide meaningful guidance for decision-making by the relevant authorities. Decision-making will be well guided and will accomplish the mission. Adequate resources can be offered to improve process performance ([Saeed, Dilshad & Nasir, 2013](#)).

MEAs had no training for school monitoring ([Kiani, 2011](#)). Since they cannot monitor the schemes of study, lesson planning, classroom management, etc., besides paperwork, they can't do well ([Mahmood, 2017](#)). Therefore, it was suggested by [Mathew \(2012\)](#) that before MEAs' appointment, a fifteen orientation course on monitoring should be provided to them ([Kiani, 2011](#)).

Therefore, educational experts and professionally experienced principals must be selected for better monitoring ([Saeed, Dilshad & Nasir, 2013](#)). But in the study by [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), it was found that MEAs were well trained for education sector monitoring. It was stated in the study by [Mahmood \(2017\)](#) that external monitors have a burden of work. Some problems and difficulties faced by MEAs during performing their duties, i.e., threats by different personnel on reporting the absence of staff, MEAs' low salaries, comparatively a larger number of schools to be monitored, long distances, difficulty in networking in remote areas, no travel allowance for MEAs as they have to travel throughout the day. Monitoring officers are performing their duties in a better way ([Nadeem & Saadi, 2019](#)).

In the study of [Mohammed \(2015\)](#), it was found that due to a lack of time, the school's monitoring is superficial and purely formal. The majority of teachers are teaching in a traditional style. They are also unprepared to accept new instructional skills that represent their unprofessional behavior ([Batool, Arif, & Nadeem, 2021](#)). According to [Salleh and Hatta](#)

(2019), professional development is a constant process, and intended outputs may not be attained without educators' professional development. School monitors in Pakistan face a burden of work that influences the quality of their monitoring tasks (Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), 2003). External monitors have a high workload and inadequate transport facilities, and their schools are scattered (Naviwala, 2016), lack of inspection allowance (Nadeem & Saadi, 2019), lack of funds (Shah, 2003), lack of stationary (Ahmad et al., 2013; Shah, 2003), limited resources (Kiani, 2016), lack of transport allowance (Nadeem & Saadi, 2019).

Federal or provincial education allocations do not match these figures (Dawn, 2016; Khan, 2016; Setna, 2016). But in the study of Mahmood (2015), it was found that external monitors have transport facilities. If these problems are addressed, their motivation will be higher and their performance will be increased. There is less coordination between the education department and the DMO office. It is recommended that quarterly joint meetings of DMO, MEAs, DEOs, and Head Teachers may be arranged for awareness about progress, plans, targets, and modes of action. Documentation of reports by MEAs should be maintained and improvement plans should be based on these reports (Nadeem & Saadi, 2019).

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

- a) Recognize the problems faced by external monitors.
- b) Find out the influence of monitors' problems on their performance in monitoring the elementary schools.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions of study:

- a) What kinds of problems are faced by external school monitors at the elementary level?

- b) What is the influence of the monitors' problems on their performance in monitoring the elementary schools?

Research Methodology

The research was a sequential explanatory mixed method. All Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) (male and female) working as external school monitors in Punjab to improve the quality of education were included in the study population. First of all, fifty percent of the divisions were selected randomly as samples, and then two districts were chosen randomly from among the sampled divisions of Punjab. All research participants are equally likely to be chosen in random sampling (Roubille et al., 2015). From every 10 sampled districts, 4 MEAs were selected purposively. Purposive sampling is used when a specific sample is required or the opinion of experts in a specific field is the topic of concern (Martínez-Mesae et al., 2016). As an instrument of the study, a self-developed questionnaire on the five-point Likert scale and a semi-structured interview were used. The instruments were validated through expert opinion for face and content validity. The instruments were finalized after incorporating the given suggestions from the experts. The quantitative data was tabulated methodically and systematically before being interpreted graphically and descriptively. The data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. The qualitative data were analyzed using coding, which resulted in the generation of themes and their interpretation in a descriptive manner.

Results

Quantitative data figures were developed on mean values basis. The data was interpreted descriptively as well. The qualitative data was developed on the perceived responses of MEAs in a descriptive way.

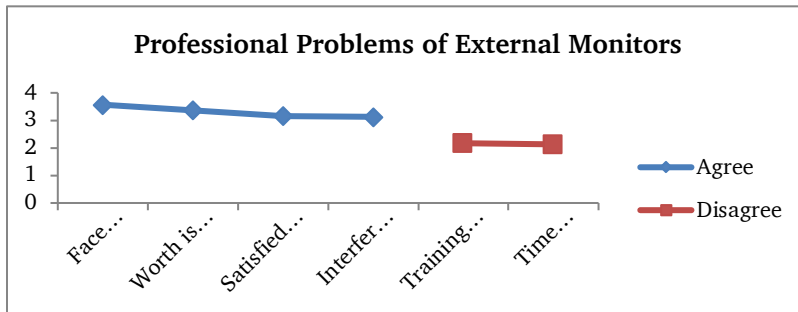


Figure 1: Monitors professional problems

Figure 1 indicates that external monitors are satisfied with the behavior of high officers; worth is given to their school monitoring reports, but interference is present in performing their duties; and also, they face references from the school teachers with mean values of 3.16, 3.37, 3.13, and 3.57, respectively. Further, it shows that training is not provided to them by the department and the time frame for monitoring the school is not appropriate, with a mean score of 2.17 and 2.13, respectively.

The data collected through interviews conducted for MEAs showed that external monitors faced some kind of professional problems in implementing an external monitoring system. The majority of MEAs stated that training is not arranged for them. One of the MEAs said:

“No training is arranged for us. Our work is just data collection from assigned schools. Therefore, we are not able to monitor the activities of the classroom, and we can't do better than paperwork. We just collect data like training guides and training certificates of teachers to evaluate their performance.”

The action is taken on MEAs' monitoring reports. The majority of the MEAs were in favor of this. It was told by MEAs that:

“Reports are sent to the concerned EDO for required actions in light of the information to increase the performance of the school. Third-Party Validation is done on the information

recorded. Also, collected data is sent to the PMIU for analysis.”

Political interference is present in actions taken against teachers. Most of the MEAs have the same views. One of the MEAs said:

“There is a lot of political involvement in the education system. This caused hindrance in our work, especially action taken against the teacher.”

MEAs are satisfied with the behaviors of higher officers. The majority of the MEAs were in favor of this. It was stated by MEAs that:

“We worked under the direction of our officers. The behavior of our officers is satisfactory. They communicatively behave with us. We feel at ease when communicating with them.”

Interference is present in performing duties. Most of the MEAs have the same views. One of the MEAs said:

“Interference is present by higher authorities, especially political interference in performing duties. This caused difficulty in performing our work independently.”

Time for monitoring is not sufficient. Most of the MEAs were in favor of this. It was stated by MEAs that:

“We are allocated a school cluster in such a way that four schools per day can be visited. But the available time for school monitoring is not enough. That's why we faced problems in monitoring the schools according to the instruction.”

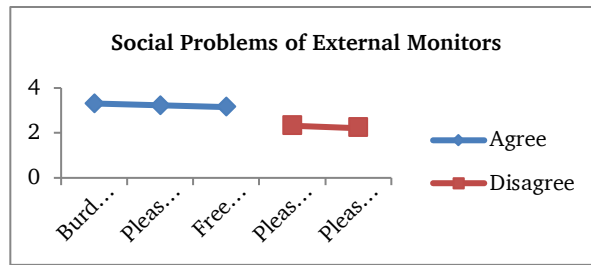


Figure 2: Monitors Social Problems

Figure 2 shows that external monitors have a burden of work, pleasant relations with headteachers, and are free from social interference in their work, with mean values of 3.31, 3.23, and 3.15. Further, it indicates that they do not have pleasant relations with the members of society and teachers, with mean values of 2.32, and 2.21, respectively.

The qualitative data, which was collected from MEAs, indicated that external monitors faced some kind of social problems in implementing an external monitoring system. Most of the MEAs were of the view that they have a burden of work after routine hours of work. One of the MEAs stated that:

“We do extra work after routine hours and have the burden of work.”

The majority of the MEAs were in favor of having pleasant relations with headteachers. It was stated by MEAs that:

“Our relations with the heads of schools have become good. We interact with heads of schools for data collection, and most of the monitoring time is spent with the heads of particular schools.”

Most of the MEAs were of the view that social interference is not present in their work. One of the MEAs stated that:

“Our schools are rotated every month, and we are not confined to specific areas. Thus, social interference is not present in our work.”

The majority of the MEAs were in favor that they do not have pleasant relations with society members. It was stated by MEAs that:

“Our relationships with the locals are not good because our circles are rotated every month and our task is only to collect data from schools, which prevents us from establishing personal relationships with locals in a specific area.”

Most of the MEAs were of the view that they do not have pleasant relations with teachers. It was told by one of the MEAs that:

“Our relations with teachers have not improved. We are unable to form personal relationships with teachers in a specific area because our circles are rotated each month and we demand work from them.”

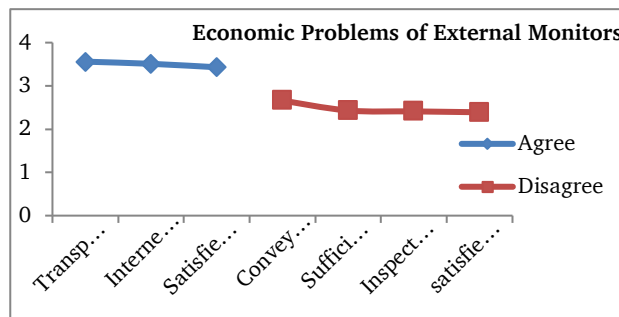


Figure 3: Monitors' Economic Problems

Figure 3 indicates that external monitors have facilities for transport and the internet, with mean values of 3.56 and 3.51, respectively. Further, it shows that they lack conveyance allowance and insufficient budget for stationery, and inspection allowance is also not provided to them, with mean scores of 2.66, 2.42, and 2.41, respectively.

The data collected through interviews conducted for MEAs revealed that external monitors faced some kind of economic problems in implementing an external monitoring system. Most of the MEAs have the view that the transport facility is provided to them. One of the MEAs said:

“Motorbikes are provided to us as a transport facility that helps us in moving from office to school.”

The majority of the MEAs were of the view that an internet facility is provided to them. It was stated by one of the MEAs that:

“Our work is data collection on iPhones and then reporting data online. That’s why the internet facility is provided to us, but in far-flung areas where internet signal is weak, we face problems in online reporting.”

Most of the MEAs were in favor that they were satisfied with the annual increment. One of the MEAs told that:

“We are satisfied with our annual increment.”

The majority of the MEAs were of the same view that they lacked conveyance allowance. It was told by one of the MEAs that:

“For monitoring purposes, no conveyance allowance is given to us. Also, in bad weather conditions, we faced problems on motorbikes.”

The majority of the MEAs were in favor of this, that they lack a budget for stationery allowance. It was told by one of the MEAs that:

“The budget for stationery is inadequate because the government does not provide funds for that purpose. When we visit the schools, surprisingly, we need stationery for preparing monitoring reports in rough form.”

Most of the MEAs have viewed that no inspection allowance is provided to them. One of the MEAs told that:

“The department hires us on a contractual basis, and the relevant DMOs review our performance at the end of the contract period. Furthermore, we are funded by the Chief Minister’s Monitoring Force. Therefore, no inspection allowance is given to us.”

Most of the MEAs have viewed that they were not satisfied with their salaries. One of the MEAs told that:

“We are not satisfied with our salaries. Because the salaries that are provided to us do not meet our needs, we manage travel expenses like repairing motorbikes, petrol, etc. with our salaries while monitoring the schools.”

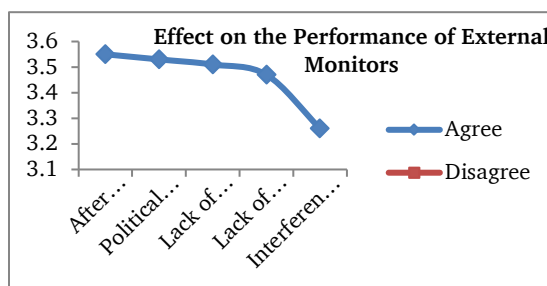


Figure 4: Effect on the Performance of Monitors

Figure 4 shows that after office timings, a high official load disturbed their domestic life, political interference caused obstacles for them in transparent monitoring, lack of training

made it difficult for them to monitor the classroom activities, and social interference caused disturbance for them to give full

attention to their work, with mean values of 3.55, 3.53, 3.51, and 3.26, respectively.

The qualitative data collected from MEAs indicates that problems faced by external monitors affect their performance. The majority of the MEAs feel that they have a burden of work after routine hours of work disturb their domestic life. It was stated by one of the MEAs that:

“When we have the burden of work after the routine hours, it affects our domestic life as we have some family responsibilities and when we do not fulfill these responsibilities, it causes a disturbance in our life.”

Most of the MEAs were of the view that political interference caused obstacles to transparent monitoring. One of the MEAs told that:

“When we prepared reports against teachers and other responsible authorities on their inefficiencies, they used political references. So, with the involvement of politics, our monitoring reports lose transparency and are worthless.”

The majority of the MEAs have viewed that lack of training makes it difficult to monitor classroom activities. It was stated by one of the MEAs that:

“Our work is just data collection; that’s why training is not provided to us. But when we monitor the schools, the lack of training makes it difficult for us to monitor the classroom activities and also make suggestions to teachers on their weak areas.”

Most of the MEAs were of the view that lack of allowances or funds caused problems in official matters. One of the MEAs stated that:

“Lack of funds or allowances for stationery, transport, etc. caused problems in our official matters.”

The majority of the MEAs have viewed that interference cause disturbance in giving full attention to their office work. It was told by one of the MEAs that:

“Interference by higher authorities caused a disturbance in performing official work properly. When someone works independently, it enhances

the efficiency of work, but when interfered with work, it would lessen the worth of work.”

Discussion

Based on the study results, it was found that external monitors are satisfied with the behavior of high-ranking officers, but interference is present in their performance of duties. They faced references from the school teachers. In the study by [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), the same results were found: even on reporting the absence of staff, they were threatened by different personnel. Another problem [Batool, Arif, and Nadeem \(2021\)](#) stated, most teachers are unprepared to accept new instructional skills that represent their unprofessional behavior. Thus, teachers’ professional development is needed to get the intended outputs ([Salleh & Hatta, 2019](#)). It was found that value is given to their school monitoring reports, as it was stated in the study by [Kiani et al. \(2011\)](#) that MEAs have a responsibility to report. That's why importance is given to their monitoring reports.

Time for monitoring is not sufficient, as, in the study of [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), it was indicated that MEAs are responsible for visiting at least three schools in a day, including two schools at the elementary level and one secondary. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to monitor these schools properly because they are scattered and have long distances between them. [Mohammed \(2015\)](#) stated that due to a lack of time, the school’s monitoring is superficial and purely formal. They are not satisfied with their salaries. The same results were found in the study by [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), which found that MEAs have low salaries.

Training is not provided to them by the department. A contradiction with the study results of [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#) was found. In which it was stated that MEAs are well trained for education sector monitoring. However, the findings of this study confirm the findings of previous studies by [Kiani \(2011\)](#) and [Mahmood \(2017\)](#) that MEAs received no training. They cannot monitor the schemes of study, lesson planning, classroom

management, etc. Thus, it was suggested by [Saeed, Dilshad, and Nasir \(2013\)](#) that educational experts and professionally experienced principals must be selected for better monitoring.

Further, it was found that they have a burden of work. The results of the study confirmed the previous results of Allama Iqbal Open University ([AIOU \(2003\)](#)); [Naviwala, \(2016\)](#); and [Mahmood, \(2017\)](#) that external monitors have a burden of work. They faced social interference in their work; they did not have pleasant relations with members of society or teachers, but they did have pleasant relations with headteachers.

They have a transport facility. The same results were found in the study by Mahmood (2015). It was found that external monitors have transport facilities. But a contradiction in results arises with the study results of [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#) and [Naviwala \(2016\)](#) that external monitors have inadequate transport facilities. It was found that external monitors have internet facilities. Conveyance allowance is not provided to them. The same results were found in the study of [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), which found that no conveyance allowances were provided to them as they had to travel throughout the day. So, it caused difficulty in their visits to schools for monitoring.

They did not have a sufficient budget for stationery. Previous study results are in line with the study results of [Ahmad et al. \(2013\)](#) which found that a lack of stationery is the problem with monitors. An inspection allowance is not provided to them. Previous study results are in line with the study results of [Nadeem and Saadi \(2019\)](#), who found that a lack of inspection allowance was the problem of MEAs. Furthermore, it was found that lack of facilities affected their performance, i.e., after office timings, a high official load disturbed their domestic life, political interference caused obstacles for them in transparent monitoring, lack of training made it difficult for them to monitor the classroom activities, and interference caused disturbance for them to give full attention to their work.

Conclusion

It is concluded that external monitors are satisfied with the behaviors of high officers and have a value given to their school monitoring reports, but interference is present in performing their duties and they face references from the school teachers. Training is not provided to them by the department. Further, it was found that they have a burden of work and have no social interference in their work. They do not have pleasant relations with the members of society and teachers, but they do have pleasant relations with headteachers. It was found that external monitors have facilities for transport and the internet. They did not have a conveyance allowance provided to them, did not have an inspection allowance, and had an insufficient budget for stationery. Furthermore, it was found that lack of facilities affected their performance, i.e., after office timings, a high official load disturbed their domestic life, political interference caused obstacles for them in transparent monitoring, lack of training made it difficult for them to monitor the classroom activities, and interference caused disturbance for them to give full attention to their work. It is necessary to address the problems of external monitors. So, they may give full attention to the monitoring of schools. Consequently, it will enhance the educational quality.

Recommendations

In the light of the study results, it is recommended that:

- Due to a lack of training, MEAs can't do much except paperwork. To improve their performance, MEAs may be properly trained for school monitoring. Therefore, they will be able to observe classroom activities as well.
- A lack of conveyance allowance causes difficulty in visiting the schools in remote areas. To overcome this difficulty, a conveyance allowance may be provided to them. Therefore, it will enable them to visit those schools effectively.

- Inspection allowance is not provided to MEAs, so it becomes difficult for them to effectively monitor the schools. So, an inspection allowance may be provided to them for better monitoring.

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