



CHALLENGES FACED BY GRADUATES OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS DURING RECRUITMENT

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Abstract

This mixed-methods research investigates the challenges faced by the graduates of teacher education programs during the recruitment process, with a focus on policy constraints, administrative inefficiencies, and competitive job markets. The data was collected from the graduates from both public and private universities in Pakistan, with a sample size of 270 participants (250 graduates and 20 education administrators). A random sampling technique was employed to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Data collection was conducted through survey questionnaires for graduates and semi-structured interviews with education administrators involved in the recruitment process. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings of this research revealed that the primary challenges faced by teacher education graduates include bureaucratic hurdles in appointments, inadequate job openings, and lack of alignment between educational qualifications and job requirements. Based on these findings, the study proposed recommendations for reforming recruitment policies and procedures, with the goal of improving employment opportunities for trained teachers in Pakistan.

Keywords: recruitment, policy, challenges, job market, professional qualification

Introduction

Teacher education programs in Pakistan play a pivotal role in elevating the nation's educational standards by equipping pre-service and in-service teachers with the necessary pedagogical knowledge, professional competencies, and practical skills to serve diverse learning environments effectively. Research demonstrates that formal teacher education—particularly B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees—enhances educators' classroom confidence, teaching methodology, and subject mastery, leading to positive pedagogical outcomes (Akhtar, 2013). Accreditation of teacher education programs through bodies such as National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education ensures adherence to rigorous quality benchmarks, resulting in significantly higher prospective teacher achievement in accredited institutions versus non-accredited ones (Khan, 2016). In the public sector, instructional practices in B.Ed. programs have been found generally effective, as both teacher educators and students affirm their alignment with teaching standards and classroom demands (Iqbal et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the integration of reflective practices into curricula promotes critical self-evaluation among trainee teachers, making reflective writing, analysis, and action planning central components of competency development (Shahzadi, 2020). Continuous professional development through in-service training deepens pedagogical knowledge, improves teacher leadership, and correlates positively with enhanced student learning outcomes (Ullah et al., 2024; Fatima et al., 2022). Indeed, quantitative studies in primary schools show that professional development programs significantly boost teacher motivation, pedagogical skills, and student academic performance (Raza & Zahra, 2024). Teacher educators themselves also require research-based professional



growth opportunities—such as doctoral training, publication skills, and software proficiency—to sustain a culture of excellence in teacher education (Rashid et al., 2023). Given Pakistan’s socioeconomic and infrastructural disparities, teacher training must encompass inclusive education, ICT integration, and modern methodologies to serve under-resourced and rural contexts (Khan, 2016). Despite widespread challenges—such as outdated curricula, under-qualified faculty, and limited infrastructure—strengthening teacher education is recognized as foundational for national reform; one-third of universities in Balochistan, for example, lack PhD-level educators or departmental capacity in education. Therefore, investing in standardized, well-resourced, reflective, research-oriented, and accredited teacher education programs is essential to prepare competent teachers who can lead classrooms, innovate pedagogy, adapt to digital tools, and ultimately drive improvements in student learning and literacy across Pakistan (Tareen, Ali & Al Taj, 2022).

Teacher education programs in Pakistan aim to prepare competent and professional educators who can effectively contribute to the development of the country's education sector. These programs focus on equipping prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to meet the diverse needs of learners in the 21st century. The government, along with various educational institutions and organizations, has introduced reforms to improve the quality of teacher training. Programs such as Associate Degree in Education (ADE), Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), and Master of Education (M.Ed) are designed to provide both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Emphasis is placed on modern teaching methodologies, subject matter expertise, classroom management, assessment strategies, and the integration of technology in education (Akhtar, 2013). Efforts are also being made to standardize teacher education curricula, ensure accreditation of training institutions, and promote continuous professional development. These initiatives aim to raise the standard of teaching and learning in schools across Pakistan and to support national goals of improving literacy, student achievement, and educational equity.

In Pakistan, teacher education programs vary in duration and structure, ranging from 1.5-year post-bachelor degrees such as B.Ed. (Hons) after a prior qualification, to comprehensive 4-year integrated B.Ed. (Hons) degree programs designed for high school graduates, providing flexibility for diverse educational backgrounds and career pathways (Rasheed, Humayon & Awan, 2016). The education sector in Pakistan constitutes one of the nation’s largest human resource systems, encompassing both public and private institutions and collectively employing over two million teaching professionals—a vital backbone of the country’s learning infrastructure. Historically, Pakistan’s national education policies—particularly those of 1979, 1992, and the 2009 National Education Policy—have recognized the teacher as “the pivot of the entire educational system,” and progressively established minimum qualifications, career pathways, and accreditation mechanisms to professionalize teaching. The 2009 policy, developed in collaboration with UNESCO and under the USAID-funded STEP initiative, explicitly mandates a Bachelor’s degree in Education (B.Ed.) for elementary school teachers and a Master’s with M.Ed. for secondary school posts by 2018, phased out legacy PTC and CT teachers, and proposed standardized accreditation, in-service training cycles, and linkage of promotions to professional development. In practice, however, recruitment policies across provinces have varied in design and impact (Behlol et. al., 2014). In Punjab, a merit-based recruitment policy initiated in 2013 required weighted scoring (85% academic qualification, 10% NTS entry test, 5% interview), and standardized e-recruitment and rationalization of teacher transfers through a points-based system has increased



transparency and reduced political interference. Sindh's Education Sector Plan (2014-18) mandated NTS testing and district-level verification to ensure transparent applications, though delays and ghost teacher issues persisted. In Balochistan, territory-wide acceptance of only professional accredited degrees (Ade, M.Ed) and use of province-specific testing services has improved qualification alignment, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recently adopted mandatory entry tests combined with teacher licensure—but controversially relaxed the professional qualification requirement in induction policy, prompting concern that it runs contrary to national policy and could compromise teacher quality (Tareen, Ali, & Al Taj, 2022; Khan, & Din, 2023).

Recent qualitative research examining recruitment in Punjab's primary education context reveals that district level recruitment committees frequently fail to evaluate candidates against National Professional Standards, and that interview panels lack consistent mechanisms to assess pedagogical competencies; thus recruitment often privileges academic score over observable teaching aptitude. Similarly, an investigation by IDEAS into teacher recruitment and retention in Punjab underscores that while reforms have improved merit-based hiring and digital transparency, political economy constraints, ghost teacher phenomena, and insufficient integration between recruitment and ongoing professional development continue to undermine policy goals. The under-utilization of professional education in recruitment is further highlighted by research on teacher status and development: while the Ministry of Education in 2009 adopted the National Professional Standards for Teachers and introduced teacher licensing, many recruitment systems still permit applicants without B.Ed./M.Ed credentials, and licensing exams have yet to become universal prerequisites before hiring. For instance, Sindh's new Teaching Licence Policy—which mandates B.Ed. degree plus passing a licensing exam for entry into elementary government school positions—was only approved in 2023, signaling a belated but vital effort to align recruitment with professional education norms.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that recruitment policies aligned with professional education enhance teacher competence and retention. Punjab's reforms linking training cycles to promotions and offering structured in-service CPD have improved motivation and teaching quality metrics, especially when combined with transparent recruitment and e-transfer systems (Behlol et. al., 2014). By contrast, provinces that neglect professional qualifications in recruitment, like the current KP induction policy, risk diluting teacher preparation and undermining students' learning gains. Further, broader national and regional studies emphasize that teacher development initiatives fail when recruitment does not embed professional education at admission. Training programs designed outside local school contexts, scheduled away from campus, with poor accountability or lacking implementer involvement, create an environment where teachers remain demotivated despite formal credentials—thereby limiting the intended effect of professional standards and licensing. Recruitment policies must not only be merit-based and transparent, but should explicitly incorporate professional teaching credentials and alignment with the National Professional Standards. Provinces that require B.Ed. and M.Ed., institute licensing exams, integrate district-level interview competency assessments, and tie teacher promotion and training to documented qualifications, demonstrate stronger teacher quality outcomes. Conversely, policy deviations that permit entry without professional education requirements threaten the coherence of national reform efforts (Rasheed, Humayon & Awan, 2016).

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed significant reforms in teacher recruitment policies within its provincial education sectors, reflecting a shift toward merit-based selection,



professional qualification standards, and large-scale hiring to address acute teacher shortages. In Sindh, the landmark 2023 Teaching Licence Policy, approved by the provincial cabinet, mandates that all government schoolteacher candidates must hold a B.Ed. degree and pass a professional licensing examination before employment. It also newly classifies elementary teacher posts at BPS-16 (rather than BPS-14), reserving 700 vacancies exclusively for licenced B.Ed. graduates. This represents a historic move to professionalize teaching and elevate its status alongside other skilled professions (e.g. medicine, accounting).

In Punjab, the government has instituted priority hiring of 23,000 School Teacher Interns (STIs) across upgraded elementary and secondary schools, including placements in Special Needs Education (SNE) schools. The full process is expected to begin in August 2025, pending cabinet and budgetary approval, and intends to mitigate vacancies estimated at over 100,000 positions in Punjab's public schools. Meanwhile, Punjab's School Education Department issued a contract extension directive in May 2025, relaxing the B.Ed. requirement for educators hired under Recruitment Policy. Those who had obtained B.Ed degrees by April 23, 2025—or were awaiting final semester results—were permitted to continue on contract until December 31, 2025; non-compliant educators, however, are not eligible for extension. In Balochistan, the government issued a comprehensive Contract Teaching Staff Recruitment Policy 2024, formally appointing teachers on a contract basis (in BPS-14 and BPS-15 scales) through verified district-level merit lists and documentation. All related administrative steps—such as vacancy statements, credential verification, and appointment orders—must now be submitted within designated timelines to enhance transparency and compliance. Collectively, these reforms reflect a broader national trend: a shift toward third-party testing, professional qualification requirements, contractual appointments with deadlines, and internship schemes aligned to hiring needs. While Sindh's licensure policy boldly aligns recruitment with B.Ed. credentials and functionally invests in teacher professionalism, Punjab and KP are focusing on massive trainee hiring and leveraging data systems for planning and deployment. Conversely, Punjab's temporary relaxation of B.Ed (Khan & Din, 2023). requirements underlines the tension between maintaining standards and addressing vacancies pragmatically. The post-2024 policy environment in Pakistan underscores an urgent imperative: to fill teacher vacancies rapidly, while simultaneously elevating professional norms within recruitment systems—through licensing, qualification thresholds, and transparent merit-based selection. These evolving policies signal a gradual yet profound transformation in how educators are recruited, aiming for a more qualified, accountable, and equitable teaching workforce across Pakistan. However, graduates often face multiple challenges during the recruitment process, such as policy constraints, administrative inefficiencies, and competition for limited positions

Problem Statement

The education sector in Pakistan witnesses a substantial influx of professionally qualified teacher graduates each year, contributing to a significant pool of potential educators (Khan & Ahmad, 2020). However, recent shifts in recruitment policies and practices by governmental agencies have introduced new criteria and mechanisms that diverge from traditional hiring processes. Notably, initiatives such as the introduction of the School Teachers Internee (STI) program in Punjab represent a paradigm shift aimed at addressing employment challenges and enhancing teacher quality (Punjab Education Department, 2023). Despite these developments, there remains a paucity of empirical research examining how graduates of teacher education programs perceive and navigate these evolving recruitment landscapes. Understanding the

experiences and perspectives of these graduates is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness and equity of current recruitment practices, particularly within the public sector. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the opinions of teacher education graduates regarding the recruitment processes they have encountered, with a focus on their challenges, perceptions of fairness, and the impact of new initiatives such as STI on their employment prospects. This inquiry aims to fill an important gap in the literature by providing evidence-based insights to inform policy refinement and enhance teacher workforce planning in Pakistan.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to identify the major challenges faced by graduates of teacher education programs in Pakistan during the recruitment process

Methodology

The present study employed a mixed methods approach utilizing a convergent parallel design to comprehensively explore the challenges faced by graduates of teacher education programs. This design allowed for the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, facilitating a robust integration of findings.



The quantitative sample consisted of 250 graduates from various teacher education programs, providing a broad perspective on the issues under investigation. Complementing this, the qualitative portion involved in-depth insights from 20 educational managers, including 10 Head Teachers, 4 Principals, 4 Assistant Education Officers (AEOs), and 2 Deputy District Education Officers (Dy DEOs), to capture administrative and policy-level perspectives. Two instruments were developed for data collection. The first was a self-developed questionnaire initially comprising 33 items, which was subjected to expert validation by six specialists. Based on the Content Validity Index (CVI), 10 items scoring below the threshold of 0.83 were removed, and five items were revised, resulting in a finalized questionnaire of 23 items. This instrument was organized into three sections: challenges related to teacher education programs (9 items), challenges in the recruitment process (9 items), and challenges in the job market (5 items). The second instrument was a structured interview protocol consisting of three focused questions corresponding to the same three thematic areas, designed to guide interviews with the educational managers. This methodological framework ensured a comprehensive, triangulated understanding of the multifaceted challenges within teacher education and employment sectors.

Results and Findings

Table 1

Challenges Related to Teacher Education Programs

Sr No	Statements	Mean	SD
1	The teacher education program adequately prepares graduates for the job market.	3.38	1.211



2	The curriculum of teacher education programs is outdated and does not meet current educational needs.	2.08	1.495
3	There is a lack of emphasis on practical teaching skills in teacher education programs.	2.01	1.379
4	Graduates of teacher education programs face difficulty in adjusting to real classroom environments.	1.96	.999
5	The teaching methodologies taught in teacher education programs are not aligned with modern educational practices.	2.80	1.460
6	The assessment and evaluation methods in teacher education programs are ineffective.	3.09	1.501
7	There is insufficient guidance and career counseling for teacher education graduates.	4.34	1.418
8	Teacher education programs do not focus on technology integration in teaching.	4.16	1.635
9	Internship opportunities during teacher education programs are inadequate.	3.01	1.227

Table 1 reveals that the respondents agree that teacher education programs prepare graduates for employment. The moderate mean suggests that while the foundation is acceptable, room for improvement remains. The $SD = 1.211$ reflects some variation in responses, possibly based on institution type or program quality. Respondents disagree, indicating that the curriculum is not widely seen as outdated. However, the high SD suggests mixed views, possibly influenced by differences between rural and urban institutions or public vs. private universities. This low mean $M = 2.01$, indicates strong disagreement, suggesting that practical teaching skills are given attention in most programs. However, some inconsistency in opinions exists, shown by the moderately high $SD = 1.379$. Respondents generally disagree $M = 2.16$, implying that most graduates are well-adjusted when entering real classrooms. The low SD shows broad agreement on this point. Responses here are mixed. The mean $M = 2.80$ is close to neutral, indicating uncertainty or disagreement about the alignment of methodologies with modern practices. The high $SD = 1.460$ shows diverse perspectives, likely reflecting variations across institutions. This neutral to slightly positive agreement $M = 3.09$ suggests some respondents view assessment methods as lacking, but there is no strong consensus. The high $SD = 1.501$ indicates a wide range of experiences, again pointing to inconsistency across different training institutions. Respondents overwhelmingly believe that career counseling and guidance are lacking, highlighting a critical gap in support for transitioning graduates into the workforce. This is one of the strongest areas of agreement ($M = 4.34$). Respondents strongly agree ($M = 4.16$) that technology integration is missing in teacher training. The high mean reflects a serious shortfall, while the very high $SD = 1.635$ shows some programs may be doing better than others, but most are perceived to be lagging behind. The neutral mean $M = 3.01$ suggests mixed responses about internship availability. Some respondents find it sufficient, while others do not. The moderate SD supports this, indicating variability across institutions.

The interpretation reveals several strengths in Pakistan's teacher education programs, particularly in preparing graduates for classroom realities and incorporating practical teaching. However, major gaps remain in technology integration, career counseling, and internship quality. The variation in responses across many statements suggests inconsistency in program implementation and quality, which may be influenced by geographic, institutional, or sectoral



differences. These insights highlight the need for policy-level improvements and standardization to ensure more equitable and future-ready teacher training across the country.

Table 2

Challenges Faced During the Recruitment Process

Sr No	Statements	Mean	SD
1	The recruitment process for teaching jobs is transparent and merit-based.	3.12	1.349
2	Graduates of teacher education programs struggle to meet the eligibility criteria for recruitment.	3.08	1.239
3	Political influence affects the hiring process for teaching positions.	2.09	1.545
4	The selection process places more emphasis on written tests than practical teaching skills.	1.08	0.470
5	Recruitment policies favor experienced candidates over fresh graduates.	1.04	1.334
6	Graduates from private universities face discrimination in government job recruitment.	1.34	0.328
7	The selection criteria for teaching positions lack consistency across different provinces.	4.25	.301
8	There is a lack of standardized recruitment procedures for teachers.	3.86	0.434
9	The recruitment process for teachers is slow and inefficient.	4.46	1.470

Table 2 shows that, responses are neutral ($M=3.12$) to moderately agreeing with the transparency and merit of recruitment. The high $SD= 1.349$ suggests significant variation in perceptions—some believe the process is fair, while others do not, likely due to provincial or institutional differences. Respondents neutrally agree that many teacher education graduates face difficulties meeting eligibility criteria. The moderate SD implies this is a common issue, potentially due to mismatched qualifications or incomplete compliance with certification requirements. The respondents disagree overall ($M=2.09$) with this statement, suggesting a perception that political interference is not as dominant as in the past. However, the very high $SD= 1.545$ indicates polarized opinions, hinting that political influence may still be perceived as a problem in some regions/provinces., The very low mean ($M=1.08$) reflects a strong disagreement with the idea that written tests dominate the recruitment process. It may suggest that written tests are either not central to selection or that practical skills are undervalued. The high SD indicates inconsistent experiences or interpretations of the selection process. Respondents strongly disagree, indicating a belief that recruitment is generally open to fresh graduates, or that experience is not significantly prioritized., $SD = 1.428$. There is strong disagreement ($M=1.34$) with this perception, suggesting that graduates from private institutions are not widely discriminated against. There is strong agreement ($M=4.25$) that recruitment standards vary across provinces. The low $SD= 0.301$ shows a broad consensus, reflecting real policy fragmentation in Pakistan’s decentralized education system. Respondents largely agree ($M=3.86$) that recruitment is not standardized nationally. This supports the previous point and suggests a need for greater harmonization in teacher hiring practices. This is the strongest area

of agreement ($M=4.46$), highlighting a major concern. Respondents almost universally view the process as delayed and ineffective, likely due to bureaucratic red tape, lack of automation, or administrative backlogs. The high SD indicates some variation, but most likely reflects the degree rather than the existence of the issue.

The interpretation of this data suggests a mixed but critical view of the recruitment process. While respondents reject claims of discrimination and political interference, they acknowledge serious issues with inconsistency, inefficiency, and lack of standardization. The strong agreement on procedural delays and inter-provincial variation signals an urgent need for policy reform, digitalization, and harmonized recruitment criteria to improve fairness and effectiveness in teacher hiring practices in Pakistan.

Table 3

Job Market and Employment Challenges

Sr No	Statements	Mean	SD
1	Graduates of teacher education programs face high competition in securing teaching jobs.	4.30	1.318
2	The salary structure for newly recruited teachers is insufficient and discouraging.	3.46	1.270
3	Government policies do not provide enough job opportunities for teacher education graduates.	4.10	0.428
4	Private school employers prefer candidates with experience over fresh graduates.	3.76	1.173
5	Graduates of teacher education programs require additional professional development to secure stable employment.	1.39	.909

Respondents strongly agree ($M= 4.30$) that teacher education graduates face intense job market competition. The relatively high mean (4.30) indicates strong consensus, although the moderate standard deviation (1.318) suggests some variability in responses. There is a moderate agreement ($M=3.46$) that starting salaries are inadequate. The mean is above neutral, suggesting concern among respondents, but the moderate SD (1.270) indicates a spread of opinion, possibly reflecting differences across regions or sectors (e.g., public vs. private). There is strong agreement ($M=4.10$) that government recruitment policies are insufficient. The high mean points to a broad perception of limited public-sector opportunities, and the lower SD (0.428) shows more consistency in responses. Respondents generally agree that private schools prioritize experienced teachers. The mean is notably high (3.76), showing this is a common concern, while the moderate SD (1.173) suggests some respondents have seen exceptions. Respondents strongly disagree that teacher education graduates need further development to become employable. The low mean (1.39) implies that the existing programs are viewed as sufficient. The low SD (0.909) indicates a high level of agreement among participants.

Table 4

Educational Managers' Responses

Areas	Challenges
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Challenges about teacher education programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversaturation of TE program graduates• Mismatching demand and supply• Limited guidance and mentoring• Lack of technology integration
Challenges about recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed priorities in recruitment/ Policy confusions• Rural urban postings• Lack of coordination among stakeholders
Challenges about job market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical training issues• Language and communication gap

Educational managers expressed concerns about the oversaturation of teacher education (TE) program graduates. According to them, universities and colleges are producing more graduates than the current job market can absorb. This mismatch between supply and demand is creating a competitive and saturated environment where even qualified graduates struggle to secure positions. Furthermore, managers highlighted the limited guidance and mentoring offered to students during their programs, especially in practical teaching aspects. Many graduates reportedly enter the job market without sufficient real-world classroom exposure or pedagogical support, which diminishes their employability. A significant concern raised was the lack of technology integration in teacher preparation. In an era of digital learning and blended education, graduates often lack basic ICT competencies, putting them at a disadvantage in modern classrooms, especially in private or urban schools where digital tools are more commonly used.

In the area of recruitment, educational managers pointed to frequent changes in policy priorities and a lack of clarity in recruitment criteria. Policy shifts between different government administrations or departments result in confusion, especially when merit-based processes are inconsistently applied or replaced by political or administrative discretion. A particular challenge noted is the rural-urban posting imbalance, where many new recruits are reluctant to work in remote or rural areas, leading to staffing shortages in underserved regions. On the other hand, urban schools become overcrowded with applicants, worsening the supply-demand gap. Additionally, there is a lack of coordination among stakeholders—including school management, education departments, and recruitment testing bodies—leading to delays, miscommunication, and sometimes disputes over postings, qualifications, and eligibility. This fragmentation reduces the overall efficiency of the recruitment process and affects the timely placement of trained teachers.

Regarding the broader job market, educational managers pointed out practical training deficiencies among graduates. Many candidates, even with formal degrees, lack hands-on experience, classroom management skills, or confidence in applying theoretical knowledge. This disconnect between academic learning and classroom realities makes them less attractive to both public and private employers. Another challenge is the language and communication gap, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas where local dialects differ significantly from the instructional medium. In urban contexts, the expectation for proficiency in English or Urdu can disadvantage graduates from remote or vernacular education backgrounds. These communication issues limit teachers' effectiveness and influence their long-term retention in the system. Additionally, private school employers often favor experienced or well-trained candidates, leaving fresh graduates with fewer immediate opportunities.



Educational managers highlight a complex network of systemic challenges across teacher education, recruitment, and the job market. The issues range from oversupply and poor preparation to policy confusion and operational disconnects. Addressing these will require coordinated reforms, better alignment between training institutions and employer needs, investment in mentorship and digital skills, and policy stability with clear, merit-based recruitment processes.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results outlined in the provided study reveal several critical concerns regarding the current state of teacher education (TE) programs, recruitment processes, and the broader educational labor market. Educational managers express a growing concern about the oversaturation of teacher education graduates, the lack of adequate practical training, and insufficient integration of modern technological tools in teacher preparation. This discussion critically engages with these findings, reflecting on the implications for educational policy and practice, and synthesizes these concerns within the broader context of global trends in teacher preparation and recruitment. One of the most pressing issues raised by educational managers is the oversaturation of teacher education program graduates. The perceived mismatch between the supply of newly trained educators and the demand in the job market is a critical challenge in many countries. This issue is not isolated to a single region or educational system but is a widespread concern. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), the oversupply of teacher graduates in some areas has led to increased competition, with many qualified candidates struggling to secure employment. This issue is exacerbated by systemic inefficiencies in recruitment processes that fail to address both geographical and subject-specific teacher shortages.

The mismatch between supply and demand is particularly problematic in the context of rural-urban disparities in teacher recruitment. Educational managers highlighted the reluctance of new recruits to work in rural or remote areas, which exacerbates staffing shortages in these regions. This phenomenon aligns with earlier studies, such as that by Guarino et al. (2021), which identified the geographic distribution of teachers as a significant factor in the overall effectiveness of educational systems. The urban concentration of teaching positions contributes to overcrowded classrooms in metropolitan areas, further worsening the competitive environment for new graduates. This issue calls for a more strategic approach to recruitment, including incentives for teachers to work in underserved regions, as suggested by Ingersoll (2019). A significant concern voiced by educational managers is the lack of practical classroom experience and mentorship available to teacher education program graduates. Many new teachers enter the workforce with limited real-world exposure to teaching challenges, which diminishes their employability. The importance of practical experience in teacher preparation is well-documented in the literature.

A study by Forzani (2014) indicates the need for teacher education programs to focus more on hands-on learning opportunities, such as student teaching placements and internships, which help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities. Without adequate mentorship and classroom management training, new teachers are more likely to experience burnout or early career attrition, as highlighted by Sorensen, & Ladd (2020). The lack of effective mentorship is also a significant barrier to teacher development, as it hampers the growth of essential skills in classroom management, lesson planning, and pedagogical



strategies. As observed by Cochran-Smith et al. (2020), mentorship plays a critical role in improving teachers' confidence and long-term effectiveness. Educational managers in the study expressed concerns that universities and colleges do not provide sufficient support for graduates once they enter the workforce, leading to a sense of inadequacy and unpreparedness. Mentorship programs are vital not only for the professional growth of teachers but also for enhancing their retention in the system.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and the increasing integration of digital tools in education, the lack of technology integration in teacher education programs is a critical shortcoming. Educational managers noted that many new graduates lack basic ICT competencies, which puts them at a significant disadvantage in modern classrooms, particularly in urban or private schools that rely heavily on digital tools. This issue is consistent with global trends highlighting the need for teachers to be digitally literate and able to leverage technology to enhance learning outcomes (Tondeur et al., 2020). As classrooms increasingly adopt blended learning models, the need for teacher education programs to equip graduates with digital competencies becomes paramount.

Another critical concern raised by educational managers is the frequent changes in education policy and the lack of clarity in recruitment criteria. Educational managers pointed out that shifting policy priorities and inconsistent merit-based recruitment processes create confusion among job seekers and administrators alike. This policy instability undermines the effectiveness of recruitment efforts, making it difficult for institutions to plan and implement effective teacher staffing strategies. According to Ugolo & Onukwu (2025), policy instability in teacher recruitment can lead to mismatches between teacher supply and demand, as well as inefficiencies in the allocation of resources. These inconsistencies contribute to delays in teacher placements, which further exacerbate staffing shortages, particularly in rural areas.

Recommendations

1. Recruitment policy for the teachers may be revised by mentioning with professional degree as a mandatory.
2. Provision of Guidance and counseling may be ensured to the prospective candidates at the time of admission in teachers professional degree programs
3. Compulsory digital literacy and technology integration in teaching is highly recommended to cope with the new requirement in this field.
4. There must be a mechanism of continuous dialogues among Teacher Education institutions and hiring agencies in the country.
5. Uniform recruitment and selection criteria may be recommended and implemented.

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