

Critical Analysis of the Problems of Education in Pakistan: Possible Solutions

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ABSTRACT

Education lays the foundation for political, social and economic development of any country. A viable education system enables the nation to achieve its national goals. Pakistan as a developing country has faced critical problems of education since its inception and therefore, the system of education has failed to deliver according to the aspirations of the nation. There are various factors responsible for this situation. This paper explores some of the critical problems that have so far plagued the education system of Pakistan. On the basis of critical review of available literature, the paper presents solutions to the existing problems of the education system of Pakistan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the road to national development. It creates sense of responsibility among the people. On the basis of education people not only realize their duties but also know how to achieve their national, societal and individual rights. One of the goals of education is to enable the people by enhancing their general consciousness regarding their national and international position as global citizens. This realization creates an atmosphere of trust and cooperation in the society. Education promotes economic development and consequently people become prosperous and play their respective roles in the overall national development [1]. Pakistan is a developing country. Its economy is weak. There is lack of political stability in the country. Besides, the country is in the deep grip of increasing political turmoil, expanding terrorism, incessant sectarian violence, social instability, and economic degeneration. All these problems are directly or indirectly the offshoot of a weak, polarized and non-unified education system.

Today Pakistan is faced with many problems such as poverty, insecurity, sectarianism and terrorism [2]. The reasons for these problems are lack of tolerance, lack of general awareness and illiteracy promoted by an ineffective education system. The vital role of education has been neglected in Pakistan which has led to low development in all fields of life. Education has been treated like a step child. The lowest budget has been awarded to the system of education since the establishment of Pakistan which has weakened the foundation of the quality in the education system. The education system, hence, has failed to raise the nation economically, politically and socially. After lapse of half a century years and adoption of more than 25 educational polices, still the education system has badly failed to take the nation out of the increasing economic, political and social quagmire [3].

The problems associated with the education system of Pakistan are lack of adequate budget, lack of policy implementation, defective examination system, poor physical facilities, lack of teacher quality, lack of implementation of education policies, directionless education, low enrollment, high scale dropouts, political interference, outdated curriculum, corruption, poor management and supervision, lack of research, and lack of uniformity [4]. The above mentioned problems could be solved by formulation of rational policies and plan and by ensuring proper implementation of the policies [5]. Education is a nourishing force. It is the constructive factor for any society [3]. Education enables people to work for their development and growth. Hence education brings out the hidden potentialities of individuals and develops them.

2. GOALS OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

The education system was envisioned by the founding fathers as the driving force behind all national goals [5]. It was decided in the first national education conference 1974 held at Karachi that the education system would work according to the national aspirations of Pakistan. The education system would be truly related to the needs of the people of Pakistan. The father of the nation Quaid-e- Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah the main goal of the education system of Pakistan was to develop national character of Pakistani generation [6]. This national character would contain high sense of responsibility, social integrity, selfless service to the nation and morality on the part of the people of Pakistan.

For strengthening the role of education, various educational commissions were formed and committees were constituted. But it is ironical to see that the implementation has been very poor [5]. Because of this the quality of education in the country has suffered badly instead of making progress. Another problem which has affected negatively the system is the widening gaps and distance between the educational institutions and community. Parental involvement in the education process is vital for ensuring the quality aspect. Home is the first school of a child. Without parental involvement in the process of education the effective implementation of policies will remain a far cry. This will solve the problem of disparity as well [1].

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION

The education system of Pakistan despite of towering claims and plans faces the following problems which are critically analyzed below;

3.1 Lack of uniformity

The system of education in Pakistan according to Iqbal (1981) is not based on uniform principles [5]. Different systems of education are simultaneously working in the country. The curriculum is also not uniformed which has given birth to different schools of thoughts. For example there is a world of difference between the attitudes of students coming out from the public educational institutions, Deeni Madaris and the few private elite institutions. This trend has accelerated the pace of polarization in the society. According to Zaki (1989) this is the result of divisive Pakistani education system [1]. This system has created a huge gap among the nation and even has deeply penetrated into the cultural veins of the nation. The recent wave of terrorism and the increasing sectarian division are the logical consequences of this divided system of education. As a result of this current polarized system of education there has occurred a great social division in the society on political, social and economic grounds rather than unity among the people which is cutting knee deep the ideological and social foundation of the nation leading towards further divisions on linguistic and regional grounds which can poentially damage the social cohesion and fabric of the society [7].

3.2 Education without direction

A sound education system is essential for every nation of the world [8]. Every nation develops its generation on the basis of vigorous training and education on social, political, economic and ideological grounds. Pakistani education system due being directionless and weak has not been able to develop and guide its people on sound political and social grounds. There is lack of cohesion in the system and it is more prone towards general education which does not bring any skilled manpower to the market. Resulting there is increasing unemployment. This situation may promote sense of deprivation among the masses [9]. Due to this there is cultural and political unrest in the society. Besides, there is lack of educational opportunities for science and technology. In this way the development of thinking, reasoning and creativity of students is not being polished.

3.3. Outdated curricula

Curriculum is the tool through which the goals of education are achieved. The curriculum of education in Pakistan does not meet the demands of the current times. It is an old and traditional curriculum

which compels the learners to memorize certain facts and figures without taking into consideration the reality that education is the holistic development of an individual. It places much emphasis on the psychology of the learner as well which cannot be negated in the process of teaching and learning. The objectives of education must be developed the psychological, philosophical and sociological foundations of education. The present educational curriculum of Pakistan does not meet these modern standards of education and research. Hence this curriculum is not promoting the interest of the learner for practical work, research, scientific knowledge and reflective observation, rather, it emphasizes on memory and theory [4].

3.4 Lack of professional development of teachers

Training is essential for quality performance. Teaching is a challenging job. There is lack of training opportunities for teachers in Pakistan. Although there various teacher training institutes in the country. These institutes are either not well resourced or being poor run due to lack of fund and trained human resource such trainers and administrators. There are no proper training standards in the available training institutes around the country. Most of the training institutes have been closed down due to lack of funds. The courses being run in the teacher education intuitions are outdated and very traditional which does not enhance the skills, motivation and quality of teachers [1].

3.5 Lack of quality teachers

Teacher is the backbone of education system. The quality of teachers in Pakistani schools is deplorable. According to a UNESCO report, the quality of the teachers and instruction in schools is of low quality [5]. This situation is grimmer in remote parts of Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan where even there are no teachers available in schools. Research has found that teachers do not use new methods and strategies of teaching and learning [3]. Majority of the teachers do not know about lesson planning which renders them incapable of dealing with various problems in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers encourage cramming of the materials by students. Students do not know the use of libraries in educational institutions. Thus the reading habits are decreasing among the students. Teachers are highly responsible for all this mess. It is their professional responsibility to guide the students towards book reading. Teachers rely on lecture methods which do provide an opportunity to students to participate in the process of education as active member. They only note does the information and memorize this just to pass the examination. Thus students are evaluated on the basis of memorization of facts and information rather than performance [10].

3.6 Alarming dropouts

Due to lack of effective management of schools there is lack of discipline in schools and other educational institutions which leads to high scale dropouts of students. This trend has increased to such an extent that there are now 40 lac students out of school due to drop out in Pakistan. This trend according to Hayes (1989) is due to partly the punishment in schools, poor motivating or unattractive school environment and partly due to weak parenting on the part of parents [11]. Child labour and poverty is also one of the reasons for dropouts form schools. An estimated 30 percent of children enrolled in primary education reach to the matric level. This trend in Pakistan has added to the low literacy rate as well [8].

3.7 System of examination

Examination is the evaluation of student's learning. It should be based on qualitative and quantitative techniques to comprehensively evaluate the performance of students. The standards must ensure validity and reliability of the procedures used in the assessment process. The basic aim of assessment is to evaluate the performance of students. The examination system of Pakistan is not only outdated but it also does not have the quality to evaluate the performance of learners comprehensively. The examination system of Pakistan tests only the memory of students. It does not evaluate them in all aspects of learning [3].

Moreover, the examinations are influenced by external and internal forces which have encouraged the trend of illegal practices such as unfair means. As a result of this the examination system promotes rote learning and cramming which negates the role of high intellectual power of learners in the education process such as critical thinking, reflection, analytical skills and so on. It does not measure the actual achievements and performance of students [6].

3.8 Poor supervisory standards

The role of supervision is to explore weaknesses or faults of teachers and showing a harsh treatment in form of transfers to remote areas or even termination from services [12]. Supervision is the monitoring of teaching and learning. Through effective supervision techniques the process of teaching and learning could be improved. The system of school supervision is aimless. There is not only lack of supervisory activities in schools but the process of supervision itself does not bring any positive results for teachers and students.

Supervision system is concerned with controlling and harassing the teachers rather than providing help and guidance for improvement of performance [3].

3.9 Internal and external influences

Education system in Pakistan is not free from external and internal influences. Externally the system has been made hostage to political interference and internally it is plagued by the bureaucratic manipulations [13]. There is a greater favoritism and nepotism in matters of transfers, appointments and promotions. Due to this the basic infrastructure of the education system in Pakistan has affected [4].

3.10 Lack of resources

Education resources such as books, libraries and physical facilities are important for smooth running of educational process. There are despairingly no facilities of books, libraries and reading materials in all educational institutions of the country. Besides, there are overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teachers and ill-equipped laboratories. This entire grim situation has resulted in a despair and low standard education system [4].

3.11 Policy implementation

Since the inception of Pakistan a number of education policies were created. There has been lack of political will on the part of successive government to implement the policies vigorously. The policies were highly ambitious but could not be implemented in true letter and spirit. There has been problem of corruption, lack of funds and gross inconsistency in successive planning on the part of various political regimes in Pakistan. Moreover, in the overall policy formulation teachers have been ignored. They are regarded as unimportant element which has led to alienation between the teachers and the system of education [1].

3.12 Low budgetary allocation for education

Finance is considered the engine of any system. The education system of Pakistan has been crippled mainly due to scarce finance. The successive governments have been giving less than 2.5 percent budget to the education sector which is not sufficient for the growing educational needs of the nation in the present changing times. In many of the developing regional countries such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh the budgetary allocation for education has increased. But in Pakistan it is declining day by day [7].

According to International Crisis group, Pakistan is amongst the 12 countries in the world that spent less than 2 percent of their GDP on education sector [3]. With this insufficient budgetary allocation, the country is hardly going to meet the targets of universalization of primary education as a signatory to the Dakar Conference's MDG goals by 2015 and onward.

3.13 Corruption

Among other causes, corruption is the main contributing factor which has deeply affected the education system of Pakistan [8]. There is a weak system of check and balances and accountability which has encouraged many criminal elements to misappropriate funds, use of authority illegally and giving unnecessary favors in allocation of funds, transfers, promotions and decision making. According to Transparency International, Pakistan is included in the list of the most corrupt countries of the world [3]. Due to low salaries, teachers in search of decent life standards and to keep their body and soul together attempt to unfair means in the examination and matters relating to certificates, degrees and so on.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that education develops people in all domains of life such as social, moral, spiritual, political and economic. It is a dynamic force which enables every nation to achieve its overall national goals. It is an established fact that countries that have developed a sound system of education have a sound social and political system. With effective educational systems many countries are playing a leadership role in the comity of nations. They are enjoying their liberties and also are politically and economically free and developed. The education system of Pakistan has not been able to play its role effectively in nation building. This factor has contributed towards development of frustration among the Pakistani society. The future generation of Pakistan is directionless due to defective education system which has drastically failed to raise the nation on sound economic, social, political and moral grounds. The directionless system of education is producing forces of degree holders who are deficient in high order life skills such as reflection, critical thinking, analysis, research and creativity. The education system instead has focused on feeding the individuals with outdated information and knowledge which is less relevant to the current fast changing

world. Students coming out of the Pakistani education system are theoretically sound but have no skills to apply whatever they learn from their institutions due to the traditional methods of teaching and learning.

Finally, this study concludes that there is an urgent need to reform the system of education of Pakistan and for this purpose this study presents the following recommendations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be sufficient budgetary allocation for education in the national GDP. This will provide the system with resources to take fresh breath of life.
2. There should be quality institutions for the professional development of teachers from primary to higher levels. For this purpose the existing system of teacher education institutions must be provided with funds qualified human resources to run programmes of training for teachers on periodical basis.
3. The system of accountability must be strengthened and all the professionals associated with the system of education should be educated to own their responsibilities on individual and collective basis. This help in creating a sense of ownership of the system and its functions.
4. Curriculum should be evaluated on annual basis. In this regard a vast survey could be conducted to seek opinions of teachers, parents and community regarding their expectations and observations. In this light of this and the expert recommendations of the education researchers the curriculum goals should be redefined and the such curriculum should be prepared which caters to the psyche and needs of the society and the country without any discrimination of cast, color and creed.
5. There should be as less political interference as possible. This will allow the system to function smoothly and without any discrimination. Frequent political intervention creates gaps in the system which has led to corruption and other evils.
6. Policies should be implemented without any delay of time and resources. There should be a strong political will on the part of the government to implement policies without any delay. Poor policy implementation has led to creation of gaps and trust deficit on the part of the public and government agencies.
7. Examination system should be made free from the mafia of unfair means, corruption and illegal gratifications. For this purpose the system of supervision and inspection could be improved both physically and theoretically. The government should enhance the salaries and the education professionals so that their tendencies are not diverted towards evil means of getting favors and support.
8. The culture of research should be promoted within educational institutions. For this purpose the pace of research oriented programs in teaching and learning should be accelerated in educational institutions around the country especially at higher levels. Government should increase the volume of funding to higher education commission for this purpose.

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