

Topic:

Youth bulge in Pakistan: an asset or a liability?

Thesis Statement:

Youth bulge in Pakistan is the responsibility of the state for providing competent opportunities to make effective use of them.

However, the state's inept policies has not yet understood the value of such a precious asset.

Outline:

I. Introduction

Youth bulge in Pakistan is the responsibility of the state for providing competent opportunities to make effective use of them.

However, the state's inept policies has not yet understood the value of such a precious asset.

II. Conceptualizing the meaning of Youth

III. Factors behind the failure of the State to harness the Youth's Potential

- a) Absence of employment opportunities.
- b) Lack of aptitude assessment and career counseling prospects.
- c) Incapacity of Pakistan to utilize Youth in Political activities at Grass Root Level.
- d) Lack of practical and up-to-date Education.
- e) Unjust distribution of Resources.

IV. How Youth bulge can be converted into an Asset?

- a) Encouraging practical education regarding real-life issues.
- b) Implementing development of Technology Parks.
- c) Fostering entrepreneurship and tech-based Education.

d) Comprehensive strategies to bring back out-of-school children to school.

v. Issues for Pakistan to implement such robust policies

a) Heavy slump in Economy.

b) Rise in Extremism.

c) Perpetual increase in political Turmoil.

VI. Conclusion

Massive youth bulge, factors of failure, remedies and strategies, prevailing issues.

"The youth is no longer a youth, but a man, when the first of his dreams is dead."

(William Herbert Carruth)

Similar is the case in Pakistan where the dreams of a massive youth have been dead. Consequently, they have to try other means to fulfil their desires. These means are often poisonous, not for their own personality but for the society and the whole country. It must be the responsibility of the state to handle youth with great care and provide them with amenities for which they struggle throughout their life. Sadly, the state has failed in recognizing the value of such a precious asset. The youth's potential has not yet been harnessed due to multiple factors such as absence of employment opportunities, lack of aptitude assessment and career counselling prospects and unjust

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distribution of resources. Moreover, incapacity of Pakistan to utilize youth in political activities at grass root level and lack of practical and up-to-date education are also ~~fact~~ fanning the fire. However, these failures can be curbed if policy makers of Pakistan convert youth bulge into an asset. This can be done by encouraging practical education regarding real-life issues, implementing ~~the~~ development of technology parks, and fostering entrepreneurship and tech-based education. Besides, the role of the state in bringing out-of-school children back to school is also of valuable use. In this way, Pakistan can effectively utilize its golden cream and can take advantage to become stable on its own grounds.

According to United Nations, youth is defined as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, the meanings of the term 'youth' varies in

different societies around the world, In some societies, youth is considered to be in between the ages of 15 and 32, while according to the African Youth Charter, 2006, those who are between the ages of 15 and 35 are considered to be as youth. Thus, the definition of youth may change with different circumstances, especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic, and socio-cultural settings. However, the definition of youth defined by the United Nations fairly serves its statistical purposes for assessing the needs of the young people and providing guidelines for youth development.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, there are multiple factors due to which state has been unable to utilize the youth's potential, chief among which is the absence of employment opportunities. Every year, a number of graduates produce by

different universities are increasing, but almost majority of them are unable to find any job regarding their profession and degree. According to the Labour Force Survey 2017-18, the unemployment rate for the year 2020-21 has been estimated at 9.56 percent.

The sadest part is that the unemployment rate among degree holders is three times higher than the overall unemployed people.

According to the latest digital census by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023, the current youth bulge in Pakistan is 58.7 million and according to the economist, Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha's calculations 17 million youth in Pakistan are either idle or unemployed.

Ultimately, this ignorance of the youth sector has badly affected Pakistan in all aspects.

In addition to the absence of employment opportunities, lack of aptitude assessment and career counseling projects is another major factor which is also adding

fuel to the fire. Even at university level, they are not properly guided in choosing better career opportunities. As a result such young educated cream is fleeing the country at the first opportunity seeking for better careers and securing their future. According to official data, more than 400,000 Pakistanis left the country during first half of the current year 2023. Similarly, in 2022, over 700,000 people left the country and in 2019, more than 600,000 and 500,000 during pandemic years 2020 and 2021.

If this trend continues, the nation could be left with a dearth of skilled professionals, leading to a population dominated by drug addicts, criminals and semi-educated clerks.

Furthermore, the incapacity of Pakistan to utilize youth in political activities at grass root level is another factor behind the failure of the state to harness the youth's potential.

Political parties are unable to engage around 25 million young voters in mainstream politics. Despite making tall claims, no prominent opportunities have been created for youth within the political structure.

As a result of this, it leads to civic apathy and political detachment on the part of the youth. Even though the Prime Minister's Youth Programme was launched in 2013 for the development of youth that focused on granting loans, socio-economic development, and engaging youth in public policy making, but this programme failed to achieve its goals.

Similarly, lack of practical and up-to-date education is also contributing a lot in not utilizing the youth bulge in a true sense. The present education system of Pakistan has many flaws in it which has failed completely to set up young generation in the current competent setup. Along with this, qualitative analysis

of interviews in a survey shows that many recruiters and employers complain that the local education system is not producing quality, skilled human resources to meet the challenges of the competitive job market. Another fact is that the education system of Pakistan does not focus on learning outcomes, and largely resorts to traditional means of employing education that focuses on cramming knowledge. Therefore, the youth of Pakistan are incompatible with today's market requirements.

Besides, flawed education system, unjust distribution of resources is another factor that is fanning the flames. It has distinctly fragmented the Pakistani society into have and have-nots. The dichotomy between the two such as ostentatious flaunting of wealth and power versus the laborious struggle to survive, creates fragmentation and frustration in the young lot of society. Also, the traditional

mindset and social pressures related to the selection of subjects, careers, marriage, and other life choices have made their issue grimmer. Hence, the responsibility on the state's shoulders has not fully utilized as a result the youth of Pakistan faced multiple problems in their life.

As each problem has a solution, youth bulge can be converted into an asset by implementing effective strategies and policies, chief among which is encouraging practical education regarding real-life issues. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, in its vision 2025, has begun emphasizing academia - industry linkages, encouraging projects revolving around real-life issues, field exposure and internships for the faculty and people alike. Following the co-op model of experiential learning, local university students are encouraged to initiate their start-up-projects. Several leading nation universities like

IBA, LUMS, and GIK Institute of Science and Technology have already introduced the model. HEC is also looking forward to German-style two track education, because according to the Commonwealth Secretariat's Global Youth Development Index report, Germany has been named the world's best place to be a young person. Pakistan too can ~~take~~ implement such strategies.

Moreover, development of technology park can equally benefitted Pakistani youth in their practical life. This plan has already included in HEC but not yet implemented.

Technology parks will create an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs to start their tech-based ventures and attract inter-business outlets for collaboration and funding. One such project at NUST has already been approved in consultation with the Malaysian government, while HEC plans to build seven parks

across the country to provide better employment alternatives for the youth of Pakistan.

In addition to this, the state can promote entrepreneurship and tech-based education for the citizens of Pakistan as it is their right and is mentioned also in the article 25A of the Constitution of Pakistan to provide the education. But the education is far too traditional which is not helping anyone at all. Therefore, majority of experts argue that the future of Pakistani youth lies in promoting entrepreneurship and tech-based education that enables them to create self-employment. However, anyone cannot be an entrepreneur, therefore, Pakistan needs to inspire and promote youth to learn vocational skills and take up low-profile jobs such as running machines, plumbing, electrical jobs, nursing etc. This can be achieved by implementing labour laws to ensure wages

and respect for skilled workers in society.

Last but not least, comprehensive strategies can be made by the state to bring back out-of-school children to school. Currently, 25 million students in Pakistan are out of school. For this, the government needs to increase the allocation of the budget to the education department instead of decreasing it which it recently did in a pathetic decision. Pakistan spends around 1.4 percent of its GDP on education which should be four percent according to the international standards. In this regard, Pakistan can follow the model of India's education policy 2020. In this policy, the main aim of India is to allocate six percent of its GDP to education to make it cheaper and accessible for all strata of society.

To implement such robust remedial policies, there are some

grave issues in the way of Pakistan, chief among which is the heavy slump in economy. Pakistan is an agrarian country whose major dependency is on the export of crops. But for a country like India to allocate a budget of 6 percent of GDP for education sector, Pakistan needs much effort in reforming other sectors too. Once the economy stabilizes, Pakistan can then allocate more budget on education for its enhancement. Likewise, the country is going through rise in extremism which does not allow the government to think about its youth's potential. As a result, the government and policy makers are busy in managing the country's security. Pakistan has witnessed a number of incidents regarding communal intolerance, extremism, terrorism etc. The recent Jaranwala incident has painted a grave picture of Pakistan. Therefore, the state must

ensure ~~that~~ peace and justice in the country along with the accountability of perpetrators so that policy makers can effectively make policies and decisions for strengthening and utilizing the youth bulge.

Last but not least, Pakistan is going through political crisis. Lack of competent law makers has made the country's condition abysmal. That is why, the youth of Pakistan has been ignored and as a result they are leaving their own country.

To conclude, the potential of a massive youth bulge of about 58.7 million in Pakistan has not completely harnessed due to multiple factors. State has failed to ~~not~~ utilize its precious cream. However, there are some strategies, policies that need to be implemented to convert the youth into an asset. After that Pakistan can pave its way towards stability.

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and prosperity. But there are some prevailing issues country is going through which are an obstacle in its way to effectively implement strategic policies. Pakistan is proud of its youth particularly the students, who are nation builders of tomorrow. They must fully equip themselves by discipline, education and training for the arduous task laying ahead of them.
