

# Education in Pakistan: Problems and their Solutions

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## **Abstract**

This study was meant to explore and report the problems being confronted by the education in Pakistan and suggest for the resolution of these problems. Definitely the study would be excavating the changes brought about since the independence and their consequent repercussions. There is no doubt in accepting the fact that education brings about a change in the social, political and cultural scenario of the country; though the change remains slow but it does have an impact on the society at large. It does bring about improvements in the organizational problem-solving through the use of design, structural paraphernalia, globalized need and quality based systems. Alongside it, the processes to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of recurrent system is also addressed in a most befitting manner. This article is an endeavor to look into the recurrent status of education in Pakistan.

## **Design/methodology/approach**

The study is a blend of qualitative and quantitative investigation more relied upon the secondary data sources. The conversation has a tilt towards configuration, admittance, excellence, future forecast and problems of education in Pakistan. It is a point to ponder that the quality has to match the quantity, and if the turnover of education is not enlightened as aspired, skilled to the level of excellence as needed, trained to benefit the individuals, groups, communities and society at large, and motivated with the least zeal to be ethically committed, such societies fail to meet their development objectives.

## **Findings**

It is the need of the time that the education should be a tool to attract the brightest youth to step forward and take part in the active development of the country. There are certain projects in vogue and new may be designed to educate others about the benefits of educational system. It may help in enhancing the educational standards, join an organization that creates educational opportunities, and improve education taking into consideration the modern and present situations. The interaction with the stakeholders may also help sort out the problems and give their possible solutions.

**Keywords:** EFA, GDP, NGOs, LEAPS.

## **Background of Pakistan's Education System**

Numerous international assessments could explore that Pakistan is lagging behind many countries in achieving the Education for All goal (EFA). We were the signatory to the treaty under Dakar Framework where it was decided by all the developing countries that they will be trying to achieve the target of EFI in the meeting held in Senegal in 2000. UNESCO rates in Pakistan are at a lower EFA development Index (EDI) because of low; enrolment at primary school, adult literacy, gender equity and equality, equalities in education and quality of education. The adult literacy in Pakistan, in spite of concerted efforts, fail to go beyond the border line of 50 percent. The women literacy is much more belittling as thirty three percent of the adult women cannot even read. The more embracing would be that we would not be catching the target to achieve the adult literacy by 2015. Progress towards the achievement of the targets is exceptionally slow, while gender parity goal is at risk of not being achieved by 2015. Moreover, more than 6 million children are out of school (UNESCO Bano, 2007).

**Education system in Pakistan** is really having a bad configuration at the moment. There is no doubt in accepting the fact that education stands the backbone for the development of nations. Looking at the history of nations, we may safely reach the conclusion that the advanced nations of the world could reach the zenith of prestige and power taking support from education. The allocations for education are too meager, and in spite of allocation, the amount is not spent for what it was meant for as the corruption is found in all the tiers of education and also because of the same delivery from the government institutions that is much below the desired and aspired levels. **Private education in Pakistan** is far reaching for the poor and the turnover of this quality education does not serve the country the way they are supposed to.

Planning for education does not go in congruence with the needs and implement remains ever ignored, so by this way the system is getting more spoiled rather than flourishing. Our universities have failed to produce the planners, developers, implementers, and decision makers. Rather the turnover is a mismatch with the ground realities, the half backed persons we are producing are of no use to us. The students we come across are degree seekers rather than the knowledge. The increase in number of colleges and universities does not mean that we are going by the standards rather these are worsening, a simple evidence of which is that no Pakistani university could find a space among the top 1000 universities of the world. The socio-economic scenario is directly attached with the status of Education in the country. The developed world managed to scale up their education in line with the needs and market requirements. Despite the recent achievements, a lot more is needed to be done as the country still faces numerous challenges which cause deterrence. We are under obligation to raise the education of our population to the level of our South Asian neighbors, to combat our own social and economic wants to the satisfactory level.

The very scale of Pakistan's education sector -- more than 150,000 public education institutions serving over 21 million students and a huge private sector that serves another 12 million -- presents formidable challenges.

Education is found to be the cheapest and tangible defense mechanism for a nation on the social, political, and economic fronts. But the down trodden condition of education in Pakistan bears an ample testimony of the fact that it is unable to defend its own sector. Over the span of 64 years, the nation has been given the 23 policies and action plans but we could not start the march towards success and are waiting for a savior who could take the system out of turmoil. There were ample spending in the government of Pervaiz Musharraf on education and due to which, we could see the visible positive educational change in Pakistani society. Currently the economic situation in Pakistan is under severe stress and education sector has received the highest impact in Pakistan. The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan has led to the fact in the following words,

“The state of Pakistan shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period.”

In Human development Report, Pakistan is placed at 136th position because its 49.9% population comes under the definition of education. The dropout rate is alarmingly high at the primary level; consequently, it is revealed by the Data Center of UNESCO, that 33.8% females and 47.18% in males could pass through the most initial level of education. We may be conclusive about the ground reality that people in the 6th largest country of the world have no access to the basic education even.

### **Key Performance Indicators for Education Systems**

The frequently used indicators for assessing education and its systems are adult literacy rates, male and female enrollment at different levels of education, participation rate in the different areas of the country; the dropout rates, the amount of resources allocated to education as a proportion of the GDP and some measures of the quality of education being pursued. At the moment, the workability of these indicators rests on the footing of authenticated and recent data so that the planning details may be worked out with confidence. Irony of fate, the indicators, their footings and the quality of data all want more authenticity, but unfortunately, Pakistan's record lacks objectivity and rationality on all counts.

Following are some of the **problems of education in Pakistan**.

**1- The** system of education in Pakistan is operative in match with the local needs and ground realities. It is almost a decisive factor that the education in the mother tongue surrenders more dividends but we have the system more segregated and diversified just contrary to our requirements. A good example of it is that we fail to decide about the Medium of education over the span of 64 years. Different mediums are operational in both, public and private sector. This creates a sort of disparity among people, dividing them into two segments.

**2- The** Regions of Pakistan in the name of provinces are not at par as regards the infrastructure, availability of staff, their training, content mastery allocation of resources and their utilization. This develops a disparity not only in the system but in the turnover too. There is a need to revisit the schools in Baluchistan (The Largest Province of Pakistan by area) because these are

not that much groomed as that of Punjab (The Largest Province of Pakistan by Population). In FATA, the literacy rate is deplorable constituting 29.5% in males and 3% in females. The conditions are to be made more congenial about teaching and learning in all parts of the country without any discretion.

**3-** We should have know how of the population comprising females, unfortunately their education is not attended to the way it was deemed fit. The gender discrimination is a cause that is contributing towards the low participation rate of girls at the basic level of education. The male and female participation ratio is projected at the primary school in the shape of ratio of boys & girls as 10:4 respectively. In the decade passed, government invited private sector to shoulder the responsibility of education of the youth. The intent was also to provide the education at the doorstep to the children especially the female students. The private sector took up the challenge and there was an increase in the growth of private schools but this step didn't cause the increase in the students or the quality. The masses could not be attracted because of precious education. It created clear cut tiers of society and created a gap among those with the haves and have not's.

**4-** There is a craze for the white collar jobs for the same pupils. Select the general rut of education, though they have the least tilt or the capacity to cope with the demands. China, Japan and Germany have the ruts for those who have a taste for and do not achieve the excellence in the general rut of education. We have kept the opportunities open for all to participate in general education at all levels especially the university level. We could not attract the general masses towards technical education making them to earn of their own act as the entrepreneurs and make their living without being the burden on the government. Education system is needed to be revamped making a space for the science, IT, management, and pupil with the excellence to go to the higher education pursuing the education of their own choice. Lesser emphasis on technical education means the lesser manpower for industry and hence the lesser finance generation.

**5-** The allocation of funds for education is very low as it never went beyond 1.5 to 2.0 percent of the total GDP. Even this amount was not utilized and had to be surrendered back to the government because of want of expertise and the knowledge of codal formalities and in time release of funds. There is a need to increase it around 7% of the total GDP keeping in view the allocations by the neighboring countries, there is also a need to rationalize the share at the different levels not ignoring any.

**6-** Government fails to attract the potential candidates for teaching with the zeal vigor and excellent carrier. Teaching is rated as the lowest among the jobs for the youth, because of lesser incentives, slow promotions and lesser fringe benefits. The teachers in government schools are not well groomed and equipped with knowledge and training. People who do not get job in any other sector, they try their luck in educational system. There is a need to reorganize pre-service and in-service trainings making them matched with the requirements rather to keep them ideal, unique and novel.

**7-** Poverty is growing over the years. The average class is vanishing like anything. It happens to be a curse for the nation that exists without having the average income group. The escalation of poverty has restricted the parents to send their children to tasks for child labor or at least to public or private schools. In these schools, the drop out is very high because schools are not the attractive places, the curriculum is dry and the teaching does not match the live situations. Poor parents are constrained to send their children to madressahs where the education is totally free.

**8-** Corruption causes the educational policies, plans and projects to fail because of being the major contributing factor. There is no accountability and transparency in the system, the salaries are low, the incentives are too less to be accounted and even those are uneven. An estimated Rs. 2,594 million out of a total of Rs. 7,016 million provided for improvement of school facilities such as buildings, electricity, drinkable water, etc had gone unaccounted during the fiscal periods 2001-06 (UNESCO Bano, 2007). Similarly, more than 70% literacy centers in Punjab remained inoperative or exist only on paper (ADB, 2007). The chances of ghost schools should be evaded by involving the community in the processes of inspection and monitoring.

**9-** *Multiplicity of Systems are leading to Social Imbalance, bifurcating the people into social and economic classes.* The students from the elite class follow the "O" and "A" levels curriculum instead of Pakistan's routine orthodox and stagnant curriculum. They have little or no awareness of their religion and culture whereas those passing out from Urdu medium schools are usually destined to work in clerical and lower level positions. Religious *madressas* churn out yet another class that is usually unaware of the world outside their own perception.

**10-** *Poor Delivery of Services lead to Low enrolment in Schools; teachers' absenteeism, poor professional training, sub-standard materials and obsolete teaching methods act as the major contributive factors towards the low enrolment in schools.* 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.

**11** The dropout rate of those lucky enough to be enrolled goes beyond 45% as has been divulged by the several reports. Most of the public sector educational institutions stay in a status of poor condition lacking even basic facilities, resultantly shaking the presupposed standards of education. There are four areas that snivel for pressing concentration which are curriculum, textbooks, examinations, and teacher training (Hoodbhoy, 2001). The textbooks need be made more facilitating, student and learning friendly.

**12-** *Private Schools in Pakistan,* enroll more students than in other countries of the region. They least bother about the capacity and facilities available, they rather over burden the teaching staff. The rapid mushroom growth of private schools and academies of teaching reflect the people's lack of trust in the public sector schools coupled with a deficiency of sufficient educational institutions to cater to the needs of the fast growing population. However, there

are certain private schools which are slightly better than the public ones. In the elite schools where the quality education is offered, heavy fees is charged that continues to be a problem. These private sectors schools are meant only for a special sector of the population and are out of the reach of general masses. The private sector schools should be brought under the control of rules making these somewhat accessible for the common population.

**13-** The National Education Policy (1998-2010) was developed prior to Dakar. It has a clear cut vision and direction to support the education department. Since the 2001, the Ministry of Education has developed a number of policy documents including that of National Education policy (2009) but the endeavors remain focused on paper work more rather than the operationalization, though the involvement of NGOs and international development agencies is very much there. The simple reason is that the plans are vicious and not the ground reality based. The policies should be environment friendly. .

**14-** Literacy in Pakistan has risen from 45 to 54 percent within the span of 2002 to 2006, simultaneously primary enrollment rates have also increased from 42 to 52 percent. The population explosion could not enable to catch the targets. In spite of the increase in the certain parameters, the participation rate in Pakistan remains the lowest in South Asia. Alongside it, there are marked male-female, inter-regional and rural-urban disparities: **Only 22 percent of girls, compared to 47 percent boys, complete primary schooling. Female literacy in rural Baluchistan is only 32 percent compared to high urban male literacy rates (and 80 percent among the urban male in Sindh)**

**15-** School dropout rates are exceptionally distressing as these touch the high figures. It is a point to note that **only 30 percent of Pakistan's children take delivery of secondary education and out of these fortunate, only 19 percent get access to upper secondary schools. There a need to make the flow through the system comfortable smooth and continuous.**

**16-** **There is a dire need to expand and modernize vocational and tertiary education.** We can switch over to this dimension through providing better access, modernizing teaching and promoting research at the tertiary level to endow the graduates with the sophisticated expertise and proficiency considered necessary to fabricate a knowledge economy. Currently **Tertiary enrollment rates are awfully less than 5 percent of the entitled age cohort (17-23).** It is also a point of concern that the workforce joining the various jobs receives training to the tune of not beyond **8 percent only. At the first level, the entry to the desirous and deserving need be facilitated and training be made a continuous feature for the workforce that currently serves to increase efficiency and quality of work.**

**17-** Most of the criticisms leveled against the education procedures and practices may be rationalized through improving governance and accountability. It would be tangible and workable if we could go for considering the merit, enabling capacity building, increasing investments in education as an industry and finally giving the heir and fire powers to the administrative heads. The private sector and the banks should finance the educational milieu

with confidence, **as at the moment, we are spending 2.3 percent of GDP which is the lowest in South Asia.**

**18-** There is a crying need for quality which calls for homogeneity among the procedural formalities like the observance of the curriculum. Had it been uniform the working for it, further extension becomes easier and getting the intellect skimmed out of masses becomes possible. Currently, the poor are deprived of education in the elite institutions which are causing the development of a special class. This class doesn't work for the nation; they work elsewhere but are fed through the national resources.

**19-** We took a long period in deciding that what our medium of instruction would be, till now we don't have a clear picture before us. It is good to have the National language as the medium of communication provided; we have a rich treasure of knowledge. In our case, we fail to develop Urdu to cope with the intellectual needs nor do we translate the treasure of knowledge available for our national use.

**20-** Education has been pursued by some of the people as an industry but because of being illiterates, they fail to cope up with the stipulated standards. The leader with vision spoils the mission as well as the projects undertaken. Their only intent is money making, that has caused the decay in the standards, induction of sub-standard staff, and depriving the deserving to grow. They don't want to catch with the move of success but they try to be good entrepreneurs.

**21-** There is a need to continuously update the curriculum because if it goes stale, it does not equip the beneficiaries with the saleable skills and expertise. At the first place, the problems cited have arisen due to lack of commitment and inefficient management on the part of state. The policies lack long term vision and its implementation strategies are being affected by undue political interference. In addition to it, the measures taken are not evidence based and geared by the vested interests of the authorities. Whatever strategies have been applied failed to promote the rational and critical thinking skills amongst the students.

At the second place, we find lack of resource commitment and realistic implementation alongside poor allocated resource utilization. As relevant statistics are not available, implementation of the education policy has not been successfully executed.

At the third place, we come across weak budgetary planning because of staggered data and least coordination among the data maintaining units (USAID, 2006). The coordination, match with the assessment, project design and implementation are not to the desired level within the government and with the donor agencies. The harmonization is missing too between the federal and provincial governments which cause drastic problems in the policy implementation.

The policy formulating, planning and implementing bodies work in isolation as the water tight compartments. The government's consultation is very much restricted and does not go beyond

its specific quarters. It should have to be extended to non-state sectors to initiate and mobilize the action. Teachers does not normally form the part of policy making process, hence the process of sharing and consultation remains missing. It leads to implementation of educational policies without consultation, thus the efforts go in vain (UNESCO, 2007).

Over the span of time, what we have learnt is to go for dialogue, and keeping the private and public sector on board. The matter of access to education and challenges to quality remain at stake as being unresolved despite much policy deliberation.

Recently, Minister of Education announced a new Education policy for that next 10 years ignoring the fact that the previous educational policy span still persists that was from 1998 to 2010. The policy has projected new plans and promises to the nation pointing to the fact that all the public schools will be raised to the level of private schools within the shortest period of time. In the absence of a plan of action, the suggested plan of action would not work. The schools have been put under obligation to use the national curriculum and encourage the students of 5th and 8th class to take board exams. This has disturbed the students of private sector also.

It is urged that the Universities should be the research centre's and must not be allowed to act as the examining bodies for graduate or post-graduate examinations. Allocations are supposed to be made to the aspired levels as UNO suggests a country to allocate at least four percent of its GDP towards education but here in Pakistan we are just allocating less than two percents of GDP. Even that is not fully utilized because of procedural formalities.

#### **Suggested Solutions for Educational System:**

- 1- English language should be the medium of instruction from beginning to the higher levels of learning. National language should be a supporting language for communication facilitation and every day business. Efforts should be made to enhance the knowledge treasure in the national language through translation of the research based information.
- 2- Hiring should be made from amongst the highly qualified and the teachers should be paid not according to the level of education but the qualification of the staff.
- 3- Efforts should be made to bring down the student-teacher ratio to 15:1 in lieu of current 40:1. Consequently, the number of teachers will have to be enhanced, leading to the rise in number of teachers and enabling the competent persons to be inducted to the system of education.
- 4- Primary education should be made compulsory and free (it is already free of cost but not compulsory). It should also be made appealing, impressive, interesting and utilitarian to attract the general masses.
- 5- Teachers should be offered more financial benefits by increasing their pays.
- 6- University professors should be encouraged to conduct and share the research to the concerned stakeholders. They should also be asked to translate the foreign research



into local languages for sharing it with the lower formations of education enabling them to implement/take benefit out of it.

- 7- .Government should strictly check all private educational institutions for keeping a balance of standards and level of practices.
- 8- Students should be offered more scholarships and government should support the intelligent and outstanding students to prosper, develop and serve their local community rather than migrating to the big cities.
- 9- The dilemma here in Pakistan is that students are genius but they use their intelligence in negative way, hence, contributing nothing towards the development of country. Another problem with Pakistan is brain drain. Capable and outstanding professionals prefer foreign jobs instead of serving in their own country. This is due to the low financial benefits and indifferent attitude of government towards them. Recently Government should provide them facilities and special financial packages to encourage them to stay in their own country.
- 10- In the view of importance of education, the Government should take solid steps towards implementation instead of projecting policies. In this regard, the allocations should be made easy and timely from provinces to districts and then to educational institutes. Workshops must be arranged for teachers as a continuous feature for learning.
- 11- Technical education should be infused into the regular system stream. The education board of Punjab has projected a plan to give tech- education to the children of industrial workers.
- 12- Promotion of the primary education should be made possible by consulting teachers, professors and educationists while devising any plan, syllabus or policy for it. There should be a balance in reliance on public and private for enabling education to reach the general masses in its true shape. Students' outlook is to be broadened by taking them out of the books into the practical realities. Education is the only cure of disability of the state and for bringing revolution through evolution and by eradicating the social evils through education.

### **World Bank support**

The World Bank is supporting Pakistan to trounce the key challenges, professionally, blatantly and successfully across the education sector.

**Improving the Quality:** Many reforms are underway in Pakistan that are focused on teacher professional development, development of textbooks, revamping of examination/assessment, working on improving student learning and classroom environment congenial. Students' learning is being monitored regularly through National Education Assessment System with the expertise and financial assistance of World Bank. Emerging analytical work includes a Learning and Educational Attainment in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) project which is based on extensive surveys conducted in three districts of Punjab, Impact Evaluations of specific interventions (including public private partnerships) for their potential scaling up (the impact of female stipend program, the evaluation of assistance to primary education) and a planned Education Sector Review.

**Sectoral Reform:** World Bank is operative in Pakistan Since 2004, through development policy credit operations in all the four provinces (Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province, NWFP). Development policy revolves around public financial reforms and devolution of roles to local communities, making service providers more accountable. The Provincial governments are being assisted in the teacher recruitment, their mentoring and monitoring, offering stipends to specified personnel, distribution of free textbooks especially to girls?, improving educational infrastructure, and boosting quality textbook development, and choosing and making available quality learning materials.

**Increasing Access to Schools:** Punjab Education Sector Reform Program is being supported by World Bank through a series of four projects in the name of (1st project, 2nd project, 3rd project, and 4th project). This support has yielded sizeable amplification in the enrollment at government primary and middle schools – especially which of girls – in 15 districts identified as low literacy districts in the provinces. In NWFP and Sind, there are similar World Bank bank-supported reforms in the name of (1st project and 2nd project) focused on improving educational access and outcomes of the masses. The intervention churned out to be a success in the shape of gross primary enrollment increase of girls by 11 percent between 2001/02 and 2004/05 – looking into the details, it was felt that more female teachers be appointed to combat the situation. It was also decided that the measures to improve the quality and reach to it be enhanced. In Baluchistan, the object had been to Improving access and quality of primary education is also the objective of the project in under implementation. In Punjab, Baluchistan and Sind, the World Bank is supporting the low cost private sector through education foundations to expand access to education in districts with large numbers of out of school children.

**Reforming Higher Education:** The World Bank's Analytical support for the Higher Education Sector has been completed and a Higher Education Support Program is under preparation. Work is also underway to support college sector reforms.

## **Conclusion**

Education serves as the backbone for the development of nations. The countries with the effective impressive need oriented, saleable and effective system of education comes out to be the leaders of the world, both socially and economically. It is only education which can turn a burden of population into productive human resource. Pakistan's current state demands that the allocations for education be doubled to meet the challenges of EFI, gender disparity and provision of teachers in the work places earlier than 2018 as per stipulated qualifications. Millennium Development Goals are yet to be realized latest by 2015.

The natural calamities, political turbulence, provincialisms, and political motivations make the best planned, fail. The allocations towards the sector of education could not be enhanced because of the earlier. We have to revisit our priorities to keep the country on the track of progress.

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### **References**

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