

Our Education System is perpetuating Socioeconomic

inequalities

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themes/topics

Outline

Thesis statement: The education system in Pakistan is perpetuating socioeconomic inequalities because the parallel system of education does not serve as the level-playing field for all.

Introduction

"The quality of education given to people is a matter of choice, not of fate."

"What we get wrong about our education system"
by Anjum Altaf.

I. Overview of education system of Pakistan

→ class-based education system

A. Public sector

B. Private sector

1) Low fee private schools

2) High fee private schools

C. NGO-based schools

D. Madressahs

II. Factors behind the perpetuation of socioeconomic inequalities

A. Lack of access to education

C.I.P: 26.2 million out of school children

B. Absence of basic facilities

C.I.P: High dropout ratio

C. A wide gender gap in education system

D. Quality of education

C.I.P: TIMSS report says Pakistan at 2nd last ~~among~~ ^{position,}

E. Absence of Technical Education and Vocational Training

C.I.P: Unemployment

F. Unequal opportunities of Higher Education

C.I.P: only one university at the time of partition ^{in Pakistan's share}

G. A wide gap between ~~gender~~ ^{education} and ~~industry~~ ^{standards}.

III. Ways forward to address the issues of education system of Pakistan

A. Education for all

Increase C.I.P: UNESCO's SGD of 100% literacy by 2030

B. Educational spendings

C.I.P: Allocating 4-6% of the GDP for education sector.

Ensure

C. Quality of education

C.I.P: Teachers training at the time of recruitment and during service

D. More institutions for Technical education and vocational training

C.I.P: Digiskills

E. Developing a connection between education and industry.

F. Public private partnerships

G. Implementation of Single National Curriculum and Madressa's registration

H. Role of media in civil society.

Conclusion

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"Education is the perfection of life — the enrichment of the individual by the heritage of ~~Peace~~. Let this vital process of transmission and absorption be interrupted for half a century, and civilization would end," asserts Will Durant in his book "Fallen Leaves". Pakistan, a developing nation, along with other problems and challenges, faces one basic challenge in education sector. ~~It~~ ^{There} is education crisis in Pakistan as there is also a hierarchal system of education in Pakistan. This hierarchy includes three tier system of public schools, private schools and Madressas, which ^{each} offers a different quality and sort of education which results in completely different mindset of the individuals. Anjum Altaf in his book, "What we get wrong about ^{our} education system" says, "The quality of education given to people is a matter of choice, not of fate". The education system of Pakistan is perpetuating socioeconomic inequalities because the parallel system of education does not serve as the level-playing field for all.

There is a class-based education system in Pakistan which includes: public sector; private sector, including sub-sectors of low fee private schools and high fee private schools; ~~and~~ NGOs-based schools; and Madressahs. The quality of

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education is connected with the socioeconomic status. Those who do economically good are enrolled in private institutions and into Cambridge system, while those who are weaker economically gets enrolled in public sector schools. ^{Additionally,} There is further subdivision in private sector, low fee private schools charging less than 800 PKR per month, and high fee private schools ^{which} charge more than 800 PKR. There is ample difference in the quality of education offered by public schools and high-fee private schools, while the low-fee schools are providing ^{education} provided ~~educati~~ is less different but better than that of public schools. NGO-based schools are playing their role by lowering the burden on the government while Madrasahs also accommodate quite a great amount of students further reducing the burden.

With these classes in education sector, there is the question of the curriculum being taught in them. The curricula ^{being} taught in high ^{fee} private schools is of standard quality which further favours the already elite class of the society. And those curricula which are being taught at low-fee private schools and public ^{schools} ~~sectors~~ ^{produce/results in} provide less skilled graduates and joblessness. Furthermore the course being taught in

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Madressahs is quite different and conserved to religion only. All these different curricula produce pupils and graduates of different mindsets in one nation. They think differently and have quite different ideologies and beliefs towards state as they are already divided into classes economically.

The perpetuation of the socioeconomic inequalities is the result of certain factors. Among these factors, the first one is lack of access to education and the number of out of school children in Pakistan. There is approximately 0.3 Million educational institutes, both public and private, catering to over 54 Million students, according to UNICEF report. ~~that~~ To add fuel to these fire, there are 26.2 million kids out of school in which there is greater proportion of girls according to ASER reports in Pakistan.

Secondly, in absence of basic facilities hampers the students from getting into schools. The case in point is high drop out ratio of girls as compared to boys. ASER (2023) reports show approximately 30% of students dropout before completing primary education. UNICEF Pakistan reports 58% of girls in Sindh and 78% of girls in Balochistan are out of school due to cultural and socio-

economic barrier. There is this gender gap in education system which hampers the growth of and improvement of the education system. Girls, particularly in rural areas, are the victims of illiteracy because of far flung schools, insecurities and household responsibilities.

Quality of education in Pakistan is another factor which is a leading cause of perpetuation of socioeconomic inequalities. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) reports show Pakistan at second from bottom performance-wise. Only 27% of the 4th graders in the country met the low international benchmark, 8% the intermediate international benchmark and only 1% met the high international benchmark. The latest local assessment (ASER 2021) reported that nearly half of grade 5 students were unable to read a grade 2 story in Urdu and English.

Moreover, there is a wide gap between education and industry. Lack of Technical Education and Vocational Training is the key factor behind this very gap which perpetuates the socioeconomic inequalities. Traditional academic curricula are being focused at in the institutions which results in less-skilled or ~~skilled~~ graduates with even no

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Skills. 1

Not only this, but also unequal opportunities of Higher Education is equally contributing to the socioeconomic inequalities. At the time of partition, only one University i.e. Punjab University came in Pakistan's share. Though the conditions being improved now and Pakistan have many universities now, yet there is unequal opportunities of getting higher education. There is a larger number of universities concentrated in urban centres. Rural areas have less to none universities. Furthermore due to economic ^{barriers} conditions there is a lesser number of youth enrolled in universities. Gender disparities contribute ^{further} more to unequal opportunities of higher education.

While these factors, discussed above, pose significant hurdles and perpetuate socioeconomic inequalities, it is not that these inequalities will keep on perpetuating. There exist viable solutions to mitigate their impacts and move toward prosperity.

One basic way forward is Education For All (EFA) which focuses on providing equal opportunities of education in rural areas as those of the urban areas. This foremost step

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step will end up the educational inequalities and rural areas will be equally equipped with infrastructures and educational institutes.

Pakistan struggles to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving 100% literacy by 2030. EFA will serve as the first step and aid in achieving the goal of 100% literacy.

Secondly, allocating greater amount of educational spendings will enhance the number of institutions, the facilities provided in the infrastructure and ultimately the quality of education. Pakistan allocates approximately 1.7% of its GDP to the education sector, which is significantly below the (international) UNESCO-recommended benchmark of 4-6%. However, this increase in the amount of ^{educational} fund upto UNESCO standard will play a crucial role in the improvement of the education sector in Pakistan.

Additionally the quality of education to be improved will play a key role in ending the socioeconomic inequalities being perpetuated by the low standards of education. Pakistan education sector to improved and the quality of education to be raised up to

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the mark, Teacher training should be given so that better quality of education is being given in a better. Additionally, training programs during service of teachers will be helpful in maintaining the quality up-to-date.

Moreover, to improve the skills and produce skillful youth, more institutions for technical and vocational training should be established which will solve the issue of higher gap between education and industries. ~~The~~ ~~the~~ Digiskill is one such program in Pakistan that helps people learn skills to compete in International online job market. Introducing more such programs will equip the youth with more skills to curb the pandemic of unemployment.

In the similar way, ^{establishing} a strong connection between industry and education can be of great help to produce a skilled workforce that aligns with the market demand. The key strategies to bridge the gap includes curriculum alignment with industry needs which will ensure that students graduate with relevant qualifications and are job ready. Furthermore Industry - Academia Partnerships can lead to internships, co-op programs and research opportunities. Not only this, but also

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also setting up ~~adv~~ industry advisory boards in educational institutes to provide insights into emerging skills will enable institutions adapt quickly to market dynamics.

Public Private Partnership is yet another step and way forward to improve the quality of education, the facilities provided in the infrastructure and providing better staff. It will lead to competition in the market and will ^{offer} incentives to the partners which will struggle for the improvement of the institutes. Better results will attract greater ^{number of} enrollments and thus indirectly decreasing the illiteracy rate and a positive step forward towards sustainable development goal.

To cope with the problem of parallel system of education, Single National Curriculum is the way forward. Single National Curriculum (SNC) is one common curriculum for all the schools in each of the provinces. One Nation - One Curriculum will unite ^{all} the institutes and will produce a nation thinking alike. Madrassas also will be registered in the education sector through the process of SNC. SNC will be of immense help in eradicating the

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unequalities have been present in the educational system. SNC will standardize the quality and content of education across all type of private and public schools and Madrasahs.

Last, but not the least media can play a prominent role in civil society. Media, as the voice of civil society, plays a crucial role in bridging educational inequalities by raising awareness, advocating for reforms, and fostering accountability.

By shining a light on the issues and factors of ^{socioeconomic} educational inequalities and pushing for change, the media ^{can} help build a fairer system where everyone has a chance to get a good education no matter their background.

To sum up, education being a process of perfection of life, the parallel system of education is adding up to the socioeconomic differences in Pakistan, because it does not offer quality education to all. Additionally, the already suffering ^{class} sector of the society is not provided with enough infrastructure, basic facilities and teaching staff which leads to further decrease in their socioeconomic condition. Certain other factors like gender disparity, wide gap between industries and education

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and unequal opportunities of higher education renders the lower class of the society low down further. However, these can be addressed through measures of single national curriculum, education financing, public private partnerships and equal facilities for all. These measures may be of great service in mitigating the perpetuating socioeconomic inequalities.