



## **Assessing Secondary School Teacher Knowledge and Understanding of National Professional Standards for Teachers in Peshawar**

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### **Abstract**

This study evaluates secondary school teachers in Peshawar in light of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) in Pakistan. The research explores teachers' awareness, understanding, and implementation of these professional standards while identifying key challenges and opportunities for their effective adoption. A qualitative research design was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals from eight educational circles in Peshawar. The study aims to assess how well teachers align with NPSTs and the extent to which these standards are integrated into their teaching practices. The findings reveal that while some school leaders have a general awareness of NPSTs, most secondary school teachers lack in-depth knowledge and formal training on these standards. Many educators are unfamiliar with the NPST framework, and their understanding is often limited to general teaching competencies rather than the specific criteria outlined in the standards. Furthermore, professional development opportunities related to NPSTs remain scarce, hindering teachers' ability to implement these standards effectively in classrooms. The study also highlights disparities in NPST knowledge between newly recruited teachers, who have some exposure to these standards, and senior teachers, who struggle with outdated methodologies and a lack of structured training. Additionally, the research identifies major barriers, including inadequate training programs, limited institutional resources, and a lack of administrative support. Many teachers expressed frustration over the absence of comprehensive capacity-building programs that would enable them to integrate NPSTs into their instructional strategies. School administrators acknowledged that while the government has introduced professional standards, their

implementation remains inconsistent due to the lack of systematic training and awareness programs.

The study concludes that targeted teacher training programs, resource provision, and administrative support are essential for improving teaching quality and aligning educational practices with national standards. It recommends the development of structured training workshops, continuous professional development initiatives, and policy-level interventions to enhance teachers' understanding and application of NPSTs. The findings have significant implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and teacher training programs in Pakistan, emphasizing the urgent need for reforms in teacher professional development. Addressing these challenges can lead to a more effective education system, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of modern classrooms and contribute to national educational advancement.

**Keyword:** The National Professional Standard for Teachers, Subject Matter Knowledge, Instructional Strategies And Planning, Assessment

### **Introduction**

National development directly depends on the quality of education and educational institutions within a country. The quality of education depends on teacher competence which relies directly on the results of teacher education programs. Various nations have launched professional standard systems for teachers to boost their professional abilities. Many countries led by the U.S. and including UK, Canada, Australia alongside New Zealand and South Africa and their Caribbean and South Pacific counterparts have started to work on professional teacher standards for implementation. The implementation of professional standards for teachers represents guiding policy priorities that drive the improvement of teaching quality (Hudson, 2009; Sachs, 2003; Santoro & Kennedy, 2016; Tuinamuana, 2011). Mason (2013) identifies three main barriers that impair teacher preparation quality which consist of (1) inadequate understanding of student learning needs and (2) poor connections between educational programs and professional development and school standards and (3) insufficient systematic new teacher onboarding programs.

A research analysis details the present understanding together with practical methods employed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province teachers in secondary educational institutions. Public-sector secondary schools must overcome teacher recruitment difficulties and struggle to keep trained educators while requiring continuing programs to develop personnel character and teaching abilities and social competencies. Well-prepared teaching represents an indispensable element in creating beneficial changes in society. Teacher competencies together with their readiness stands as a fundamental factor that leads to these improvements. For the country to advance and prosper all educators must receive professional training to perform their duties successfully. The need for highly qualified teachers has reached an all-time high in the current educational environment. The secondary education level, in particular, holds a critical position within the broader education system (Mushtaq, 2015).

The core elements of outstanding teaching stay consistent no matter what changes occur in institutional management but teaching effectiveness and quality can experience variations. A teacher's ability to succeed depends on knowledge depth in the subject combined with powerful instructional skills and various methods for dealing with different types of learning along with student problem-solving skills. The practice of combining theoretical expertise and student

learning enthusiasm serves as central components for teaching effectiveness (Chapman and Adams, 2002).

### **National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan**

The National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards founded in 1946 became the first step toward developing professional teaching standards in the United States (Cochran, 2006). Teacher training programs worldwide have implemented these standards as a quality benchmark after many countries adopted them. The Pakistani Ministry of Education collaborated with USAID funding to establish the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). Improving teaching techniques and learning results heavily depends on effective professional development initiatives. Such standards protect teachers from becoming outdated through their ongoing knowledge updates and provide improved resources to deal with classroom challenges. Degreed teachers who continue learning produce improvements in student performance outcomes. Teacher education programs function as vital institutions for teacher development through which they develop necessary teaching abilities. The development of specific teaching abilities depends on reflective practices as well as continuous professional growth. These professional standards help Pakistani teachers create long-term objectives which augment their career advancement through a more powerful professional progression. The NPST are given as follows:

- Subject Matter Knowledge
- Human Growth and Development
- Islamic Values' knowledge
- Instructional Strategies and Planning
- Assessment
- Learning Environment
- Effective Communication and Proficient Use of I.C.T.
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- C.P.D.
- The teaching of English as a Foreign Language

### **Statement of the Problem**

High-quality education becomes virtually impossible to achieve if essential professional teachers are missing along with a system that fails to provide ongoing development opportunities for its educators. The educational system needs competent staff to thrive and address its limitations. Educators need their professional status acknowledged in order to earn equivalent recognition and respect as other professions contribute to better teaching quality. Professional teachers must use the best educational practices and strategies while facing current modern challenges to advance their career development. The advancement of teaching standards requires a broader understanding about the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs).

Educating students in all facets – progress, intellect, critical thinking and practical ability – depends on devoted teaching professionals because they develop future generations. Teachers need complete understanding of National Professional Standards for Teachers in order to accomplish their duties effectively. Even though professional standards exist schools must maintain their focus on teacher understanding and implementation of these standards within their practical work. The present research investigates how the National Professional Standards for Teachers support the advancement of teaching methods and learning activities.

## **Objectives**

1. To determine the Secondary school teacher's understanding of National Professional Standards for Teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research design**

The study's main purpose was to evaluate secondary school teachers in light of national professional standards for teachers in Peshawar. The research was Qualitative in nature. Therefore, a Qualitative Research design was used for this study.

### **The Population of the Study**

In any research study, delineating a population is essential from which sample is to be extracted. The population is defined as the people to whom the researcher intends to apply or generalize the study findings. Considering numerous limitations, it seems impossible to conduct research on the entire population (Gay, 2009). The population of the study was comprised of all 1220 male secondary teachers from districts Peshawar.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

To get detailed and in-depth responses from school headmasters/ Principals, a Convenient sampling technique was used for the study. Convenient sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are chosen based on their availability or willingness to participate. The researcher used convenient sampling to select head teachers/Principals from eight circles of district Peshawar for an in-depth interview.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

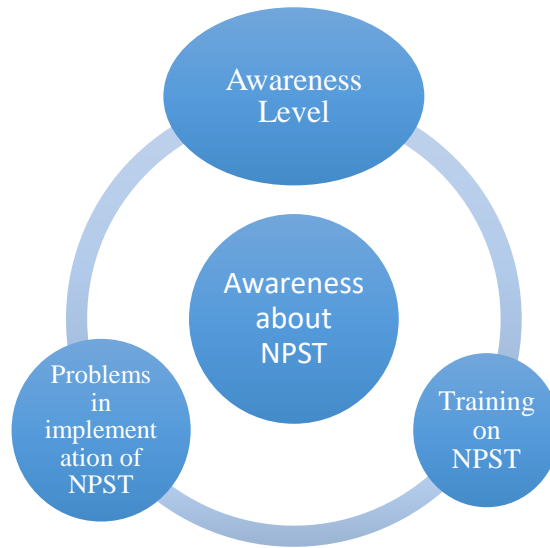
The data was collected with Semi-structured Interviews were conducted to get in-depth information from the secondary school Principal from eight circle in Peshawar. 2 Head Master was selected from each circle.

### **Delimitations**

study was delimited to secondary schools in the district of Peshawar only.

### **Analysis of Data**

### **Knowledge about National Professional Standard for Teachers**



### **Background Information about NPSTs**

#### **Awareness and Knowledge about NPSTs**

The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) function as vital tools to protect and advance the respect for the teaching profession as well as its ability to deliver outstanding educational outcomes. The standards create a foundation which helps teachers build their expertise and abilities to enhance their educational delivery methods.

A majority of secondary school principals within the examined study showed limited comprehension of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs). Secondary school teachers displayed slightly better recognition of NPSTs than their teaching colleagues at the elementary level. Respondents revealed their lack of knowledge about NPSTs through admitting they had just heard about them without reviewing or studying the official document. Several interview participants misunderstood the relationship between NPSTs and teacher competencies by confusing these professional standards with regular teaching expertise.

A common response shared by 07 respondents given in the below summaries points

*Like other developed countries, Pakistan also has developed its standard for Teachers to enhance their capacity on the NPST for teachers' documents. The NPST in Pakistan consists of the following domains: Subject matter knowledge, instructional strategies, knowledge about the English language, child growth & development, Professional Engagement, Classroom Management & Organization, and Assessment and Evaluation.(PRT-01,03,04,07,08,011,015)*

#### **Sub-Theme: Capacity Building of Teachers on NPSTs**

Training plays a crucial role in the professional development and growth of teachers. High-quality training programs equip educators with essential knowledge, skills, and strategies to

teach effectively. These programs enable teachers to refine their teaching methodologies, enhance their competencies, and stay updated with evolving trends, ultimately improving student learning outcomes. Additionally, training fosters both personal and professional growth while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

Regarding capacity-building sessions on NPST for teachers, most school principals reported having no opportunity to receive training on these standards. Some respondents had limited exposure to national professional standards through short-term training programs, workshops, or prospective teaching courses. However, the vast majority of participants had not received dedicated training specifically focused on NPST

One respondent mentioned,

*I never came across such provision of training and useful information. The lack of training and useful information from the district education department is a common issue faced by many educators and professionals in the education sector. It can be frustrating to try and navigate the complexities of the education system without adequate support or guidance from concerned authorities. (PRT-07)*

sharing their experience of training on NPSTs for Teachers one of the respondents expressed their opinion in the below-mentioned lines

*In January 2023, I participated in a teaching training program organized by FATA Coll. In that training, I have little chance to expose to NPST for teachers only to a content level., I never got training on the national professional standard for teachers. (PRT-12)*

Many participants argued it would be reasonable and sound if special training on these standards plans and organised by the education department and other institutions working to build capacity for teachers like DCIT and RITE.

out of 16 principals, three respondents shared and expressed their opinion in below mentioned manner

*National professional standards training is a crucial aspect of personal and institutional growth. These training programs equip professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in their respective fields it is also important for institutions, enabling them to keep up with the latest educational sectors' trends and best practices.*

*Additionally, by investing in the professional development of their staff, organizations can increase employee motivation, retention, and overall job satisfaction. (PRT-01.09.15)*

### **Challenges in the implementation of the National Professional Standard**

According to most school heads the majority surveyed noticed that newly hired educators recruited through ETEA and NTS possess abilities to implement these standards properly while older teachers face major implementation barriers. Older instructors face obstacles mainly due to insufficient necessary qualifications and insufficient education and skill levels to properly implement the new curriculum as intended. The new generation of teachers receives limited exposure to National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) training but leads to better performance of teaching standards according to school administrators.

One of the respondents shared their opinion regarding the challenges in the implementation of Professional standards for teachers in below mentioned way:

*As a professional striving to uphold high standards in my work, I have been confronted with many challenges in implementing national professional standards. My biggest challenges are the lack of in-service training and the necessary facilities and accessories to support the standards without the proper equipment, tools, and resources. In addition, there may be resistance from others who are not accustomed to the new standards, which can lead to pushback and reluctance to change. It can be challenging to get buy-in from colleagues and stakeholders who may not fully understand the value and benefits of the standards. Despite these challenges, I remain committed to upholding professional standards and providing quality services to my students. (PRT-03)*

### **Discussion**

The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) function as essential standards which keep educators equipped with essential knowledge together with skills and competencies for delivering quality teaching practices. Secondary school principals demonstrated slightly higher awareness about NPSTs than their educational staff while both groups revealed limited comprehension according to study results. Numerous study participants acknowledged their lack of clear understanding about standards as they had heard about them but did not examine the actual NPST document. Previous research by Safia (2005) confirms that many Pakistani teachers currently do not possess adequate understanding of NPSTs because of which they struggle to implement them properly in academic settings.

Teaching professionals need essential professional development and capacity-building programs to develop their knowledge and skills regarding NPSTs. Most teachers alongside school principals from this research sample revealed their lack of participation in formal training that targeted the specific standards of National Professional Standards for Teachers in Wales. Among the participants most educators had not accessed any formal training related to NPSTs although some attended temporary workshops. Results from the study confirm Mason's (2013) analysis that insufficient training in teacher preparation roles results in professional competency shortcomings leading to lower education quality. The research participants stressed that educational institutions and government organizations including DCIT and RITE should design thorough training programs for NPST implementation. Available research by Khan and Saeed (2010) has proven that professional development programs developed with specific intentions enhance teachers' delivery ability and competence in standard execution.

The research enumerated major obstacles which stand in the way of NPST deployment at the secondary school level. Staff members throughout the study expressed their worry about insufficient training programs since many qualified teachers never received exposure to contemporary teaching approaches. The school administrators documented that teaching recruits who entered through ETEA and NTS standardized screening exhibited better comprehension of NPSTs. Senior teachers struggled with outdated teaching methods and shortage of understanding about new curriculum standards whereas new teachers had fewer challenges. The implementation of NPSTs faced major hurdles according to respondents because many institutions lacked essential facilities together with necessary resources and insufficient institutional support. Chapman and Adams (2002) supported these findings when they explained that teaching quality depends on institutional factors which encompass teacher training access and resource availability as well as administrative backing.

The study results validate why educational institutions must focus on NPST awareness campaigns and systematized training to achieve effective NPST implementation. Teachers fail to adhere to national standards when professional development remains unstructured thus leading to reduced educational quality. Studies by Armstrong (2007) and Aldradi (2015) support the need for ongoing assessment and improvement of education programs because they maintain high teaching standards. Policymakers alongside educational institutions need to create immediate actions which support quality teacher training alongside resource provision and supportive learning spaces for all educational professionals.

### **Conclusion**

The study summary indicated that The standard of education throughout a nation depends entirely upon the teaching expertise of its faculty members. The establishment of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPSTs) operates as an educational measure to evaluate teacher capabilities and instructional practices throughout the world including Pakistan. Research reveals that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa secondary school teachers together with their principals demonstrate insufficient understanding of professional standards. Both new and veteran teaching staff show basic knowledge of NPSTs yet experienced instructors encounter obstacles with implementation because they lack proper training programs and receive insufficient organizational backing for execution.

The application of NPSTs demonstrates inconsistent implementation in schools because regular capacity-building programming is missing alongside insufficient resource availability. Educators need systematic training along with ongoing professional development programs and sustained organizational backing to successfully use these standards in their practice. Improving the teaching quality depends on addressing these gaps because it ensures students learn based on national and international education criteria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding and conclusion, research give Below mentions recommendations for future research study

- The teachers are not aware of the National Professional Standards, and hence are not being followed and practiced; therefore, the education department may devise a



mechanism which can fully observe and supervise the teachers in the light of the stated National Professional Standards for teachers.

- It is recommended that the education department create awareness among the teachers regarding these National Professional Standards; the education department may arrange seminars, workshops, dialogue and symposia etc

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