

Pakistan's Education System: An Analysis of Education Policies and Drawbacks

by

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Abstract

This paper aimed to look at the present education system in Pakistan. There exist an inherent promise and intensive potential in the educational policies of Pakistan for revolutionizing socio-economic change in the country through education. Pakistan since its independence in 1947 has faced insufficient educational institutions and a lack of qualified teachers which resulted in challenges of access and quality. To deal with educational problems, a number of educational policies were released. The policies came at different times, during different regimes, in with diverse policy document. They varied in their size, intention, and seriousness. The existing education system in Pakistan is considered not being adequately responsive to the demand for quality education. There is a wide range of issues and concerns related to the teaching and learning setup. To improve the existing education system of Pakistan development of any strategy should give due consideration to these issues and concerns.

Keywords: Education, literacy, Policy, Constitution, Ministry, Curriculum

Introduction:

Human beings today need to have a specific set of skills to survive in this competitive world as well as progress. This set of skills can be referred to as Education. Education plays an important role in the progress and development of a state. Progress of any country depends upon its literacy rate and quality of education in that country. Therefore, it is the key priority of nations.

Education System in Pakistan:

The present system of education prevalent in Pakistan is the heritage of the pre-partitioned British India. A review of the education system of Pakistan suggests that there has been little change in Pakistan's schools since 2010, when the 18th Amendment enshrined

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education as a fundamental human right in the constitution. Problems of access, quality, infrastructure and inequality of opportunity, remain endemic.

According to the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), the Federal Government was entrusted with the responsibility for policy, planning, and promotion of educational facilities in the federating units. This responsibility was in addition to the overall policymaking, coordinating and advisory authority; otherwise, education was the concurrent subject. The Federal Ministry of Education also administers the educational institutions located in the federal capital territory. Universities located in various provinces are administered by the provincial governments, but are exclusively funded by the federal government through the university grants commission and now called as Higher Education Commission located in Islamabad city.

The Federal Ministry of Education was headed by the Minister of Education. The most senior civil servant in the Ministry was the Education Secretary assisted by Joint Secretary and Joint Educational Advisors of each wing. There were 6 wings in the Federal Ministry of Education and each wing is headed by Joint Educational Advisor. The concurrent subjects have been delisted from the schedule – 11 of the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 as amended in 2010. Now, the provinces of Pakistan are empowered to make policy decisions as per their local needs for the communities and individual citizens.

Educational Policies of Pakistan:

In Pakistan, the public policies on education reflect the National ideology. It consists of the political option, tradition, values, culture, socio-economic needs, emerging trends and concepts, and even its implications in the future. The following education policies were framed and implemented in true perspectives. After the birth of Pakistan on 14th August 1947, the first effort was made by the founder of this Nation. In his message, he highlighted the need for educational improvement in the country. A National Education Conference, 1947 was conducted for getting the recommendations for implementation. Thereafter, a number of education plans, some reports, policies, and programs had been approved for educational reforms. In this regard, a comprehensive ‘Report of the Commission on National Education, 1959’ had been documented, while focusing on the overall issues of the educational subject. The chronology of developments in policymaking showed the New Education Policy – 1970, The Education Policy – 1972/80, National Education Policy – 1979, National Education Policy – 1992 and National Education Policy – 1998/2010 from time to time by the Government, respectively.

In this regard, a number of development plans had also been implemented, simultaneously. It includes as; the National Plan of Educational Development – 1951/57, First Five-Year Plan – 1975/80, Sixth Five Year Plan – 1980/85, National Literacy Plan – 1984/86, Seventh Five Year Plan – 1988/93 and Eighth Five Year Plan – 1993/98. In addition to adaptable policy documents, the long-term development programs had also been started since last four decades. It included as; a ‘10-Point Programme, 1983’ and Nationwide Literacy Programme (Nai Roshni Schools), 1986-90 whereas, the evaluation of ‘Iqra Pilot Project, 1986-89’ had also been made at Federal Government level. Another effort has also been made at the National level for raising the literacy and numeracy levels in the country. Thus, the ‘Literacy and Mass Education Commission, 1981’ was established to meet the objectives set at the National level.

The announcement and implementation of policy frameworks have resulted that the citizens were given the education as a fundamental right for their well-being. Therefore, the people of our country have become capable of living their lives well like other Nations of the world.

Salient Features of Education Policies:

Since the history of Pakistan, the task of Nation-building has been achieved by imparting education for the masses. There had been a need for educated and skilled manpower for running the country in all fields of life. The policies were framed to make priorities and targets and even action plans. The salient features of these policies are given in the following statement separately.

National Education Conference - 1947:

The birth of dominion of East and West Pakistan on 14th August 1947, a National Education Conference was held in 1947. The founder 1st Governor-General of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Quaid-e-Azam, had sent graceful messages duly meant the education sector as most important. The extract from that message is quoted as under:

“The importance of education and the type of education cannot be over-emphasized. There is no doubt that the future of our state will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children and the way in which we bring them up as future citizens of Pakistan. We should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction.”

The above Quaid’s Message is meant as the foundation of the education system, which has provided a clear way for the existence of the Nation. It is the direction and vision to compete with the other nations of the world linked with the future of the children (citizens) and the future of the state – Pakistan.

Academic Structure of Pakistan:

The academic structure of the existing system of education in Pakistan is as under:

Table 1 Academic structure²

Sub-sector/level	Grade/ Class	Duration in years	Age Group
Primary Education	I – V	5	6 – 10
Secondary Education	IV – X	5	11 – 15
Higher Secondary Education	XI – XII	2	16 – 17
College Education	XIII – XIV	2	18 – 19
University Education	XV – XVI	2	20 – 21

The educational institutions from lower to higher levels are run by the provincial government, local bodies, and private management. In government schools, the tuition fee is not charged at primary and secondary levels. However, a fee is charged from the higher secondary level to the university level, which is not very high but affordable. However, the provision of scholarship, fee-ship, and financial support has been made for deserving students at these levels.

Primary Schools:

Formal schooling in Pakistan starts at the age of 5 plus in the first grade of primary schools. The curriculum for primary classes is practically the same throughout the country.

² Source: authors own work

Instruction is given in local/regional language and in some areas, Urdu is the medium of instruction. Classes are held six hours a day (including a break of half an hour, at midday) and schools are working for five and a half days a week. Where schools operate on a double shift basis, class hours are slightly shorter. The primary courses extended over five years. Beginning generally at the age of five, promotion from grade to grade depends upon, the result of annual examination oral and written conducted by supervisors.

Curriculum of Primary Schools:

The following type of curriculum is offered in primary schools.³

- a. Languages
 - First language
 - Second language
- b. Mathematics
- c. Science
- d. Pak/ social studies
- e. Health at Physical Education
- f. Islamiyat (Islamic Studies)
- g. Arts
- h. Manual work

Problems of Primary Schools:

The problems of rural primary schools are more serious as compared to-urban primary schools. Some of the common problems are:

- i. In most cases, schools are single teachers
- ii. Poor and inadequate building
- iii. In most cases, buildings are of one room
- iv. Buildings are in dilapidated condition
- v. There are shelter less schools
- vi. Inadequate furniture (tats, chairs, tables)
- vii. Inadequate instructional material
- viii. Inadequate but in most cases missing basic amenities
- ix. Absence of boundary walls
- x. Absence of sports equipment and play grounds
- xi. The instances of dropout is high
- xii. Poor scholarship of children
- xiii. Presence of untrained teachers
- xiv. Ineffective supervision
- xv. Adjustment problems faced by teachers who do not belong to that village
- xvi. Teachers absentees
- xvii. Poor / absence of transportation facilities
- xviii. Poor / absence of intra-structure of the villages

³ Practically arts are not taught and manual work is not done.

- xix. Absence of residential facilities for teachers

Obstacles in the Achievement of Free and Universal Primary Education:

Free and compulsory/universal primary education could not be achieved because of various political, social, and economic reasons. Some of these are:

- i. Low priority accorded to primary sub-sector in the distribution of financial resources.
- ii. Unrealistic plans and their targets
- iii. Poor implementation of innovative programs
- iv. The unattractive environment of schools
- v. Un-stimulating teaching-learning situation in the classrooms.
- vi. High dropouts and repetition
- vii. Other geographical situation and socio-cultural factors.
- viii. Weak political will

The universalization of primary education is a formidable task for the government and if these conditions persist, there would be a long way to achieve the goals of universal primary education.

Secondary Schools:

Secondary education consists of VI – X classes. Higher Secondary classes XI-XII are gradually linked with selected secondary schools and are ‘converted into Higher Secondary Schools both for male and female. These Higher Secondary Schools are run by Principals and Higher Secondary classes (XI,-XII) are taught by “Specialists” a new cadre created for this purpose. Anomaly still exists in the system. Intermediate classes (XI-XII) are still part and parcel of degree colleges. However, new Intermediate Colleges are not established. In most cases, Urdu is the medium of instruction. Subjects like Urdu, English, Pakistan Studies, and Islamiyat are taught as compulsory subjects. Other subjects are grouped as Science and Humanities and are opted by students according to their interests. Attempts are being made to diversify’ secondary education curriculum through the inclusion of such options as agriculture, industrial arts, commerce, and domestic sciences for those who want to study them. But the trend from scientific subjects and arts has not been favorably shifted to technical and vocational subjects. Besides Secondary’ and Higher Secondary Schools, there are “Special Schools” such as Public Schools and ‘Cadet Colleges” in the country, these institutions are unique in many respects. They provide residential facilities, attractive physical, social, and academic environments in which students are groomed to play a leadership role in the country in the future. Only the elite class can afford such quality education for their children. The presence of such institutions is criticized and it is not clear to what extent these institutions provide free education to 25 percent poor and talented children as envisaged in previous policies.

Criticism Against Secondary /Higher Secondary Schools:

One serious criticism leveled against Secondary/Higher Secondary schools is that they

have been unable to produce good qualities of character, balanced personality, and disciplined habits. This is why the tradition of the establishment of “Public Schools” and “Cadet Colleges” as indicated earlier, which lay emphasis on the development of qualities of leadership, still perpetuates. These “special Institutions” cannot meet the needs of the people and they are very costly and only affluent people can afford them for their children. Therefore, efforts should be made to raise the quality of the ordinary secondary and higher secondary schools through the improvement of their physical and material facilities and instructional environment. Such a sincere attempt has once been made through the introduction of “Comprehensive. Schools” to provide good and multipurpose education under one roof but the scheme was later on discontinued for unknown reasons. Now the latest education policy again picks up the strings and recommends the establishment of “Model Secondary Schools” at district levels. Another criticism that is leveled against secondary / higher secondary schools is that they provide general education. They have not been developed as “terminal stage” or they have not been treated as institutions of a “complete stage in itself. As they provide general education and are almost preparatory institutions for higher education, therefore, they put pressure on colleges and universities ultimately lead to educated unemployment.

The General State of Secondary / Higher Secondary Institutions:

The general state of Secondary / Higher Secondary Schools in their quality of education is not better than what has been said about primary schools. Most of the institutions are deficient in respect of staff, equipment, material, and buildings. The majority of teachers are not satisfied with their job and lack competence and enthusiasm. In a large number of cases, the buildings are in an advanced stage of dilapidation due to lack of repair and proper maintenance. Theft is an acute shortage of classrooms in the face of swelling enrolment. Equipment is scant and are of poor quality. The secondary schools in Pakistan are often criticized for their purely academic character and their failure to make adequate provision for an individual’s difference on account of age ability and aptitude. Moreover, the classroom work is very academic, bookish consisting largely of parroting the least obviously with little thought on the part of the teacher that the work should have some relationship with the life needs of the people.

Higher Education (Colleges):

Higher education consists of two stages. Intermediate (grades XI-XII) and Degree (grades) (XIII-XIV) and for BS Degree (grades XIII-XVI). English had been the medium of instruction at the graduate level. In most colleges particularly, at intermediate level Urdu has been adopted as a medium of instruction.

The State of Higher Education (Colleges):

There is a general complaint that the academic standard in colleges has rapidly deteriorated. The major reason for this deterioration of quality of higher education is the inadequately qualified teachers with overcrowded classes of ill-prepared students. Other causes responsible for the decline of quality in education are the inadequacy of buildings, libraries, and scientific equipment. The teaching of science is particularly poor. Hostel facilities are also either missing or inadequate. Which deny students opportunities for developing esprit-de-crois and discipline for living in a kind of environment conducive to academic work. Private colleges are

flourishing in the country because of the encouraging policy of the government to open educational institutions in the private sector. These private colleges both for males and females enroll a significant number of students because of social and demographic factors. Most of these colleges cannot provide adequate physical material and instructional facilities. They also hire the services of academically and professionally untrained teachers. Though they are charging heavy fees. There has been a tremendous increase in the enrolment of students at the college stage because of the expansion in secondary and higher secondary education and because of rapid growth in population.

In spite of the substantial increase in the allocation of funds for education by the government, the educational program at the college level remains always under financial constraints. Other pressing priorities of the government such as the universalization of basic education also affect budgetary provision for a college education. However, it is most desirable for the provincial government to consolidate college education for bringing about quality improvement. Moreover, no new admission be made at the intermediate level in the existing colleges so that the degree level is fully concentrated and consolidated for quality improvement in the future.

Higher Education (Universities):

In a developing country like Pakistan, universities are the institutions of higher learning, have a key role to play. The higher-level expertise of the country is located in these institutions. Therefore, they are expected to develop, design, and implement development programs in the country. At the time of independence, there was one established university. In 1984 the number raised to 20 universities. Now there, are 36 universities (22 in 'public sector' and 12 in the private sector). Universities in the private sector are gradually increasing. The thrust of these universities is on Instructional Technology (IT) and Business Education. Moreover, agricultural colleges and medical colleges are up-graded to the status of universities.

Problems and Issues in University Education:

Some perennial problems in the past faced by universities were mainly related to:

- i. Financial constraints / deficits
- ii. Absence of coordination in academic programs
- iii. Consolidation/improvement of university institutions
- iv. Modernization of curriculum in university
- v. Diverting the trend from general education towards more technical and scientific and Job-oriented education
- vi. Consolidation of Research Institutions in university
- vii. Staff development of the university
- viii. Buildings, linkage. the collaboration of Pakistani universities with foreign universities
- ix. Bringing about national integration through higher education
- x. Bringing about qualitative improvement in higher education institutions
- xi. Improving the state of corporate life and the welfare of students in universities.

Strategies for the Solution of the Problems:

For achieving the above objectives government had been making continuous efforts to bring about desirable changes and improvements in these important institutions through initiating various policies and plans.

- i. The University Grand Commission which had been established in 1974 expanded the scope of the activities. Presently it disburses recurring and development grants and provides funds for many approved projects
- ii. The Commission also floats a number of senior and junior Fellowships and has established chairs in various Languages
- iii. It organizes pre-service and in-service training programs, seminars, and conferences which are attended by eminent scholars.
- iv. The Commission lays down standard of education and periodically reviews the syllabi and courses of studies in various subjects taught in university institutions,
- v. Providing grants for equipment and libraries in the
- vi. An Information Service regarding high education for use of government departments, universities and research institutions.
- vii. In order to improve and coordinate activities in universities, Centers of Basic Science (COBs) has been established at the University's Grant Commission.
- viii. A similar organization for Social Sciences and Humanity has been established.
- ix. A computer training center has also been set up at University Grants Commission under the aegis of UGC.
- x. In addition to the various activities undertaken by UGC, other innovative programs have also been launched by the government to improve, develop, and strengthen the instructional programs of higher education and to build the professional capabilities of the administrators, planners, and teaching personnel of the universities in Pakistan. Some of such institutions are worth mentioning:
 - a. Institute of Science and Technology
 - b. Centers of Excellence
 - c. National Academy of Higher Education
 - d. National Academy of Educational Planning and Management
 - e. National Education Council
 - f. Area Study Centers
 - g. Pakistan Study Centers

Teacher Education / Training Institutions:

The first step in this direction was that universities had been financing by the Federal Government since 1980. Since independence, there had been a substantial expansion in teacher education institutions. In 1998, there were 90 elementary colleges and 30 Training Units in selected high schools which were offering Teacher Training Programme for PTC, CT teachers, and Drawing Masters. There were 18 Colleges of Education, 5, "Institute of Education and Research" and 2 Departments of Education which offered different teacher training programs.

The "laissez-faire policy" of the government has led to the opening of such Training Colleges in every region, where a large number of students take admission on a self-financing

basis. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) Islamabad, is also contributing substantially to the training of teachers at various levels. It offers PTC, CT, B.Ed., M.Ed. M.A. Education, M. Phil, and Ph.D. programs through a non-formal approach in various areas of distance-learning, educational planning, and management and teacher education, thousands of students are enrolled in various programs except in M. Phil and Ph.D. which are highly selective.

Issues in Teacher Education/Institutions:

There are issues in teacher education institutions that are briefly stated. These issues influence the policy of the government for the development and improvement of teacher education in the country:

- i. In view of the (trained) graduate teachers from various training institutions, the government will have to work out the actual requirement on short- and long-term basis and will have to restrict admissions in training institutions accordingly.
- ii. The training institutions prepare professionals of general nature while they are required to concentrate on the specialized nature of training, particularly in educational administration, curriculum development, evaluation, and research at M.A. M.Ed. M.Phil. and Ph.D. levels.
- iii. Effective measures need to be taken to strengthen in-service training institutions in Pakistan.
- iv. Special arrangements should be made for the training of teacher-educators and for this purpose the services of the proposed National Institute of Teacher Education (NITE) be fully utilized.
- v. The Academy of Higher Education in the UGC should be strengthened to provide in-service training programs to the newly appointed teachers of colleges and universities.
- vi. The Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE) as established earlier, in each region, should be activated and revitalized to impart intensive training in management and supervision to administrators and supervisors and other key personnel of supervisory cadre.
- vii. In order to universalize primary education in the country. It is necessary to provide suitable number of teachers to the disadvantaged institutions i.e. female primary schools in the rural areas through provision of an 'attractive package' of incentives i.e. stipend/scholarship, special pay/ allowance, residential facilities and opening of daycare centers for the children of female teachers.
- viii. Technical and vocational institutions face a shortage of material, inadequate and poorly trained teachers, poorly equipped workshops, and inadequate administrative structure. All these factors lead to both internal efficiency and the ineffectiveness of the program. Therefore, these institutions should be improved on a priority basis.

Conclusion:

An overview of the educational system of Pakistan suggests that our educational policies should be reviewed in consonance with aspirations of the people and the socioeconomic structure

of the country and for its reorientation and reorganization appropriate measures should be adopted which ensure integrated and balanced development of education in various stages.

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