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Education system of Pakistan: causes, impacts, and solutions

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Causes of a flawed education system in Pakistan (way 2)

a) Low quality of education

Evidence: According to a UNESCO report, the quality of the teachers and instruction in schools is of low quality as 44% of the urban children enrolled in grade 5 in public schools could at least do division, 50% could at least read sentences in English, and 51% could at least read a story in Urdu or another local language.

b) Gaps in implementation of education policies

Evidence: According to UNESCO's report 2023, Gaps in implementation of education policies have hindered reforms in education system of Pakistan, and corruption and lack of political are reasons behind it.

c) Inadequate budget allocation for education

Evidence: According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-2024, the total budget allocated to the education sector is 97.098 billion dollars, constituting 1.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product GDP.

4- Ramifications of flawed education system in Pakistan

a. Massive number of out-of-school children due to poor infrastructure

Evidence: According of UNICEF , Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children with an estimated 22.8 million aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of this age group.

- b. Unemployed youth bulge due to absence of market-oriented studies

Evidence : The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) released the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in 2023, which revealed an increase in unemployment, with educated young being more likely to have trouble obtaining employment due to having skills mismatch with market.

- c. National disintegration due to apartheid education system

Evidence: For instance, Demand for separate provinces by people of south Punjab and sentiments of Baloch nationalists are stark examples of national disintegration due to flawed education system.

5- ways to improve education system of Pakistan

- a) Allocate sufficient budget for education
- b) Formulate and implement effective educational policies
- c) Link higher education to the market needs

6- Critical analysis

7- Conclusion

Education is indispensable for any nation's survival in the ongoing competitive world. It is a journey from darkness to light. Being a country's backbone, it plays a pivotal role in a nation's socio-economic, political, and cultural development. **For instance, Japan has demonstrated that a country can revive through better education, rising from the ashes of World War II.** In contrast, a nation that neglects it thoroughly can never achieve its highest echelon, as the future belongs to those who prepare for it today. Woefully, education has been a neglected sector in Pakistan for decades. Despite being the bedrock of society, the country's education system has been plagued with numerous problems. The negligence of the government in making effective education policies and allocating inadequate budget for education have led to a flawed education system. Moreover, low quality of education has worsened the situation. Nonetheless, the flawed education system has drastic impacts on social and economic development of Pakistan. A massive number of out-of-school children and national disintegration pave the way for numerous social problems. The unemployed youth bulge has become a liability for the country, affecting its economy. Optimistically, every dark cloud has a silver lining. So pragmatic measures like allocating a sufficient budget for education , ensuring a uniform

system of education, and linking higher education with industry needs would surely be helpful in achieving desired results. This essay highlights the causes and impacts of flawed education system in Pakistan and suggests ways to overcome the situation.

Moving ahead, education system is very crucial for any country - either it is developed or developing - as it is founding stone for successful future of the country. The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be philosophy of government in the next. It plays a significant role in social, psychological, mental, and physical growth of citizens. **According to Edward Litton, former Secretary of State for the Colonies of the United Kingdom, “The pen is mightier than the sword”.** For example, significance of the education system is evident from the end of Peloponnesian war, when the Spartans won over Athens. Scholars believed that it was not soil richness and economic affluence but dynamic, versatile, and competitive education system that fostered the national ambitions. Furthermore, it is important for development of society. It elevates poverty, promotes justice, flourishes a democratic culture, and ensures political stability. Moreover, it is crucial for economic and human development. Therefore, for a state, an education system is paramount.

Furthermore, to understand the status of Pakistan’s education system, understanding its structure is mandatory. Education system of Pakistan, like other systems of state, has a hierarchical structure. It is divided into five levels: primary (grade 1 to 5), elementary (grade 6 to 8), secondary (grade 9 and 10), higher secondary (grade 11 and 12), and tertiary (graduate, postgraduate, masters, and PHD) . It is overseen by the federal ministry of education and provincial governments, while federal government assists in curriculum development, accreditation, and financing of research and development. Hence, Pakistan has organized its education system into hierarchical structure for its smooth functioning.

Before moving to the factors that have led the country towards having a flawed education system, it is essential to have a bird’s eye view of current status of education system in Pakistan. Although Pakistan has taken remarkable steps to enhance productivity of the system, education is still grappling with many problems. For instance, according to Article 25-A of the constitution of Pakistan, the state will provide free education to all up to the age of 16 years. Still, Pakistan has the second-lowest literacy rate relative to other countries in the region. This shows that there are some loopholes that are holding back the country in the race for educational advancement. Therefore, the system of the country still faces obstacles, hindering socio-economic development.

Despite having an organized structure, the Pakistani education system is facing several challenges because of a variety of factors. Analyzing those factors is mandatory to understand the root of the problems and their severity.

First, the low quality of education is the dominant reason for the flaws in education system of Pakistan. This is due to the appointment of under-trained teachers and teachers lacking pedagogical skills at low wages in private institutions. **Bertrand Russell** said, “More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which teaching is given”, It is clearly a business at the cost of future of generations. **According to a UNESCO report, the quality of the teachers and instruction in schools is of low quality, as 44% of the urban children enrolled in grade 5 in public schools could at least do division, 50% could at least read sentences in English, and 51% could at least read a story in Urdu or another local language.** This situation is even grimmer in remote parts of Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan, where there are even no teachers available in schools. Research has found that teachers do not use new methods and strategies of teaching and learning, teaching using outdated methods results into lagging behind in the race for innovation. Hence, it is the low quality of education that is hindering progress of education system in Pakistan.

Second, gap in implementation of education policies is one of the main reasons behind a flawed education system. According to researchers, gaps in implementation of education policies are due to poor policy evaluation mechanisms, vacuum in leadership, lack of political will, bureaucratic red tape, and corruption. These issues are so indulged in Pakistani society that reforms seem to be a dream in their presence. **According to UNESCO’s report 2023, gaps in implementation of education policies have hindered reforms in education system of Pakistan,** and corruption and lack of political are reasons behind it. So, without implementing education policies, fixing loopholes and reforming the system are not possible. Thus, gap in implementation of policies is the stumbling block in education system of Pakistan.

Lastly, inadequate budget allocation for education is another principal factor behind issues in education system of Pakistan. Owing to this, education system lacks basic resources and facilities, e.g. labs, clean drinking water, classrooms, and teachers. A class in a government school in Thatta is a stark example of this, where government-complied data shows that nearly a quarter to a third of public-sector primary schools are single-room, single-teacher schools. **According to the Economic Survey 2023-2024, the total budget allocated to the education sector is 97.098 billion dollars, constituting 1.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product GDP. Whereas, international standard for budget allocation to education is minimum 7 per cent of GDP.** Poor infrastructure and paucity of resources drastically affect quality of education, creating an unfavorable learning environment. Therefore, inadequate budget allocation for education is a hindering factor behind ineffective education system in Pakistan.

As a result, there are serious ramifications of this flawed education system in Pakistan. The incompetent system is impeding the socio-economic development of the state. Some of the aftermaths are discussed below.

The most important of them is the issue of massive number of out-of-school children. The education system in Pakistan is not good enough to provide its children with an appropriate learning atmosphere. **According to UNICEF , Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children, with an estimated 22.8 million aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of this age group.** Even in Islamabad, the Federal Capital, there are a staggering 83,000 out-of-school children. This is due to poor infrastructure of public institutions and prevalent poverty in the country. In a report by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), titled "Primary School Literacy: A Case Study of the Educate a Child Initiative", released in March 2022, "Pakistan has never provided a chance to approximately 24 per cent children of ever attending school, while around seven percent had enrolled and dropped out every year". These children usually become puppets of street crime mafia and terrorist outfits that make the situation even worse. Thus, a futile education system results in the problem of a massive number of out-of-school children.

In addition, unemployed youth bulge due to absence of market-oriented studies is another grim impact of a weak education system on Pakistan . Due to a lack of relevant and market-driven skills, Pakistan is losing almost an entire generation. According to the recent report by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), one-third of Pakistani youth are unemployed. Sadly, some institutions are literally more than degree mills, and their graduates add little to the job market. **The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) released the Labor Force Survey (LFS) in 2023, which revealed an increase in unemployment, with educated young being more likely to have trouble obtaining employment due to having skills mismatch with market.** This mismatch is due to the absence of market-oriented studies in higher education. So , weak education system is resulting in an unemployed youth bulge in Pakistan.

Moreover, inefficient education system of Pakistan results in national disintegration. It is education, which makes citizens develop their cognitive abilities, that is the best tool to differentiate between right and wrong. Due to these, individuals cannot deviate from social and national norms of society. In Pakistan, the apartheid education system, Madrassa, Private and Public systems of education, has disrupted nationalism and encouraged public mistrust. **For instance, the demand for separate provinces by people of south Punjab and sentiments of Baloch nationalists are stark examples of national disintegration due to a flawed education system.** Indeed, an educated person is always a great source of national integration. In this way, a setback to the national integration has happened due to the weak education system of Pakistan.

Nonetheless, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel, despite having grave issues. There are some hopes that, through pragmatic measures, issues in the education system of Pakistan can be resolved.

The most important way to improve the education system of Pakistan is by allocating a sufficient budget for education. Budget allocation can resolve the issue of poor infrastructure, and scarce resources and facilities in educational institutions. This increases spending on research and development, which is essential to reform education system. **According to Benjamin Franklin, “an investment in knowledge pays the best interests”.** A seed of investment in education today would become the fruit of the education system of Pakistan tomorrow. Thus, sufficient budget allocation can reform education system in Pakistan.

In addition, the formulation and implementation of effective educational policies is another major solution to issues in the Pakistani education system. Policy formulation is the first step to reforming the education sector, and implementation of the policies is essential to make the step successful. Moreover, strong coordination among stakeholders inspectorates, schools, teachers, and researchers is mandatory to fill the gaps in policy formulation and implementation. History is filled with the examples of such countries that have reached to the glory through effective educational policies. Therefore, Pakistan is also in dire need of formulating reformative educational policies and complementing of them to revamp the system.

Furthermore, linking higher education with the needs of the market is the best way to increase productivity of the education system in Pakistan. For this purpose, higher education institutions need to offer courses according to the needs of labor market. The market demands skills that usually students lack, resulting in unemployment and less economic development in Pakistan. That unemployed youth bulge has become a liability for Pakistan, which clearly shows the failure of the education system to produce skilled graduates. Higher education institutions can meet the demands of the labor market by strengthening skills and providing work-based learning. In this way, amid the fast pace of technological innovation and industry demands, the only way to be in the race for development is to develop link between market needs and education.

To evaluate critically, education is the bedrock of a country, which ensures its peace, progress, and prosperity. Sadly, Pakistan has failed to benefit from its education sector, as it has been dealing with drastic challenges since its inception. However, pragmatic measures are rays of hope amid these challenges. Therefore, improving the education system of the country would result in social and economic development and national integration.

To conclude, the education system of Pakistan has failed to deliver its desired results. The country is trying hard to improve its education, but has failed due to multiple challenges. This has severe socio-economic impacts that hinder its progress. However, pragmatic measures, like allocating an adequate budget for education, can mitigate the situation, as the future is for those who prepare for it. Therefore, it is high time Pakistan took effective steps to overcome these challenges, as it is the only way to be in the race for social and economic development.