

## A Qualitative Study on Exploring Head Teachers and Teachers' Experiences on Visits of Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants in Public Sector Primary Schools

### AMBREEN IFTIKHAR

Ph.D Scholar, Institute of Education and Research,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.  
Email: [ambreeniftikhar59@gmail.com](mailto:ambreeniftikhar59@gmail.com)

### ABIDA NASREEN

Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University  
of the Punjab, Lahore – Pakistan.  
Email: [nasreen.ier@pu.edu.pk](mailto:nasreen.ier@pu.edu.pk)

### MUHAMMAD KAMRAN

Ph.D. Scholar, Institute of Education and Research (IER),  
University of the Punjab, Lahore – Pakistan.  
Email: [kamran.soc23@yahoo.com](mailto:kamran.soc23@yahoo.com)

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### Abstract

*The main purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences of head teachers and teachers on the visits of monitoring and evaluation assistants (MEAs) in public sector primary schools. A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used to conduct the study. All the head teachers and teachers of the public sector primary schools of Tehsil Kamalia, District Toba Tek Singh were the population of the study. Four head teachers (2 male and 2 female) and four primary school teachers (2 male and 2 female) of same four government primary schools of Tehsil Kamalia were purposively selected. Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect data from participants. Narrative analysis was used to analyze the semi-structured interviews. Teachers and head teachers said that MEAs' monitoring regarding academic, financial and physical infrastructure helps the schools to maintain its record, building and academic abilities of students. They said that positive impacts of MEAs' visits in schools include increase in percentage of students' attendance and teachers' attendance. MEAs' visit also increases the cleanliness of the school and negative impacts of MEAs include the decline of percentage of student and teachers' attendance after MEAs' visit. Teachers and head teachers said that there should be more than one visit of MEAs' in a month as well as there should be Literacy and Numeracy Drive test of every class.*

**Keywords:** MEAs, Head Teachers, Teachers, Primary Education, LND Test.

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### Introduction

Monitoring is very important for successful running of any educational programme. There is need to assess the educational institutions continuously because it gives them feedback and motivate them to bring improvements in their practices. In monitoring and evaluation the data is collected from the educational institutions and then feedback is given. On the basis of this data which shows the performance of the educational institution the suggestions are given to the head of institutions to bring improvement in the institution (Ehren & Shackleton, 2016). Monitoring of any institution brings the positive results. It makes the administration efficient and vigilant. They keep their records updated and maintain their school

building. It also decreases the absenteeism of teaching and non teaching staff. Head teachers and staff will in general observe the proposals from the school monitors as an incredible help for the current thoughts and want to change (Marriott & Goyder, 2009). The monitoring and evaluation system was established in 2004. This system was presented by the Chief Minister of Punjab. Initially this system was implemented in four regions of the Punjab, these regions were Rawalpindi, Jehlum, Attock and Chakwal. There were four persons for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of these regions. It was difficult for them to monitor all the schools. This practice did not bring fruitful results. Again in 2006 the suggestion was given to monitor the schools on monthly basis (Munawar et al., 2019). School monitoring as an idea has been characterized in various ways by various people. It has been here and there utilized reciprocally with school supervision. School investigation can be portrayed as the way toward inspection work in schools, gathering confirmations from an assortment of different sources and detailing the decisions. (Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The most important aspect of inspection is that it gives insight about the performance of the institution. The feedback is given to institution to remove their deficiencies. (Leithwood, 2001; Mishra, 2005). There are 36 districts in the province Punjab. There was need to monitor the schools of on monthly basis to check their progress. For this purpose Programme Monitoring and Implementation (PMIU) was established. The main task of it is that to gather the data on monthly basis from all the schools of the 36 districts of the Punjab. The District Monitoring Officer (DMO) is given the task to monitor this process on district level and assign the duties to the Monitoring and Evaluation Assistants (MEAs). These MEAs are retired army personnel. They check the schools on monthly basis according to the areas of the schools assign to them by the DMOs. They go to the schools and check the schools according to the indicators provided to them and submit their report online on their Tablets. The reporting of the MEAs is bias free. According to the number of schools the number of MEAs is recruited in each region for the smooth running of the inspection process. It is the responsibility of the DMOs to ensure that the monitoring process should be bias free so that they keep on rotating the MEAs in different areas of the district to avoid the personal association of the MEAs with school staff. The monthly observations of the MEAs are gathered by the higher authorities. This data gathered by the MEAs is used to rank the districts according to their performance. (Government of Punjab, 2007).

The monitoring and evaluation system through MEAs and DMOs of government schools in Punjab has almost past two decades. The researcher has not found any exhaustive study to get feedback that how far the system has been successful to improve the quality of education in schools. As being a teacher and informal discussions with many teachers and head teachers, the system is not accepted by majority of the head teachers and teachers because MEAs cannot evaluate instruction plans, classroom instruction and assessment which are the key concerns. Secondly, sometimes complaints have been seen about the attitude of the MEAs towards head teachers and teachers, especially female head teachers and teachers.

The third issue is that some teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders are of the view that if monitoring is done by MEAs, then what is the role of assistant education officers, deputy district education officers and district education officers. Therefore, it was imperative to conduct a study to explore head teachers and teachers' views and experiences about the prevailing MEAs visits. This will provide research relevant data in order to put forward the recommendations to the Government of Punjab, School Education Department to take necessary reforms.

The study provided empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of visits of MEAs with regard to academic, financial and physical infrastructure in the schools. It highlighted the perception of head teachers and teachers about MEAs visits in their schools. It explored some of the benefits and limitations of the system which may help the School Education Department and PMIU to take necessary reforms in future. Moreover, the study may contribute to the literature as a reference on accountability in education, teaching and learning in primary schools in Punjab.

## Statement of the Problem

The monitoring and evaluation is most important thing in the academic world. It helps the administration of educational institutions for the improvement of teaching and learning in the educational institutions. The development of any institution largely depends upon the quality of monitoring and evaluation. It has been considered that the process of monitoring and evaluation in Pakistan is not very effective. There is need to aware of the perceptions and experiences of head teachers regarding the school inspection. Therefore, this study explored the head teachers' and teachers' views and experiences on MEAs visit in primary schools. It included the pros and cons of this initiative taken by the Government of Punjab. It explored some recommendations for the Government for making such policies in School Education Department.

## Objectives

Following were the objectives of the study.

1. To explore the views and experiences of head teachers of primary schools on MEAs visits to their schools with respect to the monitoring and evaluation
2. To explore the views and experiences of primary school teachers on MEAs visits to their schools with respect to the monitoring and evaluation
3. To determine the kind of support head teachers get to make the school's improvement from Assistant Education Officer (AEO), Deputy District Education Officer (Deputy DEO) and District Education Officer (DEO)

## Research Questions

Following were the research questions of the study.

1. What are the views and experiences of head teachers of government primary schools about monitoring and evaluation of academic, financial, physical infrastructure aspects in their schools?
2. What are the views and experiences of teachers of government primary schools about monitoring and evaluation of academic, financial and physical infrastructure aspects in their schools?
3. What kind of support head teachers get from AEOs, Deputy DEOs and DEOs for the improvements in school?

## Limitation of the Study

The study explored qualitative data and was limited to the public sector primary schools of Tehsil Kamalia, District Toba Tek Singh of the province Punjab.

## Methodology

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used to conduct the study. All the head teachers and teachers of the government primary schools of Tehsil Kamalia, District Toba Tek Singh were the population of the study. Four head teachers (02 male and 02 female) and four primary school teachers (02 male and 02 female) of same four government primary schools of Tehsil Kamalia were the sample of the study. They were purposively selected in the way that only those head teachers and teachers were drawn who would had served at least one year in that respective school.

Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect data from sampled participants from four schools. The questions were in open-ended form. The questions were asked about the experiences of head teachers and teachers regarding the MEAs visit in their schools. The questions were asked about the experiences of academic, financial and physical infrastructure monitoring and problems which head teachers face when

MEAs visit their schools. The questions were also asked about the role of DMO, DEO, Deputy DEO and AEO. Some questions were asked about problems (e.g. relating to teachers and students attendance, school cleanliness, school registers and students' results of Literacy and Numeracy Drive test) they have to face from their higher authorities on the reports of MEAs. Recommendations were explored for the improvement of the system i.e. to make MEAs visits more useful that can better contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning process in the schools. Some probing questions were asked as per situation from each participant. The interview protocol was validated from three experts having well awareness about monitoring and evaluation system prevailing in the public sector schools. One mock interview was conducted to ensure the validity and judgmental reliability of the interview. That interview was not the part of the actual study.

### **Data Collection**

The head teachers were contacted one to two weeks before the conduct of the interviews. Their consent was sought and they were briefed about the purpose of the research and the key interview questions to be posed regarding MEAs visits in their schools. The dates and time of the interviews were finalized as per convenience of the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Narrative analysis was used to analyze the semi-structured interviews. Narrative analysis is a form of qualitative analysis in which the analyst focuses on how respondents impose order on the flow of experience in their lives and thus make sense of events and actions in which they have participated (Bryman, 2004). The answers of the interview questions were transcribed in order to be analyzed and proper coding, memoing and description of the interview data was done to analyze and interpret the data in order to draw meaningful results. Memoing can be described as the reflective notes of the researcher which he/she prepares while learning from the data. It can also be described as the ideas regarding the codes and their relationship in the research data (Lempert, 2007). The researcher had to go through the literature review to make qualitative data analysis and interpretation more meaningful and effective.

### **Results of the study**

The results of the study show that there is increase in the overall progress of the school due to the MEAs visit. One head teacher said, "MEAs did not provide information before visiting the school and they did one visit in a month. MEAs check attendance of teaching and non teaching staff and also check the attendance of students. MEAs also check cleanliness of the school. MEA also check the physical infrastructure of the school which includes furniture and condition of the building of school". It was rarely seen by the teachers and head teachers that MEAs provide information before visiting. It was found that MEAs did one visit in a month and sometimes they did more than one visit. But mostly MEAs did one visit in a month. The school administration maintains the condition of its school building and furniture because they know that these things would be checked by MEA. It was found that MEAs emphasize on cleanliness, MEAs emphasize on student attendance and teacher attendance. MEAs check all the things in the schools according to the indicators which are shown on their tablets. It was found that positive impact of MEAs visit in school includes improvement in teacher attendance, improvement in student attendance and improvement in cleanliness of school.

One teacher said, "MEAs take LND test of class three students, due to this test we keep an eye on the learning progress of class three students because their evaluation determines the performance of the school. It also exerts pressure on the teacher of grade three". It was found that MEAs monitoring regarding academic, financial and physical infrastructure helps the schools to focus more on the academic abilities of students especially on class 3 because MEAs take the LND test of class 3 and it improves the performance of students. One head teacher said, "MEAs check the records of NSB (Non salary budget) and FTF

(Farooq-e-taleem fund) and because of it we maintain record on monthly basis and make our expenditures transparent”. It was found that AEOs, Deputy DEOs and DEOs regularly visits schools and provide support and guidance regarding different affairs of schools. One teacher said, “AEO, Deputy DEO and DEO visit schools regularly and guide us regarding different tasks. AEO visits school twice a month and help teachers in lesson planning”. One head teacher said, “MEAs visit in school includes both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts include increase in attendance of students and school staff, maintenance of school record, building and cleanliness. The negative impacts include increase in increase in student attendance and school staff. The communication style of MEAs also varies from person to person”. It was found that the negative impact of MEAs visit is that there is increase in absenteeism in student and teacher attendance after MEAs visit. There is lack of cleanliness after MEAs visit. School staff became lazy after MEAs visit. It was also found that because of MEAs strict reporting head teachers are continuously in pressure. It was found that communication style of MEAs varies from person to person. Some MEAs adopt authoritative communication style, some adopt formal communication style, some MEAs adopt informal communication style and some MEAs adopt harsh communication style.

## **Discussion**

The results of the study show that MEAs monitoring regarding academic, financial and physical infrastructure helps the schools to maintain its record, building and academic abilities of students. Classroom perception was observed to be helpful as a methodology in guaranteeing arrangement of value essential training. Dobbelaer (2013) sees classroom perception as an imperative routine with regards to class assessors. It is very important for teachers to monitor the progress of their students and remove the weaknesses of the students which are identified by the external evaluators. Teaching and learning is also evaluated during the monitoring process and the shortcomings and qualities are highlighted in the reports of schools inspectors (Dimmock, & Allan, 2005).

AEOs, deputy DEOs and DEOs help them in the better development of school. AEOs did school observation twice a month and AEOs help in the progress of schools, they also help teachers in their professional development. The AEOs, Deputy DEOs and DEOs help in the professional development of the teachers through their continuous guidance. The results of the study are similar with the findings of the study of Wilcox (2000) which says that pedagogical skills of the teachers should be developed by the school inspectors. The school inspectors should play their role as supervisors and help teachers to excel in their professional development. (Ehren & Shackleton, 2016).

The main purpose of the visits of MEAs is to increase the performance of the educational institutions. It has been seen that there is increase in the attendance of the students and teachers due to the inspection of the MEAs. They also check the cleanliness of the schools. The performances of the educational institutions have improved due to this monitoring and evaluation system (Grauwe, 2007; Mishra, 2005). The results of the study show that the communication style of MEAs varies from person to person. It also shows that teachers respect those MEAs who are respectful towards them and use friendly style during their monitoring in schools. The respectful attitude of MEAs encouraged the teachers to work well in the schools without any stress. Head teachers and teachers work more effectively and efficiently in an atmosphere which is strain free and positive. It underlines abilities like decency, solidness, transparency, acknowledgment and sympathy to secure the instructor's participation (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

The results of the study showed that during their visits the most pressure is on head teacher and LND teacher. There should be more than one visit of MEAs in a month as well as there should be Literacy and Numeracy Drive test of every class. Allen and Burgess (2012) underpins this discoveries that school investigation is all the more a component that guarantees responsibility to the individuals who pay for the training of their kids which goes for bringing quality models up in instruction. Ehren and Visscher's (2008) say that the effect of school investigation for development found that both oral and composed criticism from school assessors was an imperative boost for school improvement.

## Conclusion

The results of the study shows that MEAs did not provide information before visit and they did one visit in a month. MEAs monitoring regarding academic, financial and physical infrastructure helps the schools to maintain its record, building and academic abilities of students. AEOs, deputy DEOs and DEOs help school staff in the development of school. The positive impacts of MEAs' visit in school includes increase in percentage of student attendance, teacher attendance and cleanliness and negative impacts of MEAs' visit includes the decline of percentage of student and teacher attendance after MEAs' visit. There is continuous stress on Head teachers and teachers regarding the visit of MEAs in every month because they have to be very attentive regarding their work. MEAs emphasize on teacher attendance, student attendance and cleanliness. The communication style of MEAs varies from person to person and during their visits the most pressure is on head teacher and LND teacher.

## Recommendations of the Study

Following are the recommendations of the study:

1. There should be more than one visit of MEAs in a month.
2. There is need to give training to MEAs so that they adopt respectful attitude with head teachers and teachers during their visits.
3. MEAs should take assessment test any of the class of school randomly.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Following are the recommendations for future research:

1. The present study included the experiences of head teachers and teachers the future study could be conducted on by taking the opinions of MEAs, AEOs, deputy DEOs and DEOs.
2. The present study was conducted on one tehsil the future study could be conducted on district and provincial level.

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