



Crisis of Poor System of Education in Pakistan

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Abstract

The study explores and determines the key issues, problems and challenges present in the education system of Pakistan and also suggest some solutions in order to tackle these issues. Education plays a dynamic role in governance, management, leadership and control in the society. The purpose of the educational organizations is to enrich the people with knowledge and wisdom in order to develop them physically, psychologically and publicly. It develops and supports the cultural, financial, societal, and political life of the nation. It is a fact that education promotes the change in the communal, radical and cultural situation of the country. Education is very strongly linked with the development and prosperity of the country. In Pakistan, the quality of primary and secondary education is declining day by day. Even after more than seven decades, the indicators are not displaying progressive consequences. Percentage of students are falling day by day from schools. The decline in the quality of education rate is mostly a result of the quality of teachers, students, schools, administration, affordability, library facilities and research laboratories.

Introduction

Education is the only meaningful way to all kinds of development in the world. It is factually proven that the human race (Ball, 1990) has evolved and progressed through education. It helps to increase the productivity and efficiency and develop different kinds of skills which paves the way for an enlightened future and contributes in the economic development of a nation. Education is considered as a prerequisite of modernization as the history explains that the fundamental difference between the first world and third world is of the standards of education and the way the governments prioritize this issue. The first world is considered to be more developed and advanced because it comprehensively invested in the human capital formation and its development. They invested in their present for a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Similar to many developing countries, Pakistan has not shown a significant progress in the education sector. Since its inception it has not able to develop and grow in this sector. It faces low enrolment rates, low quality of education and lack of infrastructure, low female enrolment ratio, brain drain and untrained teachers out of which most of them are political appointments. It is unfortunate that since its independence it faces a low level of public expenditure in the field of education. The governments in the past have never taken the issue of education earnestly. On an average the country has only witnessed a 2% public spending on education as a percentage of GDP (currently 2.8%). The low level of spending on education computed adverse effects and that's why it faces low levels of literacy rates in comparison with the world and the lowest enrolment rates in the primary schools. Pakistan stands at the lowest levels in terms of literacy, public expenditure on education and obsolete curriculum design.

Literature Review

Arif and Saqib (2003) argued that Pakistan has witnessed different education policy initiatives in which several recommendations were given but couldn't get implemented. Some policy measures dates back to education policy conference 1947 in which it was targeted to give free primary

education to all. In 1959 a policy initiative was taken in 1959 which emphasized on character building through religious education. Barber (2010) noted that in 1972 a mass nationalization drive was launched under which many schools were nationalized. Furthermore a national education policy was drafted in 1979 and 1992 but both couldn't yield fruitful results.

(Khan and Mahmood, 1997) stated that education policies drafted in the past were reviewed and a white paper was published in 2007. This paper laid the foundation of a national education policy in 2009. This policy described the challenges and identified the causes and appropriate measures which should be taken for better results. Lynd (2007) researched that the quality is one of the major concerns which needs to be addressed. The research results showed that around 9% of the schools didn't have a blackboard, 24% didn't have proper books for the students and 46% of the schools didn't have desks. Private schools were better equipped with facilities in comparison to public schools. Public schools in some cases suffered from most basic facilities, only 36% of the public primary schools in the country have electricity. The three types of schools differ from each other on several other aspects too. These aspects include fees, infrastructure, quality of education, and teachers. Khan et al. (2005) research on three types of school showed interesting findings. The public schools did quite poorly on quality of education in tested performance. These schools were selected by parents who were unable to afford higher fees of private and NGO schools. Contrary to the common belief it was found that the government schools teachers were paid higher salaries as compared to other types of schools.

The private schools showed different results as some were poorly run as family businesses with low quality education while others had high quality with well stocked library. In comparison to public schools the students did well on regular homework and confidence level. The teachers of these schools were poorly paid as compared to public schools. The NGO schools showed the best results in terms of tested performance, teacher student absent rate, school facilities, and teacher parent's interaction. It was noted that sending the children to NGO schools was considered a status symbol. The fees of the NGO schools were similar to private schools but 77% NGO schools did not charge fee from the poor students.

Batley and Rose (2010) argued that NGOs played a pivotal role in countries like Pakistan as they provided quality education at fee structures which were affordable for households for all income levels. Andrabi et al. (2006) noted that the government of Pakistan acknowledged the role of private schools as they were also providing education in rural areas at very affordable fees. They were able to charge low fee because they were paying teachers less than the public school teachers but overall the increase in the recruitment of teachers in the private schools increased manifold. Khan et al. (1999) argued that on an average public teachers are paid more than the private teachers but still the quality of education in the public sector has not improved. This thing shows that the problems lies within the management and administration rather than financial.

Alderman (2001) studied that the poor quality of education in the public schools made parents to pave their way to get their children enrolled in private schools. His research results concluded that parents keep several factors in mind to enrol their children such as the accessibility, affordability and the quality of education. On the other hand the richer parents preferred private schools as they had the resources to afford private school education. Lloyd (2005) research on private versus public primary schools in rural areas of Punjab and KPK (NWFP) showed interesting findings. The data explained that in 3 villages out the 12, there were no girl's public primary schools. The research also concluded that parents preferred private schools because of better quality of education and greater facilities.

Hussain (2005) argues that the constitution of Pakistan mandates to provide free and compulsory education to children aged between 5-16 years and to increase the adult literacy rate. With the historic 18th amendment the concurrent list with 47 subjects was abolished and many important subjects such as health, education, law and order was transferred to provinces. The year 2015 also marks deadline for Dakar declaration which is a universal commitment for education for all. Pakistan couldn't achieve its target in 2015 but seems ambitious to achieve the target of sustainable development goals 2030.

Discussion

Education is the only valuable tool to deal with poverty, economic development and for social uplift of a nation. An educational system with poor quality is one of the reasons many developing countries are unable to progress. Pakistan also faces poor quality of education provided by both the private

sector to some extent and the public sector. Although the literacy rate has been improved but unfortunately it has unable to provide quality education. Pakistan's definition of being literate is the one who can read and write his/her name is considered as a literate person. The budget allocations has also improved in Pakistan but it has not channelized the desired results because of corruption, extractive institutions and political appointments. Efforts have also been made to design a national curriculum which embeds science, technology and research but the bottleneck is of the untrained and inexperienced teachers and instructors at all levels of education. It has been reported in the media several times that many of the teachers have been recruited but they are mostly absent in the schools. Some of the initiatives were taken by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government by making biometric attendance of the teachers but still the problem prevails in the rest of the country.

There is also a lack of uniformity in the educational system as currently the gap between the Urdu medium schools, madrassas and English medium schools has increased a lot. This is one of the basis where the difference increases between haves and have not's. The students at the Urdu medium schools are unable to compete with the students studying at English medium schools and the students of madrassas are deprived of any kind formal education other than studying Quran and Sunnah. According to a professor working in a government college he argued that the current curriculum in all of the government schools lacks any productive learning it is still dependent on memorizing the syllabus content whereas the other systems of the world enable the students for critical thinking and analytical reasoning. The process of memorizing hampers the student's ability to compete in the international arena. Such curriculum is disastrous for a nation's future as they are only memorizing the content and are not contributing anything productive. He also said that still in some of the schools in Sindh out-dated material is being taught as it was reported in the media that Microsoft Windows 1998 is part of the computer science curriculum.

Further, after the 18th amendment, the concurrent list was abolished and education as a subject was transferred to provinces. It was a vital step for devolution of power but decentralizing education created a mess for the provinces. The smaller provinces had capacity building issues and lacked any expertise in the field of education. The devolution also couldn't maintain a centralized curriculum applicable to all provinces. The recruitment process of teachers at the district level was also supervised by the provinces and had different recruitment processes. The education department at the provincial levels were unable to collaborate with each other where they can agree upon the curriculum, recruitment process, medium of instruction and role of private sector and NGOs in the field of education.

According to census 2017, Pakistan's total population is 207 million out of which women out numbers men. As already discussed in the literature that the literacy level among women is very low in terms of men. This is because of cultural backwardness in some of the areas as people don't have the awareness of the importance of education. Some areas in Pakistan don't send females to the schools as they consider it against their religious beliefs and customs. This is one of the main reasons that many areas in Pakistan have low level of primary school enrolment ratio is as low as 10:4. This low level of enrolment ratio is at an alarming low rate such levels are the lowest in the region.

Furthermore, the role of technical education is pivotal for a society's economic wellbeing. The technical education builds skills which can lead to entrepreneurial start-ups and generate employment. The role of technical education is as much important as formal education. Such vocational institutions were setup by the provincial government of the Punjab but still more skill development programs and subjects should be added which can help them compete in the market locally and internationally as many skilled labor force is still needed in the fast growing economies of the world. The technical education is practically one of the most important means for human capital formation.

Without finances and priority by the government to this sector it is impossible to make it improved. According to the economic survey of Pakistan 2018-19, the table below shows that Pakistan spends around 2.8 percent of the gdp on education and it is at the lowest in terms of spending in the region on education. The low allocation of funds makes the situation worse as without the state's intervention it is difficult to improve the overall situation of education in the country. The table also shows a comparison of the human development index rating. Pakistan is far behind Iran which faces many economic sanctions but still manages to grab a considerable ranking.

Table: 10.1 Education Indicators

Country	Literacy rate adult %age 15 years and older (2006-16)	Youth %age 15-24 years old		Population with some secondary education %ages 25 years & older (2006-17)	Gross enrolment Ratio (GER) 2012-17				Primary School Dropout rate (2007-2016)	Public Expenditure on education (%age of GDP) (2012-2017)	Human Development Index (HDI) Rank
		Female (2006-16)	Male (2006-16)		Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary			
		SDG 4.6			SDG 4.2	SDG 4.1		SDG 4.3			
Iran	84.7	97.7	98.2	68.5	51	109	89	69	2.5	3.4	60
Sri Lanka	91.2	98.6	97.7	82.8	94	102	98	19	1.6	3.5	76
Maldives	98.6	99.4	99.1	47.1	99	102	n/a	14	17.8	4.3	101
India	69.3	81.8	90.0	51.6	13	115	75	27	9.8	3.8	130
Bhutan	57.0	84.5	90.4	9.6	25	95	84	11	21.1	7.4	134
Bangladesh	72.8	93.5	90.9	45.5	34	119	69	17	33.8	2.5	136
Nepal	59.6	80.2	89.9	34.6	86	134	71	12	26.5	3.7	149
Pakistan	57.0	65.5	79.8	37.3	72	98	46	10	22.7	2.8	150
Afghanistan	31.7	32.1	61.9	25.1	n/a	105	55	8	n/a	3.2	168

Source: Human Development Indicator and Indices: 2018

Government is unable to attract potential candidates for teaching as it is considered as the lower rated job for many graduates. This is all because of low public service motivation and lack of incentives, slow service structure and less fringe benefits as compared to other government jobs. Teaching is considered as a virtue universally but in Pakistan the people try their luck in the education sector if they don't get any job.

Corruption is also one of the reasons which halts any progress in the education sector. Mostly the appointments are done on political grounds which hampers meritocracy in the recruitment process of teachers. In rural areas, ghost schools are a reality they are to be found on paper but practically are non-existent. Also, as being reported daily on the electronic and print media in the rural areas the influential and large landowners of the area grab school premises for their own personal gains. The education department is incapable to deal with the issue because of corruption and lack of accountability. Burki (2005) opines that most of the public schools are either mismanaged or poorly managed. They are found imparting education of second-rate quality through substandard textbooks and curricula that do not cater the needs of the 21st century. The education should be based on learning outcomes through suggesting multiple books rather than following a single book as an obligation.

Pakistan has faced one of the longest and one of the most brutal wars of the 21st century. After the 2001 invasion of United States of America the former FATA became a buffer zone and a safe haven for the militants. Due to Pakistan's engagement in the war on terror these militant groups targeted the infrastructure specially the schools as they were the easiest target. These areas faced tough circumstances for more than a decade and many of the school growing population were deprived of their fundamental right of acquiring education. The intensity of the matter can be analysed that many school growing children were only deprived because the infrastructure was completely destroyed and they had no other option.

Pakistan's population growth rate is compounding at a disturbing rate and this rate is unable to equate the resources function which further deteriorates the situation. According to the human development report Pakistan is facing a problem of youth bulge as two thirds of the total population is below the age of thirty. The astounding rate of the youth is unable to get jobs as they are not properly trained and equipped with the requirements of the industry. The education system is unable to equip them with the requirements of the industry.

In Pakistan education has become a business rather a welfare service. The dominance of private schools have added salt to the injury. The urban centres are flooded with private schools and

coaching centres which emphasizes on memorizing rather learning. They charge exorbitant fees which becomes unaffordable for the middle and lower middle income households. These private school owners influences any policy initiatives for their own vested interests which undermines the quality of education provided by the public sector. The growth of the private sector in the field of education is resulted due to the incompetence and lack of commitment by the governments.

Recommendations

The importance of education cannot be undermined; the current government won the election on the manifesto of educational reforms. So, the government has the moral obligation and the mandate to initiate inclusive policy measures which can help bridge the gap between haves and have not's. The primary schools are a backbone of an educational system. There is a need to revamp and uniform a curriculum at national level so that equity prevails in the society. The primary school enrolment rates should be increased as if these rates will increase it will have a direct and positive impact on the enrolment rates at the secondary level. Also, the female enrolment rate should also be increased by taking help from the Ulemas which can give a true depiction of what actually Quran and sunnah states about education. There is also need to involve the influential personalities from the rural areas which can help improve the female enrolment ratio as low enrolment is mostly seen in the rural areas. Previously, the governments overemphasized on the higher education sector and neglected the primary schools system whereas it is impossible to strengthen the leaves without strengthening the roots.

The 21st century is considered as the century of inventions, technological advancements and scientific research. The government should initiate measures and get benefits out of technology. The e-governance systems can be used for bio metric verification of the schools and even to maintain the attendance of the government school teachers. Applications for mobiles can be launched through which children can gain knowledge through distant learning. The teachers in remote areas at any level can also get training through internet and video conferencing through professional trainers and educationists. These measures are cost effective and are being used and applied widely in the education sector of developed as well as developing countries.

There is a dire need to develop a proper system for the recruitment of teachers as they have to shape and mold the future of the country. The teachers should be selected with rigorous testing system in which proper interview and psychological tests should be conducted like any other competitive examination. The test format should be centralized for uniformity and also an independent board comprising of the members from the government, NGOs, think tanks and also members from the private schools should monitor these recruitment for transparency. These teachers should get performance based evaluations with a proper service structure having competitive salaries and fringe benefits enjoyed by other superior government officers. Salaries for the teachers serving in the remote areas should be higher than the market average so that teachers should not feel reluctant to work in these areas.

There is a wide debate that the country should now move towards one curriculum system. A school teacher at a private school was interviewed and he argued that in order to maintain a balance in the society one should initiate measures for a uniform curriculum and examination board equipped with a syllabus productive in nature and also through which students may learn and develop critical thinking skills. Currently the matriculation and the O-level system dominates the education system. The O-level examinations are taken under the supervision of Cambridge international examinations. The process of these examinations are expensive in nature and effects the national exchequer adversely. The government should take measures where it can develop a single system under one authority and abolish foreign based systems likewise abolished in neighbouring India. This can help maintain equity in the society as such distinctions further creates classes in the society. Through this the government will be able to maintain homogenous examination system systems and also save millions of dollars being remitted to such foreign examination boards.

Pakistan is culturally, religiously, ethnically diverse keeping this in mind policy measures should be taken in which every ethnic or culture should be highlighted at the national level because culture represents a civilization and the only tool for preservation is through education. Every culture, religion and ethnicity should be respected and given equitable status so that the students studying it develops a balanced opinion about every diversity. English should be given emphasis but not at the cost of other languages and culture. The model of English based learning was also launched by the

Malaysian government in 2002 that science and mathematics should be taught in English. This model can be applied to specific cases keeping in mind the level of proficiency of students in the English language.

The higher education also needs an overall revampification as the institutions should equip these prospective graduates with skills according to the job market needs. There is a need to bridge the gap between academia and industry as many of the recruitment agencies find incompetence and lack of required skills in the graduates. The world is becoming competitive by introducing such courses and skills it will help them compete in the international arena as well. The public sector universities should also equip the students with research skills under supervision and guidance of instructors having proper exposure of how to do research. Also, the government should initiate education funds at the bachelor and masters level where bright students can get state sponsored study abroad scholarships with a legal commitment of serving in their home country.

When these students will complete their programs and degrees they can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the country. The public sector universities should also be established in remote and less developed areas as many of the students have to pave their way towards urban centres which increases the cost of acquiring education and it also has been noticed that prospective students are willing to get higher education but they don't have the ability to bear the cost of living in the cities. The role of NGOs working in the country cannot be neglected as they have adopted several government schools in one of the most remote and underdeveloped areas in the country. The government should facilitate these NGOs in adopting more schools as they can make valuable addition in the field of education for the betterment of the country.

Conclusion

Education is the only medium through which society can incur positive change. It can help rejuvenate an individual socially, mentally and intellectually. If a society lacks to contribute in the education sector it may not prosper. The process and the results may be seen in the long run but the results contributes as a strong base for socio economic development. There is a dire need for reforms in the education sector, the government should realize the intensity of the matter and install some concrete measures which can help improve the country's socio economic condition. Teachers are one of the most important pillar which can build and renovate the future of the country. They should get accommodated so that competent people can help reform the crisis in the education sector. Uniformity of the academic curriculum like other developed countries is also needed so that under one system the students can be given an enabling environment for inclusive development of a society. Private education should not be considered as a solution as the private individual will have a sole motive of profit making whereas the state's responsibility is to provide education to all. The current government has a mandate for educational reforms they should initiate measures which can have enormous benefits in the long run.

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