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Q1: What is the role of education in character-building of the nation? Highlight major pitfalls in Pakistan's education system.

Introduction:

Education, the kindling of the flame, is the permanent character of human history from darkness to light and the evolution of thoughts from ashes to the phoenix. It has remained the most powerful tool for securing growth and progress in the socio-economic and political realm. However, since the inception of Pakistan, due to political instability and corruption, low finance budget for education, lack of vocational training and teachers' naivety of modern technologies caused the downfall of education system. Nevertheless, cycle can be reversed through proper and sufficient budget, strengthening of accountability, introduction of updated and relevant curriculum along with vocational training, providence of solid political will on policy implementation as well as less political interference in the education sector.

Role of Education in character building of the nation:

Education is the process that begins at birth and continues until the end of

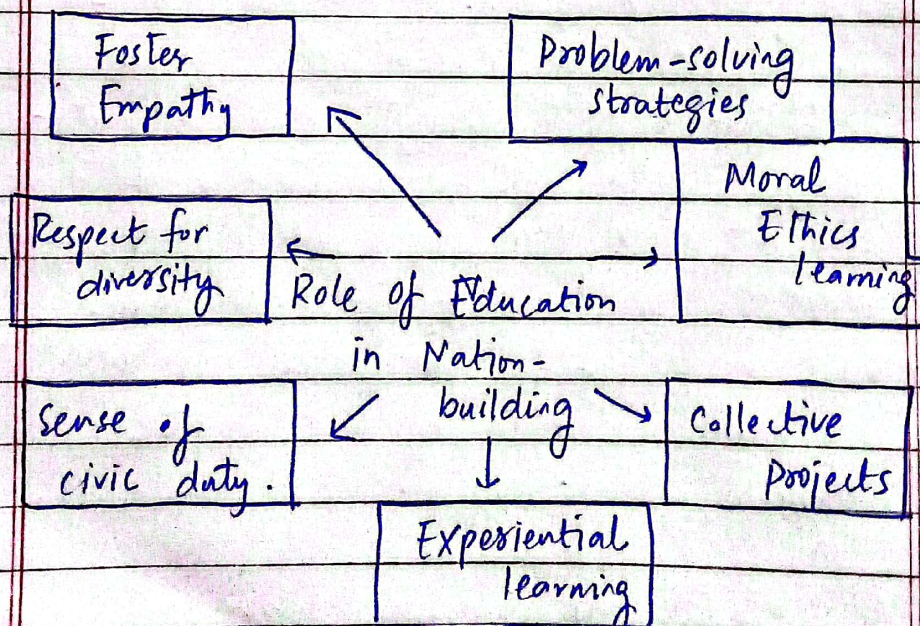
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life. Bifurcation of education system into formal and informal assists in constructive educational system, these both types have difference in timing, content, delivery system and level of control. However, combination of both helps in capacity building of nation.

Quaid-e-Azam Ali Jinnah said in First Education Conference in 1947:

"Through sound education, we should try to instill in them a high sense of honor, integrity, responsibility, and selfless service to nation. There is an immediate and urgent need to give scientific and technical education to our people to build up our future economic life."



Education is a mean to teach the learners knowledge as well as effective strategies for problem-solving. Contradictory to this, Moral

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ethics teaching is central to character education, but it is most neglected in educational institutions of Pakistan. One of primary problem of Pakistan's education system is exam system which revolves around rote memorization and does not instill any kind of moral ethics. Islamiat and Pakistan Studies somehow endeavor to fill the gap but unfortunately, success is not achieved in this matter. Because these subjects often taught in a theoretical and prescriptive manner. It rarely promotes problem-solving, community engagement and leadership, which is essential for building character.

Similarly, education should not be confined to theory but rather experiential learning should be preferred in fast growing world. Students should participate more in collective projects to learn group working. Education is a candle that lights everyone who attempts to learn. Programs like service-learning initiatives as well as vocational projects can engage students in community projects, this can help to develop a sense of civic duty and empathy which correlate with higher academic achievement and lower dropout rates. Most importantly, students should learn to respect for diverse perspectives and avoid rigidity in their manner.

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Major pitfalls in Pakistan's education system along with their solutions:

- Traditional teacher-centered education
- Limited Co-Curricular Activities and Extracurricular Engagement
- Low Parental and Community Engagement
- Limited integration of Technology and Media
- Lack of updated curriculum and Absence of teacher advancement

* Traditional teacher-centered education:

Our education system revolves around passive deliverance as well as lecture-based learning, where teacher is at the core, students involvement is often neglected in this regard. This learning method hinders students' mental growth and critical thinking which is essential for a proper citizen in the future.

In contrast, active learning fosters not only academic skills but also essential character traits i.e., empathy, responsibility, and teamwork. One of effective learning strategies is "cooperative learning", where students work collectively to complete tasks.

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The Journal of Educational Psychology published an article that reported that students engaged in this type of learning demonstrated a 35% increase in social skills compared to those in traditional lecture-based learning methods.

* Limited Co-curricular Activities and Extracurricular Engagement:

According to Planning Commission of Pakistan less than 6% of youth acquire technical education and only 2% implement it.

Limited co-curricular activities and extracurricular engagement not only retard progress of students in variety of areas but also lift them at the back in the competing world. "Pakistan Education Statistics" demonstrates that less than 30% of schools provide extra-curricular activities.

Extra-curricular activities involves students in competitions, games, debates and many more that build their confidence, a sense of achievement, cooperation, empathy, ethics, rules and guidance. This does not stick to their educational period but continues till death.

Harvard School illustrates that students ^{who} develop leadership skill, perform

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better in developmental and social projects. So, in Pakistan, there should be integration of both curricular and extra-curricular activities to make our students more competent and smart in their particular field.

* **Low Parental and Community Engagement:**
In Pakistan educational system, there is a lack of check and balance from parent's side. Harvard Family Research Center illustrates that students with engaged parents demonstrate higher level of motivation, discipline and ethics as compared to others.

However, in Pakistan, Parents rarely visit the schools of their children. Their lack of engagement and participation never let them to create a bond with school community and with a child. Pakistani Parents demands only good marks but not exhibit any kind of assistance regarding education. Moreover, Comparison system of Parents with other students and community children shatters confidence and ability of children.

Center for Responsive Schools held a research that better Parent-teacher communication increases capacity building of children and strong academic performance of students. So, Pakistani Parents and

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Community should promote engaging environment which is beneficial in student's learning.

Limited Integration of Technology and Media
Technology and media offer means for collaboration, communication, and access to diverse perspectives, and can influence and shape social norms and behaviors. Pakistan education system has limited integration of technology and media, computer labs are out-dated and lack of essential material.

Developed countries like the US and China promotes technology use in education due to advancement in technology. Media that involves documentaries or film stories on social change can inspire students to engage in communities. Similarly, use of social media can promote character building.

Global Partnership for Education Report 2023 highlights the government's successful international collaborations offering opportunities to upgrade Pakistan's education sector. Pakistan is moving toward progress and incorporation of technology e.g., laptop schemes, this exhibits slow progress in this regard but something is better than nothing. Pakistan's education system lacks behind due to limited use of technology, if policy makers implement such policies which can foster technology use, then.

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Progress can be seen.

* Lack of updated curriculum and absence of teacher advancement:

The present curriculum in Pakistan is heavily focused on memorization and academic performance, with little or no emphasis on moral and ethical development.

Ishaat Hussain, in his essay, "Education Reforms in Pakistan: Building for the Future", aptly says, "Curriculum and teaching methodologies in Pakistan's education system are primitive and outdated, which affects the overall quality of education in the country."

As we can see, government has failed to implement any effective education policy for updated curriculum even after adopting more than 25 education policies and multiple action plans.

There is a need of modernization of curriculum and teacher training programs would provide an opportunity to uplift the education standards.

Moreover, Pakistan Education Statistics recently reported that only about 20% of teachers receive any form of professional development. This can lead to an ineffective transfer of values and ethical behavior in classrooms.

John Dewey, an educational theorist said,
"If we teach today's students as we
taught yesterday's, we rob them of
tomorrow."

So, investing in teachers and student
development is necessary to ensure progress
for next generation.

Conclusion: The development of good learning
and good character is part of education
that transforms individuals' personalities and
morale of societies. As for this system, Pakistan
has major issues in fostering the character
development of scholars. This needs practical
and experiential multilevel change, with the
curriculum focusing on ethical values, empathy,
and social concerns as important subjects.

Commitment and combined efforts can help gain
integrity, compassion and social responsibility in
a society that foster a better future for all.