

Pakistan's Educational Crossroads: A Point of Concern

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Essay

Education is the backbone of any nation, serving as a foundation for the economic progress, social development, and political stability. Educated nations describe their own fate and existence through a powerful voice of dignity.

Educational crossroads are the critical junctures for any city, society or a country where suitable and the necessary decisions have to be made to cope with prevailing challenges. Pakistan's education system is also finding itself at these crossroads. Pakistan's education system is facing some challenges include low literacy rates and lack of sufficient access to education. Furthermore, outdated curriculum in Pakistan's education system and inefficient teaching methodologies are also hindering Pakistan's educational progress. Moreover, prevailing conditions of political instability in Pakistan is another challenge facing by Pakistan in its educational uplift.

Along with challenges responsible for Pakistan's

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educational crossroads, there are some way forwards to cope with these challenges include providing sufficient budgets for education sector and ensuring easy access to education in Pakistan. Along with these, modernizing existing curriculum and building greater political consensus in Pakistan can also take part for educational progress of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan's education system is at a crossroads, grappling with a number of challenges that demand urgent reforms.

The first and foremost challenge responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads is low literacy rates in Pakistan. Education is very crucial and essential for economic development and social progress of a country. So, a country having low literacy rates can not gain desirable goals for sustainable development. Literacy rates can be depicted as the ability of populace to read and write. According to UNICEF report published in 2023, Pakistan's literacy rate is 62% which is lowest among all South

Asian Countries. It shows that low literacy rates hinders the educational uplift of Pakistan.

Furthermore, lack of sufficient access to education in Pakistan is another serious challenge responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads. Sufficient access to education can be depicted as safe transport system which can be affordable for every citizen and free education etc.

In Pakistan, transport system which is affordable for everyone is insufficient as a large number of students still reach schools by foot. Girls' security is at stake in rural areas as many parents restrict their daughters to get education. As per Muhammad Ali Babakheil, approximately two million children have no access to education only due to transportability. Hence, it is evident that lack of access to education is harmful for Pakistan.

Moreover, outdated curriculum in Pakistan's education system is another challenge responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads. Outdated curriculum can be seen as old teaching contents that

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that are being taught for many years. There is content like mathematics which is so much old. In this way, critical thinking skills can not be flourished among students as there is no upgradation in Curriculum. According to a columnist Waqar Hassan, China has updated its curriculum to 9-dimensional technology based curriculum, while Pakistan is still running its educational contents to 2-dimensional which is mainly restricted to white boards only. Hence, it is evident that outdated Curriculum casts a shadow over Pakistan's educational progress.

Along with, there is another challenge facing by Pakistan's education system is inefficient and ineffective teaching methodologies. Still even in 21st Century, there is a cramming culture in Pakistan. Teachers often ask students to cram the contents which hinders the student's ability to think analytically. Also, there are many teachers who are not competent for teaching due to lack of skills and training. Concept of ghost schools

Marks..... Percent..... % Grade

is also prevailing in Pakistan where teachers get payments without teaching. This is evident from Pakistan's low scores in PISA analytical skills based exam in 2021. Hence, it is clear that inefficient teaching methodologies are also responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads.

Furthermore, prevailing conditions of political instability in Pakistan are hindering Pakistan's educational progress. Political instability can be interpreted as having lack of consensus among the key politicians and political parties. Due to this instability, no effective and long-lasting educational policy can be made because incumbent government often stops the projects initiated by previous government. For instance, ineffectiveness of 'single National Curriculum' policy is due to lack of political will of current government. That is the reason, political instability is a cause of Pakistan's educational crossroads.

In addition to, lack of ^{infra}structure in education sector is also a challenge facing by Pakistan's education system.

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Infrastructure can be depicted as availability of basic amenities like proper buildings, chairs for students, and proper toilets. Basic necessities are very essential for any society or country to flourish. Similarly, basic necessities for students are also essential for their proper learning. According to Pakistan Educational Statistics, 40% schools in rural areas have infrastructure issues due to which students are affected badly. Hence, it is evident that how lack of infrastructure contributes to educational decline.

Also, there is another challenge responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads, and that is lack of sufficient budget for education in Pakistan. Due to strict conditionalities of IMF, and Pakistan's economic turmoil, the budget allocation for education remains low. This low budget allocation hinders educational uplift of Pakistan, as there are less funds to be spent for the infrastructural development for the education sector. For instance, UNICEF recommends

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4-6% of GDP as allocated fund for education. But, Pakistan has allocated 2.2% of GDP for education in 2023 and 2.4% of GDP for education in 2024. It means Pakistan has increased budget for education by just 0.2% which is insufficient. Hence, it is clear that low budget allocation is a challenge for educational sector.

There are some reforms that are to be made on compulsory basis in order to influence Pakistan's educational crossroads.

The first and foremost pragmatic solution to cope with challenges of educational sector is providing sufficient budget to education sector in Pakistan. For this purpose, Pakistan has to increase budget allocation for education. It is because availability of sufficient budget is essential for infrastructure development. In this regard, New Zealand has allocated 5% of GDP to education and Pakistan has allocated 2.4% of GDP^{in 2024}. So Pakistan has to increase budget allocation to education to influence educational

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Crossroads. Hence, it is proved.

Furthermore, ensuring easy access to education in Pakistan is another demanded reform to influence Pakistan's educational Crossroads. Easy access to education can be explained as providing affordable transportation for students especially girls of belt areas or rural areas of Pakistan. Also providing free education is necessary for educational progress of Pakistan. According to World Bank, access to education especially for girls should be encouraged by proper law making for every country. Hence, ensuring access to education in Pakistan is very essential in order to influence Pakistan's educational Crossroads.

Also, modernizing existing curriculum in education sector is another pragmatic solution to influence Pakistan's educational Crossroads. This is 21st Century which is considered as Century of modernization. Every country is modernizing her sectors like industrial sector and educational sector. Similarly, Pakistan has to modernize

existing Curriculum in education sector. For instance, India has spread its educational sector to rural areas by using E-learning apps such as Byjus. Pakistan has to launch such modern tools or apps for distant learning. Hence, it is evident that modernizing existing Curriculum in education sector is fruitful for Pakistan's prosperity.

Moreover, updating teaching methodologies for educational uplifting of Pakistan, is another reform demanded for educational progress of Pakistan. It is because, students with cramming skills cannot compete a nation having analytical skills. So, Pakistan has to update teaching methods and teachers training to get fruitful goals. For instance, Punjab has initiated Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP) and Training Need Assessment (TNA) in 2016 and 2024 respectively. All other provinces should adopt programs like PESRP and TNA.

In addition to, ~~B~~ building greater political consensus to influence the Pakistan's educational crossroads. It

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is because Political instability casts a shadow over educational Policies initiated by Governments, either the incumbent Government or the Previous Government. That is the reason that Political Consensus is very crucial for Continuing of educational Policies. In this regard, Consensus like National Finance Commission (NFC) should be developed for educational Policies in Pakistan. It is clear that developing greater Consensus is very important for Pakistan's educational Progress and for influencing the Crossroads.

Moreover, another Reform that is demanded to be done is that; solving issues related to regional Connectivity like regional disparities. Regional disparities can be depicted as having lack of consent on Particular Policy. For instance, Balochistan Government has some concerns on PSDP funds as these funds are allocated in abundance to Punjab. So there should be equality between Provinces. Also, there should be Connectivity between Provinces ^{same} as European Union so that

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can enroll in every educational sector. Hence, solving such regional disparity issues are very essential for influencing Pakistan's educational crossroads.

Last but not the least, announcing incentives like scholarship programs in order to promote education is very necessary in influencing educational crossroads. 7 million people are below poverty line in Pakistan. So, they can not afford educational expenses for their children. Government of Pakistan should announce such initiatives like scholarship programs. For instance PEEF initiatives and PM Laptop scheme in Pakistan should be expanded for every deserving student. In this way, Pakistan can increase literacy rates.

In conclusion, there are challenges like low literacy rates, outdated curriculum, lack of infrastructure along with other factors are responsible for Pakistan's educational crossroads. There are some reforms needed to influence these crossroads such as providing sufficient budget to education

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sector in Pakistan, building greater Political Consensus, ensuring easy access to education and updating teaching methodologies. Education is a life gas for Pakistan's Prosperity in every aspect. Hence, there is a need of Political will for updating educational sector in order to get fruitful results. This is necessary for future development and growth for the betterment of countrymen.
