

Education in Pakistan: Fifty Years of Neglect

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"You know that importance of education and the right type of education, cannot be over-emphasised.... If we are to make real, speedy and substantial progress, we must earnestly tackle this question ... having regard to the modern conditions and vast developments that have taken place all over the world".

Quaid-i-Azam

Pakistan was created in the name of Islam under the outstanding leadership of Quaid-i-Azam. The Quran placed great emphasis on education. The Quaid as quoted above also highlighted its importance for the new nation. Unfortunately, despite high and repeated rhetoric, education remained the most neglected aspect of national life during the last half century. The literacy level are low, the female literacy levels are among the lowest in the world and the lowest in the Muslim countries. The emphasis in education is still on a general and liberal type of B.A. or M.A. degree. The change towards scientific and technical education has still not taken place. The quality of education is low, the teachers are under-paid, under-trained and dispirited. The students are apathetic as they see no relationship between education and higher earnings or status in the society.

A few decades ago education was sought for cultural, religious and social progress. In 1960s, the pioneering work of Schultz and Becker working on the concept of investment in human capital proved that a high level of education is a necessary condition for economic growth and no country can make significant economic progress if majority of its citizens are illiterate. The rapid progress of East Asian Countries is largely attributed to their excellent system of education.

Despite the exhortation of Quran and the Quaid as well as the international experience of education promoting rapid economic growth, Pakistan's planners continued to allocate insufficient resources for education, especially for primary education. Moreover, the money allocated was not effectively spent. The hostility of the feudals and the indifference of the educated elite (who educated their children in English medium schools in Pakistan and sent them abroad for higher education) are primarily responsible for the neglect of education in Pakistan.

As we are on the threshold of a new millennium, we must turn towards the high road of education, knowledge, leaning, sciences and technology. We are living in an age revolution through knowledge. It is only by education at all levels, specially technical education that Pakistan can enter the privileged club of developed nations.

I. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF RHETORIC WITHOUT ACTION ON EDUCATION

Over the last fifty years a number of attempts have been made to analyse the educational problems of Pakistan and to devise a proper strategy for following the advice of the Founder of the Nation. It would be pertinent to briefly describe the

aims and purposes which the education policy documents of the Government of Pakistan from time to time have targeted for achievement. Since independence almost a dozen educational reports and four major education policies have been produced. A chronology of these reports and policies is given below:

Report/Policy	Year
– All Pakistan Education Conference	1947
– Education Conference	1951
– National Commission on Education	1959
– Education Policy with Nationalisation	1972
– National Education Policy	1979
– Education Policy	1992

*There have been three major education policies as indicated in bold type above.

The main areas of emphasis in all these reports and policies are: (a) the ideological basis; (b) national unity; (c) individual development; (d) social development (e) economic progress; (f) equality of opportunity for education; (g) emphasising vocational education; and (h), above all, improving the spread and quality of education at different levels.

All-Pakistan Education Conference 1947

The importance of education was fully realised soon after the establishment of Pakistan. The All Pakistan Education Conference was convened in 1947, at the behest of Quaid-i-Azam. He provided the basic guidelines for future education development by stressing, inter-alia, that the system of education should suit the genius of our people, it should be consonant with our history and culture and instil the highest sense of honour, integrity, responsibility and selfless service to the nation. It should also provide scientific and technical knowledge for economic uplift of the new state. The Conference therefore, made three basic recommendations: (a) education should be inspired by Islam; (b) free and compulsory elementary education; and (c) emphasis on technical education.

National Education Conference 1951

The National Education Conference held in 1951, led to the formulation of a Six Year National Plan for Educational Development by translating various objectives into physical and financial targets. Nevertheless, it failed to evoke political commitment and financial resources for achieving its objectives. However, due to sheer pressure of numbers arising out of influx of displaced persons from India, there was substantial expansion in enrolments at all levels during the period 1947–55 and increase in overall expenditure. This expansion proceeded at the cost of

quality as over half of school teachers were untrained, classrooms over-crowded and equipment highly depleted. The deluge of numbers seeking admissions led the education system to expand at the cost of quality and ideological orientation of free independent Pakistan. There pre-independence colonial pattern of education underwent no structural change and was in fact further strengthened.

National Commission on Education 1959

The Ayub era saw high-level commissions to examine and guide all walks of life. Education being a very important aspect of national development received priority during this period. The National Commission on Education dealt comprehensively with the system of education and made recommendations to emphasise (a) character development through compulsory religious instructions, (b) compulsory schooling for age group 6–11 within 10 years and for 11–14 within 15 years (c) diversification of curricula to introduce technical/vocational subjects in secondary stages and enhancement of middle level technical (poly-technical) education (d) extension of degree programmes at the Bachelor's level from 2 to 3 years. The Commission's recommendations were incorporated in the Second Five-Year Plan (1960–65) which provided enhanced allocations to education as a whole and specially for primary and technical education. Quantitatively, the Plan was an exceptional success, as its implementation was upto 96 percent of planned investments. Nevertheless, the targets for primary education and technical education were still far from fulfilment. Qualitatively, curriculum revisions were made to emphasise ideology and modern concepts in sciences and technical subjects, yet these were introduced without adequate preparations and failed to give the desired results. The recommendation to prolong the BA/B.Sc. studies by another one year triggered students unrest and vitiated the whole report of the Commission. Another Commission was appointed in 1964, to look into the problems of students, manifested by the growth of student indiscipline and rapid deterioration of educational standards.

This Commission stressed the role of education in creating unity and the idea of nationhood among the people of Pakistan and inculcating the moral and spiritual values of Islam. This combined with the freedom, integrity and strength of Pakistan should be the ideology which inspire our educational system. The Commission rightly emphasised that education is a public investment which should be used as a vehicle to create a welfare state whose foremost objectives should be to constantly improve the standard of living of the common people.

Education Policy and Nationalisation 1972

The national objectives were identified as: (a) equalising the opportunities for education; (b) arresting the declining educational standards; and (c) correcting the

growing imbalance between various types of education. The statement of goals was accompanied by broad-based guidelines which were to provide a framework within which the Provincial Government and non-government agencies were to prepare detailed plans and programmes. The role of the Ministry of Education was to ensure that adequate and effective programmes are developed for the achievement of the educational goals and targets at the desired place. This was to be monitored by continuous study and evaluation.

The strategy used in developing the goals relied on two principles, (a) education should be inspired by the nation's ideological and cultural heritage; and (b) education should be dictated by universal structures of human knowledge and concepts of human progress.

From the goals so designed, the roles assigned to education were:

- (i) the role of education in the preservation and inculcation of Islamic values as an instrument of national unity and progress;
- (ii) reorientation of educational programmes in the light of economic needs of the society particularly by shifting the emphasis to scientific, technical and vocational education;
- (iii) role of education as an instrument of social change and development, and as a factor in the creation of a democratic social order by ensuring an equal access to opportunities of education;
- (iv) the paramount importance of quality in education and the crucial role of teachers in the improvement of educational quality; and
- (v) decentralisation of educational administration to ensure academic freedom and administration and financial autonomy required for healthier and efficient growth of educational institutions, particularly those of higher education.

All these objectives and lofty goals remained empty rhetoric and the major change made by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government was to nationalise private educational institutions. This was a retrogressive step which literally ruined the excellent private educational institutions run by extremely dedicated foreign missionaries and Pakistani NGOs like the Anjuman-e-Haimayat-e-Islam. The standard in privately run institutions was generally higher than in Government institutions. Moreover, these institutions were self-financing and supplementing in a very effective way the inadequate Governments efforts in the field of education. This decisions was taken without any consultation with educationalists and purely on political grounds. When the adverse impact of this decision was pointed out to then Education Minister he frankly stated that this step has been taken on purely political grounds as we expect the entire staff of the nationalised institutions to become a pro-PPP faction in the field of education. It is tragic that a populist and a modern leader like Mr Bhutto sacrificed long term national interest by having good educational

institutions in the private sector for petty political considerations. After the departure of Mr Bhutto these institutions were denationalised in Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan but are still rotting under government control in Punjab. Fine institutions like F.C. College, Lahore, and others, have been ruined by this ill-conceived policy of nationalising private educational institutions. Mr Bhutto and the PPP should have studied the programmes of socialist parties in Europe, none of which took this retrogressive step. The Church and private schools operated freely under different socialist governments in Europe. The nationalisation policy also proved to be very expensive for the exchequer. The entire expense of private schools was picked up by the government and the government expenditure on education doubled without any increase in capacity and substantial decline in quality of education in former private schools.

National Education Policy 1979

With the change of government in 1977, a National Educational Conference was convened by the President in October 1977 for evolving a set of fresh recommendations for a new education policy. The policy was announced in 1979.

The major aims of this policy again focused on fostering deep and abiding loyalty to Islam, creating awareness that a Pakistani is also a part of Universal Muslim Ummah, inculcation of character in accordance with Quran and *Sunnah*, providing equal opportunities to all citizens for cultural and religious development, development of creative and innovative faculties of people, functional literacy to all citizens, fostering discipline and promotion of scientific and technological education needed for socio-economic growth. To achieve these aims, the proposed strategy envisaged:

- (i) Curricular revisions with a view to reorganising the entire content around Islamic thought.
- (ii) Possibility of merging the traditional Madrassah Education with modern education.
- (iii) Use of National Language as medium of instruction.
- (iv) Training for productive work.
- (v) Mobilisation of community resource such as mosques, civic buildings factories etc. for education purposes; effective participation of community in literacy/education programme.
- (vi) Linking scientific and technical education with production.
- (vii) More emphasis on quality improvement and consolidation and opening new institutions only where demand is reasonable.
- (viii) Separate educational institutions for female students upto highest level with specially designed curricula.

The objective of this policy were partly implemented as indicated below:

- (i) Integrated curriculum was introduced.
- (ii) The medium of instruction reverted to English after eighth class.
- (iii) Secular subjects were introduced in the *Deeni Madaris*.
- (iv) Mosques were used as part of formal primary education system.
- (v) Literacy Ordinances were introduced but not implemented.
- (vi) The non-formal approach to primary education through Nai Roshni Schools did not achieve its objectives.
- (vii) The Federal Government took over the financing responsibilities of universities all over Pakistan on the understanding that Provincial Government will reallocate the saved resources for the promotion of primary education.

National Education Policy 1992

The reform proposed in the 1992 policy are aimed at bringing about the following major changes:

- (i) Structuring the society as dictated by teaching of Islam.
- (ii) Universalising primary education, eliminating drop-out by the year 2002.
- (iii) Raising the literacy ratio to 70 percent by the year 2002.
- (iv) Improving the quality of education by reassuring the role of teachers in the teaching running process by modernising curriculum by tax book.
- (v) Use of community for the promotion of basic education in the country.
- (vi) Intensifying vocationalisation of general education, and introducing a new stream of technical education in middle and high schools; inviting the private sector for participation in educational programmes, and allowing progressive privatisation of nationalised institutions.
- (vii) Initiating procedures leading to de-politicisation of campuses and enforcement of discipline.
- (viii) Streamlining the examination system and establishing the merit-based valid admission procedures to be devised by the National Testing Services.

This policy also could not achieve the desire targets mainly because of political instability, resource constrains and lack of commitments of the policy-makers. However the following are the major achievements emanating from the policy:

1. Establishment of School Management Committee at the lowest administrative unit for the promotion of basic education.
2. Establishment of quality Model Primary School at the Union Council Level so as to provide quality education to the rural female children.
3. The concept of mixed Primary School was introduced in provinces.

4. The qualifications of the teachers have been lowered in order to attract the female population towards the teaching profession.
5. Literacy Programme in selected areas of Pakistan was launched in order to enhance the literacy rate the country.
6. Nation-wide teachers competition were held to give awards to the best Primary School Teachers at the national level. In order to mobilise.
7. The examination method was changed by giving weightage of 25 percent to multiple choice questions at secondary and higher secondary exams.
8. During this period the Supreme Court gave an historic decision by banning the students unions in the university campuses and obliging all parents to give certificate of good behaviour for their children attending colleges and universities.

II. THE COST OF NEGLECTING EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

The importance of education in different walks of life has been emphasised since Aristotle and Plato. Human development in culture, science, social life, communal harmony, social cohesion, political participation and overall refinement of human personality are promoted and enhanced by good and effective education. The progress of any civilisation has depended upon its educated classes. Recent strides in human knowledge have highlighted the importance of education in economic growth. This universal recognition became part of accepted economics in 1960s when Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker, both Nobel Laureates of the Chicago School enunciated the concept of human capital. Schultz provided the theoretical under-pinning and Becker calculated the rates of return on human capital and proved that investment in human capital has higher return than investment in physical capital in many situations. The Table 1 indicates the rate of return to investment in different sectors of the economy calculated by the World Bank in 1994 in their cross-section study.

Table 1

Rates of Return of Investments in Different Sectors of the Economy

Items	1974-82	1983-92	1974-92
Education Investment			
Primary			20
Secondary			14
Higher			11
World Bank Projects			
Agriculture	14	11	
Industry	15	12	
Infrastructure	18	16	
All Projects	17	15	

Source: Psacharopoulos (1994); World Bank Operations Evaluation Department data-base.

This clearly shows that investment in primary education has a higher return for the economy than investment in any physical capital be it agriculture, industry or infrastructure. Hence, if it investments were made strictly on economic criteria of rates of return then primary education should have received the highest priority in the development plans of Pakistan. This concept of human capital was accepted part of economic literature in 1960s and all our leading economists and framers of Five Year Plans fully knew the importance of human capital in economic growth but for reasons which will be attempted later, they continuously ignored it till today and our female literacy rate is hardly 20 percent whereas Larry Summers in his recent Quaid-i-Azam Lecture on 'Investing in All the People' has calculated the benefit of females education in Pakistan as shown in Table 2.

He has calculated that by incurring a recurrent cost of one year of education for 1,000 women the expenditure is US\$ 30,000 whereas the benefits are \$88,000. There can be no other development expenditure with a higher benefit in relation to cost. The benefit cost ratio of these health and fertility externalities in Pakistan has been estimated about 3:1. Despite this clear calculation we continue to ignore female education and the disparity between male and female education in Pakistan is about the highest in the world.

Table 2

The Externalities of Investing in Girls' Education, Pakistan

Items	Calculation	Cost or Benefit (U.S. Dollars)
<i>Recurrent Cost of One Year of Education for 1,000 Women</i>		30,000
Benefits		
Reduction in Chile Mortality		
Total Deaths Averted	60	
Set Cost (U.S. Dollars)	800	
Value of Averted Deaths		48,500
Reduction in Fertility		
Births Averted	500	
Set Cost (U.S. Dollars)	65	
Value of Births Averted		32,500
Reduction in Maternal Mortality		
Total Material Deaths Averted	3	
Set Cost (U.S. Dollars)	2,500	
Value of Averted Maternal Deaths		7,500

Source: [Summers (1992)].

Secondly, he stated that under investment in girls is not an ineluctable consequence of poverty, nor is it made necessary by any religious or cultural tradition. It is an economic problem that results from a vicious cycle caused by distorted incentives. The expectation that girls will grow to do little other than serve their husbands reduces parent's incentive to invest in their daughter's human capital. Uneducated women then have few alternatives and so that expectation becomes self-fulfilling, trapping women in a continuous circle of neglect.

Thirdly, increasing educational opportunities for girls offers the best prospect for cutting into this vicious cycle. As an economic investment, increased outlays directed at educating girls may well yield the highest return of all investments available in developing countries considering both private benefits and returns to other family members.

Fourth, experience suggests that female education programmes are relatively inexpensive compared to other development investments and could quickly increase female enrolment rates.

Fifthly, major initiative to increase female education have the potential to transform society over time. If a larger fraction of girls had gone to school a generation ago millions of infant deaths each year could have been averted and tens of millions of families could have been healthier and happier. Yet the female literacy in Pakistan is only 20 percent.

Birdsall, Ross, and Sabot (1993) show that education investments have social as well as economic benefits, e.g. the lower infant mortality, greater acceptance of family planning, and better health of the family result from better-educated mothers and that gains in income growth alone are a poor measure of lost overall development. He argued that substantial foregone income gains for Pakistan due to low investments in schooling over the last three decades. There could be potential increase in current per capita income of 25 percent had Pakistan had Indonesia's 1960 primary school enrolment rates, and a potential increase of 16 percent had Pakistan sent as many girls as boys to primary school in 1960.

Educational investments matter not only for increasing income. Across developing countries, these investments are associated with lower infant mortality, lower-fertility and other social benefits; these social benefits are particularly associated with women's education. In East Asian economics, education is also associated with improvements over time in the equality of income across households. These other benefits-social and distributional are as central a part of the development process as income gains. If we had not neglected, education, not only the quality or life in Pakistan would have been much better with lower crime, less sectarianism, but every Pakistani would be enjoying a much higher standard of living. Our per capita income would be around \$10,000 instead of being less than \$500.

III. THE PRESENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN AS COMPARED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

The deplorable present state of education in Pakistan is a direct result of education not receiving national priority in any regime during the last half century or in any development plan out of the eight Five Year Plans which have been implemented so far. Any thing for which resource are not allocated and which does not receive the attention of the rulers is bound to languish. Although every new regime formulated its own educational policy but none of them implemented them with any seriousness. The problems and the solutions, which were obvious, were repeated from one education policy to another but none of them received attention. The Tables 3 and 4 indicate the expenditure on primary education in different Five-Year Plans.

The above table clearly indicates that the allocations for primary education till the Fourth Five-Year Plan were highly inadequate and it is only in the last Four Five-Year Plans that the allocations for primary education have increased. Allocation aside, the percentage of utilisation has been extremely poor in all the five year plan except in the fourth plan and seventh plan. Hence, not only inadequate funds were provided for primary education but whatever was provided was utilised only to the extent of half on the average.

Table 3

Expenditure on Primary Education

Plan Period	(Rs in millions)				
	Education % of GNP	Education Allocation	Primary Education Allocation	Primary Education Actual Expenditure	Percent Age of Utilisation
1st Plan (1955-60)	0.88	296	52	23	48
2nd Plan (1960-65)	1.55	527	78	19	24
3rd Plan (1965-70)	1.38	677	69	26	38
4th Plan (1970-78)	1.53	3665	473	444	94
5th Plan (1978-83)	1.5	5643	3048	1413	46
6th Plan (1983-88)	2.1	13430	7000	3172	45
7th Plan (1988-83)	2.16	22680	10128	11766	116
8th Plan (1993-98)	2.2	69010	32669		

Source: Government of Pakistan (Various Issues).

Table 4
Expenditure on Primary Education

Sr. No.	Country	(Rs in millions)	
		Literacy Rate 1995 (%)	Expenditure on Education as % of GNP (1995)
1.	Pakistan	37.2	2.44
2.	Bangladesh	37.8	2.3
3.	India	51.6	3.7
4.	Sri Lanka	90.3	3.3
5.	Egypt	51.2	N.A
6.	China	81.3	N.A.
7.	Iran	80.0	5.4
8.	Thailand	80.0	4.0
9.	Indonesia	83.8	4.2
10.	Nigeria	57.3	N.A
11.	Mexico	89.6	
12.	Brazil	83.3	

Source: Adult Education in a Polarising World: Education For All Status and Trends 1997.

The obvious results was a very low rate of literacy. Pakistan stands 31 out of 35 among Muslim countries in literacy rate and globally Pakistan has been placed at 134 out of 186 countries whose data has been given in the World Bank Atlas of 1996. The literacy rates of SAARC and E9 countries are given in the following Table.

Table 4 clearly indicates that Pakistan has the lowest rate of literacy among the 9 most populous countries in the world as well as in the major countries of the SAARC region. Our performance is all the more deplorable because our per capita income in purchasing power parity terms is quite high in relation to these countries specially in comparison with India and Sri Lanka. It is tragic that way back in October 1947 during the first year of our independence the target of achieving universally primary education was sharply focused at the National Education Conference held at Karachi. Despite continued promises through various policies the target has remain elusive and illusory. According to the 1992 policy Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved by 2002 and adult literacy rate raised to

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70 percent in the same duration. According to the World Declaration on Education For All made at Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, as well as Summit Declaration of Nine High Population Countries made at Delhi in December, 1993, Pakistan is committed to achieve the following, by the year 2000:

1. Universalisation of Primary Education.
2. Double the literacy rate *vis-à-vis* of 1990.

It would be a miracle if these targets are achieved by the highly publicised programme of 2010. They are more likely to be attained by 2020 if we give higher priority, increase allocations, improve utilisation rate, decrease population growth, raise the competency of teachers by appropriate incentives, decrease the drop-out rate substantially, involve the community, devise an effective monitoring and evaluation system through decentralised management structure, abolish ghost schools but more important than all these factors have strong commitment for education specially for providing basic education to every Pakistani boy and girls as has been guaranteed to him in the Constitution. Very few people know that the right to primary education is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of 1973 but Pakistanis remained deprived of it even after a quarter century.

Higher Education

The general criticism of Pakistan education policy is that more resources have been allocated to higher education which caters to 2.5 percent of the population of that age group as compared to primary education which should cover the entire population of that age group. Despite our high expenditure our enrolment ratio in institutions of higher learning still remains the lowest as indicated in the Table 5.

Table 5

Comparative Higher Education Data for some Asian Countries

Country	Number of Students at Higher Education Level per Million Population for the Year 1992	Percentage of Students Enrolled in Higher Education of the Relevant Age Group
Republic of Korea	4253	42.4% (1992)
Philippines	2696	26.2% (1993)
Japan	2340	30.4% (1991)
Hong Kong	1540	20.7% (1992)
Indonesia	1045	10.2% (1992)
Singapore	963(1980)	7.8% (1980)
India	755(1990)	9.3% (1990)
Malaysia	679	7.2% (1990)
Pakistan	258	2.6% (1990)

Sources: 1. UNESCO (1995) *World Education Report 1995*.

2. UNESCO (1995) *Statistical Yearbook 1995*.

3. Human Development Centre, *Human Development in South Asia (1997)*.

4. World Bank (1993) *The East Asian Miracle*.

The table clearly shows that Pakistan has very low percentage of student population enrolled in higher education. Moreover, the pass percentage in Bachelor's and Master's examinations is never more than 40 percent. The most distressing thing is the quality of higher education in Pakistan which is deplorable to say the least. The ratio of students going for higher education between arts and science is 70-30 respectively whereas in developed countries it is reverse.

The Ph.D. or the research programmes of the universities are very inadequate. Annually we turn out less than 50 Ph.D.s from all the 22 public universities in Pakistan. When the present cohort of teachers in higher education who have been trained abroad at government expense retire, there will not be even locally trained Ph.D.s to take their place.

The encouraging sign in the field of higher education is the establishment of prestigious private sector universities like the Agha Khan Medical University at Karachi, the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Technology at Topi, and the Lahore University of Management Sciences at Lahore. We have also centres of excellence of basic sciences in our universities, but so far only the HEJ Institute of Chemistry at Karachi University has been able to get international recognition.

The most disturbing development in the field of the higher education is the mushrooms growth of private universities affiliated with non-recognised foreign universities, working from a single home and offering degrees in many applied subjects. The government needs to have a regulatory mechanism for granting affiliation and monitoring their academic standards and performance.

Technical Education

In the last 50 years every educationist has recognised that Pakistan's system is still pursuing Macaulay's emphasis on producing generalists with working knowledge of languages to be efficient clerks or subordinate government servants required for the colonial power. Although some progress has been made in establishing about hundred middle level polytechnics across the country and setting up twelve new engineering college during the last 50 years but the amounts allocated to technical education has been insufficient and the courses and teaching methods have not been tailored to the manpower requirements for technicians. We have large number of unemployed engineers but serious shortage of middle level technicians. Similarly, in the medical field we have surfeit of doctors but serious deficiency of nurses. The doctor nurse ratio should normally be 1:3 but in case of Pakistan doctors out number nurses by a large margin.

In making international comparison in the Human Development Report of South Asia (1998, p. 5), Mahbub-ul Haq points out that:

Less than 2 percent of children in the relevant age group at the secondary school level are enrolling for technical education in South Asia, compared to

over 10 percent in East Asia. Not only, is enrolment low, but about half of the students drop out before completing their studies. Moreover, the skills taught in many technical schools are often inappropriate for the job market.

Many graduates of polytechnics and vocational schools fails to land worthwhile jobs. For instance, approximately one hundred thousand technical school graduates in India are either unemployed or under-employed at present. South Asia faces a perplexing dilemma. It is producing so few technically trained people and yet about half of them remain unemployed.

The same is true of Pakistan.

IV. GENDER DISPARITY

Gender Disparity of education at Pakistan at all stages is much higher than in almost all other countries. Pakistan may have the highest gender disparity among the major countries of the world. At the primary school level, the net enrolment of the girls is only 35 percent whereas for boys it is 65. Similarly, male literacy in Pakistan is 52 percent whereas female literacy is less than half at 20 percent. Moreover, in province of Balochistan the female literacy is about 5 percent and in the NWFP it is not more than 15 percent. The gap in the initial enrolment of boys and girls is not so great but the drop-out rate among the females is much higher.

In our earlier chapter we have quoted Summers leading American economist now under secretary of Treasury in the US, who has stated that the rate of return on investment on female education is the highest in Pakistan. The old proverb that if you educate a man you educate one person but if you educate a female you educate the entire family, is also not being followed in Pakistan. The Human Development Report of South Asia in 1998 indicates the male and female literacy figures of Muslim Women in India. The Male figure is 44 and the female figure is 40. How on earth do you explain the yawning gap between male and female literacy in Pakistan which is the highest in the World. Muslim of India who are very akin to us have only a small difference of 4 percent or 10 percent whereas we have a hundred percent difference. This is the far, the most important question for social scientists in Pakistan and biggest hindrance to national development, growth, family planning, inculcation of proper value among children and above all the biggest obstacle to all facets of national progress.

V. PROGRESS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION UNDER THE SAP PROGRAMME

The disparity between economic growth and abysmally low human development indicators had become glaring in case of Pakistan. In this background the Government of Pakistan along with foreign donors launched a multi-sectoral Social Action Programme (SAP) in 1993-94 and later on included in the 8th Five-

Year Plan. The SAP-I was assisted by World Bank, Asian Development Bank, U.K. and Dutch Governments. The primary emphasis in the SAP was on primary education which constituted 2/3rd of the entire SAP Project with main focus on girls education. The basic objective was to strengthen access, efficiency and quality of primary education.

The findings of a number of reviews have revealed that SAP has positively impacted on the provision of quality education in rural areas. There is a qualitative shift in the awareness about the importance of education; women and girls were the primary beneficiaries of an improved education system. In the context of enhancing girls education, co-education was started in all provinces. In Balochistan, all new schools were for girls, which boys could also attend. In Sindh, the first school in any area was co-educational and the second school was for girls. As a result, girls schools increased by 15 percent. The viewpoint was that the primary school should be co-educational, so that access for girls is enhanced and efficiencies are achieved. Estimates available by now indicate that 70 percent of increased enrolment in Punjab was of girls mostly living in rural areas. The number of elementary teachers increased by over 85,000, half of which were women. In NWFP, 55 percent of the growth in enrolment was for girls. 4000 schools were established, of which 1000 were for girls and 2000 were mosque schools open to girls. In Balochistan, 75 percent of school established were for girls. In addition, minimum qualification and age were relaxed for recruitment of female teachers from their place of domicile.

The enrolment at primary school level increased by 4.99 million—1.91 million of boys and 3.08 million for girls in the terminal year SAPP-I compared with 1992-93 level. Consistent with the increase in enrolment in primary schools, participation rate increased from 68.9 percent in 1992-93 to 73 percent in 1995-96 with male participation rate going up from 84.89 percent and those of female from 53.7 percent to 57 percent. This impacted adult literacy rate which increased from 35.4 percent in 1992-93 to 37.9 percent in 1995-96 with literacy rate of male going up from 47.3 percent to 50 percent and those of female from 22.3 percent to 25.3 percent. Although large number of teachers were recruited but with sharp increase in enrolment student—teacher ratio went up from 38 in 1992-93 to 42 in 1995-96.

VI. ADULT LITERACY

Literacy rate is universally calculated for population above 10 years of age. In Pakistan 37 percent of the population over 10 years is literate. However, population between 10 to 18 which is about 18 percent of the total population is about 50 percent literate due to sharp increase in enrolment rate in recent years. But population over 18 years which half the total population is less than 30 percent literate. It is this ocean of 45 to 50 million illiterates, aged over 18 years in a total population of 130 million which is not receiving attention from lack of any Government policy on adult education at present, because there is no ongoing programme of adult literacy.

Historically adult literacy has received almost no attention during last 50 years. During the Ayub era, it was made part of the community development programme of Village AID. During the Zia era, a Literacy and Mass Education Commission (LAMEC) was set-up which started a programme of *Nai Roshni* schools. Adult literacy schools were established all over the country and a reward of Rs 1000 was given for converting an illiterate person into a literate person. Moreover, under the philosophy of *each one teach one* it was made mandatory for all students passing Intermediate Examination to convert one illiterate into literate. The *Nai Roshni* Programme had a mixed success, it was woundup in 1989 during the first Bhutto regime. After this there has been no adult literacy programme. At present the Prime Minister's Literacy Commission which was the new name of old LAMEC is concentrating on opening non-formal primary schools where children are under 15 in order to capture those children who failed to enrol in government or private primary schools at their appropriate age.

Literacy has been increasing in Pakistan at the rate of 0.5 percent per annum because with the population increase is 2.6 percent and annual increase in enrolment not exceeding 3 percent. The target of raising literacy level above 60 or 70 percent implies increasing the annual growth rate in literacy from 0.5 to 2.0 percent per annum. *This can never be achieved unless there is an effective and broad-based adult literacy programme.* International experience shows that all countries which have rapidly increased their literacy level have concentrated on compulsory primary education combined with strong and effective adult literacy programme. *Pakistan's literacy rate will remain under 50 percent unless we launch a programme to educate our adults over 18.*

VII. REASONS FOR NEGLECT

There is a need to find a plausible explanation for Pakistan's very poor performance in the field of Education as compared to other East Asian countries and even amongst SAARC countries with the possible exception of Nepal. *First*, Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and the emphasis which Holy Quran places on education is not found in the holy books of other religions. Quranic injunctions of "Allah increase my knowledge"—"Read in the name of thy Lord who created", etc., have been totally ignored. *Secondly*, at the theoretical level, the importance of education and the acceptance of human capital as the most important form of capital (by Becker and Shultz in 1960's) was not unknown to the planners and policy framers in Pakistan. All educational policies and Commissions have emphasised primary education. *Thirdly*, there is provision in the present Constitution wherein the provision of free and compulsory primary education is one of the principal responsibilities of the State. Why is it that despite all these reasons education has been kept at the stage of rhetoric and no practical measures were taken to provide primary education to every Pakistani child during last five decades.

Professor Weiner and Noman explained in 1996 the poor performance of education in India (which is far better than of Pakistan) due to Indian caste system which makes it incumbent that the children of lower classes should learn to work with their hands and not with their heads and the education should therefore reinforce rather than break down the caste distinction. The Indians believe that one group of people are meant to be educated and the rest remain illiterate in order to serve them. Fortunately, there is no caste system in Pakistan. However, we have very feudalistic structure of the society which provides the same impediment as the caste system. The feudals correctly argue from their selfish point of view that if the children of the poor get educated then their superior status in the society will be diluted and they will not be able to dominate them as they can do at present. Therefore, the feudalistic political and social structure has been the biggest hindrance in the growth of basic education in our country.

Feudals alone cannot be blamed for low rate of literacy because for almost 25-years we were under Martial Law when feudals neither implemented nor framed policies. During this long period of Ayub and Zia, Pakistan was ruled by civil and military bureaucracy but in both these two decades there was no desire to implement the injunction of Islam on education or to implement constitutional provisions on this subject or to realise that without better education no nation has ever achieved sustained economic growth and development.

The feudals cannot be blamed for low level of allocation for education in the Five Year Plans. *Iqra* surcharge of 5 percent on all imports was introduced with great fanfare and Rs 8 billion were collected each year for a decade on the pretext of providing more resources for education, but the proposed measure failed to provide in the Finance Bill that it will be utilised for education only. Instead of putting all this money in the Educational Trust fund, it was put in Federal Consolidated Fund and spent mostly on Defence, Debt-servicing and civil administration. The hypocrisy with which a Quranic word was used for taxing poor people for education and using it for buying guns was culpable. Therefore, instead of implementing the injunction of Quran, we use its word in order to cheat and beguile the people. The civil and military bureaucracy as well as the boffins of the Planning Commission during the period when they were ruling the country also did nothing for spreading primary education during half of Pakistan's history.

Moreover, there is no formal caste system in Pakistan, but a caste system determined by children studying in English- and Urdu-medium schools has emerged. Students from English-medium schools consider themselves superior, get prize jobs in commercial and industrial sectors, and do better in CSS Examinations, which are conducted in English. Students of Urdu-medium schools are meant to be Macaulay's clerks. The children of policy-makers and the élite go to English-medium (mostly private) schools, and hence they are totally indifferent to the plight of Urdu-medium schools. The selfish indifference of the non-feudal élite towards the state of education is almost criminal.

The elite of Pakistan, which lacks noblesse oblige as compared with the elites of other countries is selfish, safarishi and corrupt with no interest in primary education. The children of elite go to English Medium Schools like Atchison, Burn Hall etc. and they do not bother at all whether children of their subordinates receive any education and even if they receive education in some form, its quality is very poor. Their education policy is very clear: *get your children to complete O&A level in Pakistan and send them abroad.* The education for the rest which is in Urdu and other regional languages can languish at low level.

There was no let up in the neglect of education in Pakistan during the last half century. Adequate resources were never allocated for education. The *safarish* and corruption in educational system continued to increase. Most governments even failed to appoint literate Education Ministers both in the Provinces and at the Federal level. Education was never considered to be important for our national development. The emphasis was on infrastructure, like Dams, Bridges, Roads, Highways, industries and Agriculture but education along with other social sectors never received priority.

Half century of neglect of this most vital sector of education has now created problems which were bound to occur as the international experience is that no nation can achieve sustained economic growth without education. Due to lack of literacy, Pakistan's yield per acre yield in most of major crops is half of international average level. The Indian Punjab's yield per acre of wheat is almost double of our average. With educated peasantry we could be more than self sufficient in wheat.

Successive reports of the Public Service Commission have stated that the standard of the best people selected for superior services are declining. The quality of education imparted in our Schools, Colleges and Universities is pathetic. The base of Science and Technology on which the future of the nation depends is almost non-existent in Pakistan. If Pakistan had followed the East Asian route to education, we could have become a *Tiger* by now but to think of becoming one when only 1/3rd of the people are literate is like dreaming in the clouds. We could also have become like South Korea whose per capita income in 1960s was same as Pakistan's but is now \$12000 and ours only \$440.

Actually, all our ailments including illiteracy can be easily remedied if we have the motivation and national will, but unfortunately hypocrisy has come to be our most popular national attitude. We substitute action with rhetoric and think that by speaking much on education, and lecturing on *Iqra* we have fulfilled prophet's injunction on education.

By neglecting education, we have ignored the Quran, the Quaid, and the quintessence of international experience. Very low literacy in Pakistan has not only led to poverty, strife, over-population and decay of institutions, and by ignoring Quranic injunction on education we have become bad Muslims and poor Pakistanis. Let us take a new turn toward the high road of education, knowledge, learning,

sciences and technology in the next millennium, because we are living in an age of revolution through knowledge. The Golden Jubilee stock-taking leaves us with no other option.

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Comments

The paramount significance of education in the socio-economic development of a country is known to all of us. The author has touched on the crucial subject of education and its neglect in Pakistan as his focus of study. The analysis done points towards the limited progress achieved in education since the year of Independence, and the challenges faced for improving the quantity and the quality of education in the years to come.

The paper, at the outset, gives a detailed description of education policies formulated in Pakistan at different points in time, and how these policies have failed to be implemented in terms of achieving their objectives and providing basic education to all individuals in the country. In this context, several issues and limitations inherent in our education system and social structure, which have persisted over time, have been brought out. Nevertheless, an important aspect of the subject pertains to finding a solid explanation and the strategies to improve upon the dismal state of education in Pakistan. This has been ignored altogether. In fact, the contents of the paper have raised more questions than provided answers to the problems and issues existing in Pakistan's education sector.

Section II of the paper highlights a fact already known: how poorly we have performed in our educational progress and how the quality of education has deteriorated at all levels. Tables 1 to 3 given in the paper, which compare the literacy rates and educational budgets of Pakistan with some Asian and even the E-9 countries, indicate clearly the lowest position of Pakistan in this regard. However, the critical question of what needs to be done to make up for past neglect is not adequately addressed in the paper.

The author has very rightly pointed out that Pakistan has foregone substantial economic growth and social progress due to low investment in education over the last three decades; and then a number of factors which have continued to afflict the development of education are mentioned, including the paucity and underutilisation of funds, high population growth rate, low political commitment, teacher incompetence, low quality of education, etc. I understand that all such factors and reasons for past neglect of education have been mentioned and discussed in a number of studies done in Pakistan already. What is lacking at this point is an in-depth analysis of the factors attributed to the neglect of education sector and finding some concrete answers to deal with the persistence of issues hindering the progress in education.

In this regard, it would be useful to see which education policies have been adopted in other Asian countries and how they have been successfully implemented to

develop this sector. A simple comparison of the literacy indicators of Pakistan with those of other countries would serve no purpose if the strategies and the means to attain the targets are not explored. For example, in East Asian countries, the emphasis has been placed squarely on universal, high quality primary education, accompanied by a largely self-financed university education system. The Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia all devote nearly 70 percent of their education budgets to basic education as against the 40 percent in Pakistan. Hence, an analysis of Pakistan's education policies and their achievement in comparison with other countries would provide a more meaningful basis to draw certain conclusions and find some policy-relevant answers to deal with the problems in education.

While analysing the reasons for past neglect, the author has attributed our feudalistic political and social structure as the biggest hindrance to the growth of basic education. It would be more plausible if this statement was supported by some statistical or empirical evidence existing in Pakistan.

The issues of educational inequities, in terms of differential access and opportunities by class and gender, and educational inefficiencies in terms of mismanagement and corruption, have also been mentioned in the paper, but in a very casual manner. I think such issues are critical to hindering or helping the progress in education and should be analysed and studied in greater detail. A simple narration of the issues with no hard facts or data analysis provides no solution to the problem.

The author is also critical of the duality of our education system, in terms of English-medium or private schools for the élite and Urdu-medium or public schools for the rest of the population. Is it to suggest that private schools which are contributing at least 40 percent to the basic education network should not be a part of our system? What about the recent efforts of the government in encouraging private sector schooling and increasing its involvement with public schooling? The paper needs to provide a critical assessment of the contribution of the private sector in education, and how it should be reformed to become a part of our education policy.

I would like to conclude by saying that the paper has enlightened us about the problems and issues in the country's education system still persisting, but it lacks an in-depth analysis of these issues. The problems highlighted are merely narrative statements with no solid evidence to unveil the real situation. As the paper starts with a description of various policies, it would have been worthwhile to end the paper with some policy guidelines and suggestions for future actions to make up for earlier neglect of matter.

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