

Education in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles

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Introduction:

Thesis statement: Education system in Pakistan faces many hurdles, but there are some hopes.

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Hurdles in the progress of Pakistan's education system:

2a.

Incompetent faculty in the educational institutions and obsolete curriculum.

2b.

Rot learning limiting the creative skills and critical analysis of students.

2c.

Limited integration of advanced technologies into the educational institutions.

2d.

Social barriers ^{resulting in} leading to lower literacy rate due to gender inequality in education.

2e.

Extremely low budget allocation for education.

2f.

Corruption as an impediment to the education.

2g.

Extreme weather conditions hindering smooth educational progress.

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Hopes for the education in Pakistan:

3a.

Role of Higher Education Commission in improvement of education system.

3b.

E-learning as tool to make education more accessible.

3c.

Role of Public-Private-Partnerships in education sector.

3d. Emerging social awareness regarding education.

3e. Youth bulge as a catalyst for education revival in Pakistan.

3f. Support from international organizations and collaborations with them.

(4) Remedies to achieve unhindered educational progress in Pakistan:

4a. Updating the curriculum and training the teachers accordingly.

~~4b. Introducing modern educational systems to enhance creativity and critical thinking of students.~~

4b. Integration of advanced technologies into the educational institutions.

4c. Promoting education among masses to curb gender inequality and achieve inclusivity.

4d. Aligning educational policy with global benchmarks for quality and accessibility.

4e. Digitization of institutions to curb corruption.

(5) Conclusion:

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Education is the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world"

Nelson Mandela, the great South African leader, emphasized on the importance of education by regarding it as a weapon for change. In Pakistan, this weapon remains underused. Education system in Pakistan faces many hurdles, but there are some hopes. The curriculum is outdated and faculty in educational institutions also lacks the competence. Students are pushed towards rote learning which compromises their critical ability. Moreover, use of advanced technology in institutions is also lacking. Gender inequality in the society compromises literacy rate due to social barriers. However, there are hopes also. Higher education commission is playing its role to improve education. E-learning tools are making education more accessible for the students living in remote areas. Public-Private-Partnerships are proving to be instrumental

in curtailing the ongoing educational crisis in Pakistan. Although there are number of hurdles in the way of smooth educational progress, measures could be taken to reduce them to sustainable levels.

Incompetent faculty is the foremost problem in the education system of Pakistan, followed by an obsolete curriculum. An effective and dynamic education system needs an updated curriculum and competent teachers to deliver it. When both of these are compromised, the phenomenon of learning poverty rises in which a student is unable to read a simple text by the age of ten. A study^{was} carried out in Bahawalpur. It showed that there were no special requirements for teachers to join private schools and most of them were F.A pass. Separately, 40 percent of Pakistani graduates are unable to compete in job market. This is because curriculum fails to equip them with market-relevant skills. Therefore, incompetent faculty and obsolete curriculum are hindering smooth

educational progress in Pakistan.

Similarly, rote learning is prevalent in the educational institutes. It limits the creative skills and critical analysis of the students. To compete in the modern world, students need to equip themselves with advanced ways to handle problems and situation. Unfortunately, Pakistan's education system fails to equip them with such skills. As per a study carried out by UNICEF, "Children are often pushed towards rote learning, focusing on copying and memorizing rather than creative or critical thinking". This study clearly shows that rote learning is a key problem in Pakistan's education system.

Another problem in the existing education system is lack of advanced technologies in the institutions. In the changing global dynamics, technology's use is key to compete at any forum. Same goes for the education system. Behind every advanced break through, there is an

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effective use of technology. Use of advanced technology in Pakistan is limited to few institutions. Resultantly, education sector remains stagnant with respect to modern ones. As per Edtech, only 10%-15% of schools in Pakistan integrates advanced technology. These numbers clearly illustrates how educational institutes are deprived of advanced technology.

Moreover, social barriers are resulting in lower literacy rates due to gender inequality. A nation can not thrive when half of its population is held back. Female students are discouraged to ~~go to~~ schools, specially in the remote and rural areas. The colonial mindset that girls should stay at home and run its errands is the major cause. Female literacy rate in Pakistan is 46 percent as per Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2024. Less than half of female students being out of school clearly shows how social barriers ^{actively} are hindering educational progress in Pakistan.

To add on, budget allocation for the education sector is extremely low. An organization can not operate effectively if it is lacking the necessary funding to run the operations. Education must be a priority for any country that seeks development. Unfortunately, this important sector is ignored for decades. With stressed funding, there can be no infrastructure development for institutions, no ~~attractive~~ handsome salaries to attract skilled faculty, and no means to implement policies. Only 1.91 percent of GDP was allocated to Education sector in recent budget of FY 24-25 as per ESP, while UNDP suggests at least 4 percent. Hence, stressed budget is hindering Pakistan's educational progress.

Furthermore, corruption is the key cause of hindrance in education system. Whenever there is corruption, progress is inevitably hindered. Same goes for the education sector. With already stressed budget and no means to run

and the department effectively, corruption is proving to be a crippling burden that diverts resources away. A research carried out by Dr. Sharmila Tariq shows how corruption prevails in the education system of Pakistan. Therefore, corruption is being an obstacle for education system in Pakistan.

Additionally, climate change has emerged as a key obstacle in the recent years for smooth ~~oper~~ educational operations. Extreme weather conditions are being the major cause for closure of educational institutions. Whether it be recent hailstorm in Islamabad or extreme heatwaves in different parts of Pakistan, all are resulting in the closure of same the children organization, UK stated that "more than half of school age children were locked out of classrooms due to heatwave". This statement actively demonstrates how climate change is hindering education.

Despite deep rooted

challenges, ranging from outdated curriculum to corruption, Pakistan's education sector holds promise. From role of higher education institutes to emerging social awareness, hope is steadily replacing despair.

To begin with, Higher Education Commission is playing an enormous role to improve education at higher level. From giving merit and need-based scholarships to arranging for internships, HEC's role is proving to be promising. It also oversees higher education institutions and regulates them by strict inspection. For example, Universities have to follow certain standards to get registered in HEC. This helps in maintaining and enhancing the quality and standards of institutions. HEC has attached its Quality Enhancement cells (QECs) in every affiliated institution. Therefore, HEC is proving to be key instrument in improving education.

In the same way, E-learning has major breakthrough become a

in education for the last few years. After COVID-19 pandemic, it became widely used to continue the educational operations, since every catastrophe is also an opportunity. Institutions formally began to educate the students, even after through online platforms like ZOOM and Microsoft Teams.

Resultantly, students residing in rural and remote areas got benefitted. Hence, E-learning has become instrumental in improving education and increasing literacy rate.

Moreover, Public-Private Partnerships are playing a key role in improving the education in Pakistan. Private entities step in where government's reach and efficiency is ~~not efficient~~ limited. They help the government in solving multiple problems. For example, Punjab Educational Foundation partners with 7500 private schools, educating over 2.6 million children. Similarly, Zindagi Trust by Shehzad Roy adopted multiple public schools in Karachi and improved

them. In essence, the education system is witnessing improvements due to crucial involvement of PPPs.

To add on, emergence of social awareness regarding education is hope for a better education system in Pakistan. It is necessary for children to go to schools first to get educated. Mass movements regarding overall awareness has resulted in the parents rethink regarding their children's education. Although not completely neutralized, the colonial mindset that discouraged girls' education is slowly being challenged. Organizations like Malala Fund are playing a key part in awareness regarding education. To sum up, social awareness regarding education has emerged as a hope for Pakistan's education system.

Furthermore, youth bulge in Pakistan can be used as a catalyst ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~Pakistan~~ improve Pakistan's overall literacy rate. Pakistan is one of the countries that contains massive

number of young people. The literacy rate of Pakistan is 58% as per Pakistan's Economic Survey 2024-2025. This shows that massive number of youth lies in the illiterate pool. By ensuring education for all and introducing an effective implementation policy, literacy rate can be boosted to higher levels. Hence, the demographic advantage of youth could be utilized to improve literacy rate.

Additionally, support from international organizations and collaborations with them has opened new doors for education system in Pakistan to thrive.

Different educational institutions sign MOUs (Memorandum of understandings) for improvement in different areas. Also, exchange programs like Global UGRAD help students to experience advanced way of learning. World Bank funded HEDP (Higher Education Development Program) aims to enhance Research and development, and capacity building of teachers with a staggering \$400 million.

Therefore, support from international organizations and support from them has opened new means for educational development.

While there are many hurdles coming in the way of smooth educational progress, they are not insurmountable. Following are the remedies that could be adopted to achieve unhindered educational progress in Pakistan.

The first and foremost recipe is to update the curriculum and to train the teachers accordingly. With updated syllabi and a competent faculty that can deliver it, smooth educational progress is inevitable. Students equipped with advanced skills as per international standards can compete easily in the new global dynamics. In Pakistan, the most advanced educational system which institutions offer is of the Cambridge. While this system is adopted in many schools, it is getting obsolete. The system which is now leading is the "International Baccalaureate."

It equips students with a holistic approach. Therefore, such system needs to be introduced in Pakistan for betterment of education sector.

Secondly, integration of advanced technologies into the educational institutions will prove to be instrumental in equipping students with necessary means to compete in the modern world. Students can not compete at any forum if they are ill-equipped with advanced technological means. They will be left behind in the global world because behind every invention or breakthrough, there is proper use of technology. Moreover, countries that prioritized the education with proper means that is the technology are leading the world. For example, Switzerland invested 29.2 billion CHF in R and D, and innovation. Resultantly, it is leading in research and development as per Global Innovation index 2025. Therefore, prioritizing tech integration will prove instrumental for Pakistan's

education system.

thirdly, education should be promoted among masses. This could be done through various means. For examples, social awareness drives regarding girls' education. By promoting education, Pakistan can curb colonial mindset ~~regarding girls' education~~ that discourages girls' education. Achieving inclusivity by curbing gender inequality, a country can boost its literacy rate. Malaysia and Turkey, by encouraging and ensuring female's education, have achieved literacy rate of above 90 percent. Similarly, Bangladesh's literacy rate is 70%. Therefore, inclusivity in education must be ensured by curbing gender inequality.

Fourthly, Pakistan's educational policies need to be reformed to calibrate it with global benchmarks. This will result in education quality and accessibility. Pakistan's allocated budget for the education sector is 1.91% of the GDP that is way

below UNDP's recommended 4pc-6pc.

Countries that followed the recommended benchmarks are leading the world today. Finland is a classical example. With its many achievements, education is one of them. It achieved the literacy rate of 100 percent by allocating 5.2 percent of its GDP to education sector. Hence, following the global recommended standards will help Pakistan's education sector to thrive.

Lastly, digitization of institutions must be ensured to curb corruption. Corruption, being the foremost impediment to growing education system of Pakistan, needs to be dealt with.

It is only possible through digitization. The test results can not be changed using authority if the system is regulated digitally. Fake degrees can not be made if universities keep record of academic activities.

Government grants can not be misused if the record is digitized. All the above problems mentioned by Dr. Sharmila Tariq

can be dealt by integration of digitalized system in the education sector.

To sum up, education sector in Pakistan is grappling with many problems, but they are still not insurmountable.

In Pakistan, social barriers are ~~sent~~ leading to lower literacy rate. Budget allocation is extremely low for education sector. Moreover, corruption is impeding the smooth progress of education. Extreme weather conditions are also hindering educational process. While there are many hurdles in education system, hopes are also existing.

Public-Private-Partnerships in the education system give rise to new hopes. Social awareness is also emerging regarding education. Large population of youth can be utilized to increase literacy rate. Furthermore, international organizations' support and their collaborations with educational institutions in Pakistan are playing key role in education sector. Although there are number of hurdles hindering the

growth of education system in Pakistan, they can be surmounted by taking adequate steps.

Ultimately, Pakistan's education system will thrive and will become a weapon to change Pakistan's destiny.