



PIDE ROUNDTABLES ON EDUCATION



1

The Education Paradigm in Pakistan: What is it, What Should it be?



3

Public Private Partnerships in Education



5

The National Unified Curriculum: What? Why?



2

Role of Government in Education



4

Is Technology the Panacea and are we using it?

MESSAGE OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING SHAFQAT MAHMOOD



Pakistan Institute of Development Economics is holding a week-long discussion on education and I think it's a very important gathering because nothing is more important than education. We keep saying that but we seldom follow it down and now the time has come. Because this government is taking some special initiatives on education. We are trying to reduce the disparity between a class-based education through the introduction of a single national curriculum which is an important initiative to reduce disparities and to somehow try and level the playing field for everybody. But then there are large number of other issues an outstanding response of our government has been on online education and teddy school during the times of covid. There are very few countries who reacted to covid and managed education in this period, as well as, this government has done but there is more to be done and more to be discussed. Similarly, higher education issues of quality are very important. We keep making universities but equality is not what it should be so we need to look at the role of government in education as a whole, which is a very important role. But how do we take it forward and particularly in times of covid. What we have to see is how we can use technology in the future to make great further progress in education. How can we make sure that distance learning becomes a part of our learning methodology? All of these are different issues and they require a lot of discussion. I congratulate Dr. Nadeem ul Haque for holding a week-long discussion on different issues related to education.

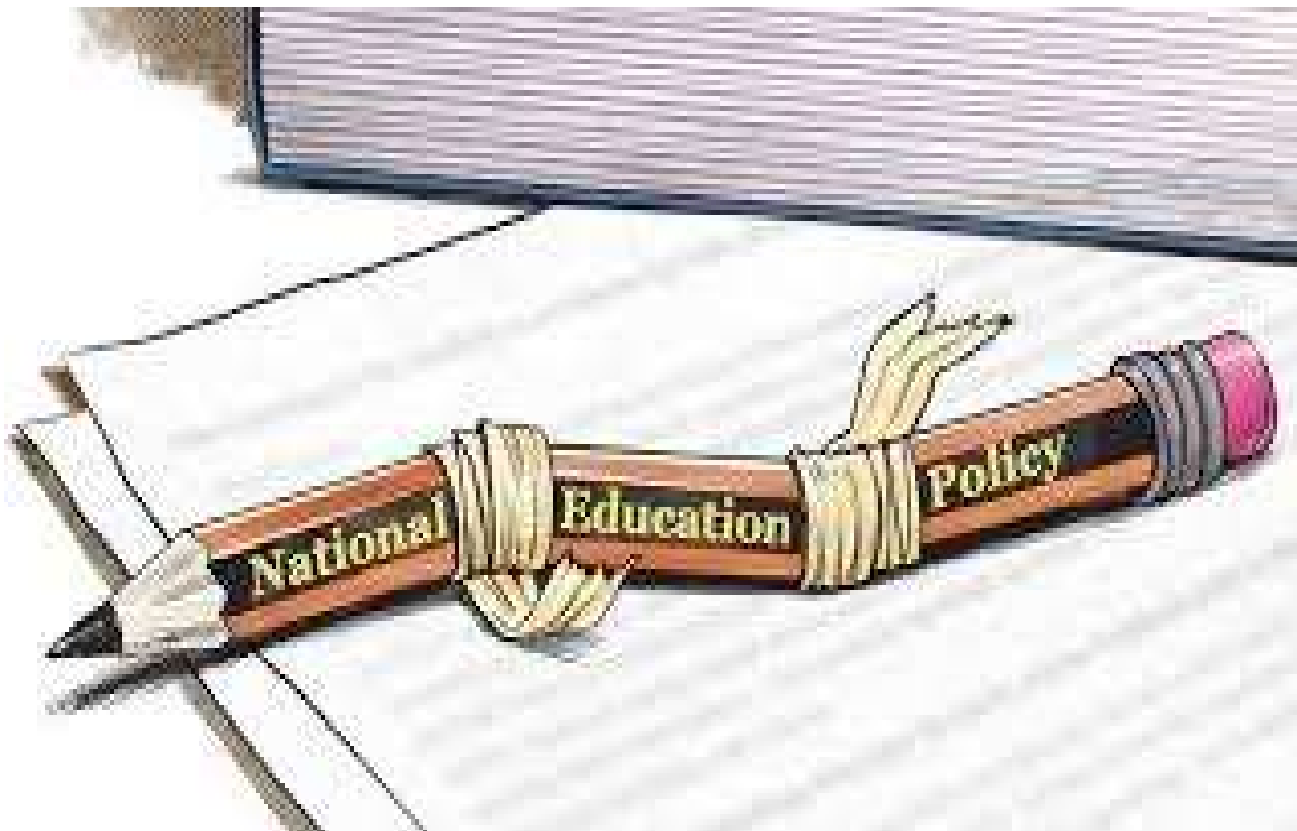
1 The Education Paradigm in Pakistan: What is it. What Should it be?

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque Takeaways

1. Every new government has a new education policy as well as a new IMF programs. We seem to be as confused about education as it is about macroeconomics.
2. Experts and officials spend too much prescribing and telling kids what education should be. Ideology, citizenship, nation building dominate. What students and parents want remains low priority in the eyes of educators who sit in committees to make education policy.
3. Children invest with their time and money to pick up market skills for increasing lifetime earnings. In this way education allows for professional development and social mobility. But this aspect appears to be not very important in the eyes of our education policy makers.
4. Cost of students in terms of their time their effort is never taken into account. They are supposed to do what is prescribed and love it. Education is not seen as a voluntary effort but more like a draft.
5. Teaching mostly unrelated to students experience hence alien to them. Poor children street smart and have survival skills but they are not allowed to build on them.
6. Exploration curiosity and creativity are instinctive in kids. Rather than build on those our experts in committees focus on prescribing ideologies and prescriptions beyond their interests.
7. Digital world has made Facebook and WhatsApp accessible to illiterate people. Most knowledge is now available to everyone in a tablet or a mobile phone which is now available to most. Our policies don't use this advantage we'll our experts are not leveraging this.
8. The structure of schooling remains fixed in most educators minds concrete schools the way they were with teachers. And yes lots of teacher training. Whereas another view pointed to greater use of online resources like khan academy and Coursera and less reliance on teachers.
9. There was disagreement on the language issue. There was strong support for learning in local language whatever it might be. But then in this day and age with visual And internet resources do we need to be hung up on language.
10. Diversity in approaches to education allows experimentation and choice. While there is some diversity in the system, policy is always seeking to unify and kill difference. There was agreement we need to allow 1000 flowers to bloom. Policy must resist the urge to unify!

Key Messages

1. Many education systems many programs. It seems as a country totally confused.
2. There is too much prescribing and expectations of students that parents and students don't like. Hence drop out
3. Experiential flexible learning is at a minimum. And great focus on building citizens or religion. But at cost of students. Giving them unemployable skills which reduces demand for schooling.
4. Teaching mostly unrelated to students experience hence little root taken.
5. Teacher training considered to be very important though there was some disagreement on can teachers be trained
6. There was disagreement on the language issue. There was strong support for local language whatever it might be. But then in this day and age with visual And internet resources do we need to be hung up on language.
7. There was talk of diversity in the system but it was also noted there was push to unify by all! At least I feel we need far more diversity but our government keeps pushing us towards uniformity.
8. Why can't kids explore develop curiosity, learn through experience? I find people were unclear on this.



2

Role of Government in Education

Key Messages

1. Everyone wishes the government would give us a quality welfare state with quality education at the centre. Surprisingly this wish is strongly held even though there was widespread agreement that the government is incapable of doing the task. Few fully understand that without a comprehensive reform of the government overloading the government with tasks is not going to work.
2. There was agreement that the decentralization and diversity in education delivery down to the school level was necessary and critical to the development of higher education.
3. Definition of an education policy proved to be very difficult. Education for all is important but how and what instruments is unclear.
4. Yet Pakistan has had at least 14 education policies—one every 5 years and no real evaluation of any policy. Leading educationists felt that these policies were hasty jobs without much research. Some said they had never read a policy document. Clearly, policies have not worked and have not been based on research.
5. M&E of education is either done by donors or by foreign NGOs.
6. Government ministries run schools which is contrary to the commonly held view of experts that the system should be decentralized and diverse. Commentators want ministries to mainly focus on M&E and based on that develop long term policies if there is a need as evidenced by data.
7. Regulation of education is frequently demanded but again like policy it is thought to be done by a benign all-knowing government capable of looking after all. We must recognize that the regulation requires good M&E and research to back it up.
8. Both regulation and policy must be based on outcomes such as skills achieved, job market placements and learning outcomes and not inputs such as curricula, hours of schooling and funding as in our policies.
9. There was a strong minority opinion that the government should not be in the business of either providing education or developing or publishing textbooks. The delivery of education can be market based with a strong targeted subsidy by the government. M&E and research-based thoughtful regulation could achieve the objective of improving learning outcomes.
10. Schools need to be run by local communities and parent organizations and certainly not the federal or the provincial governments. But then we have yet to evolve a participatory culture as evidenced by the limited participation in our debates.

3

Public Private Partnerships in Education

Key Messages

1. The largest public private partnership (PPP) provider stressed that demand for quality education among parents and students is very much there and parents even in poor people are well aware of the importance of education.
2. The role of the government cannot be marginalized as even if a child has zero money he or she has right to education, but we must recognize that PPP is the only way forward
3. The mohalla schools need to be supported by the government under the PPP initiative and this can bring a major change.
4. In creating an effective model the key question is how to incentivize all profit-based or non-profit private schools to conform to quality delivery. Mr. Zia Akhter Abbas points that four impediments that do not let PPP actualize its potential in Pakistan, 1) ideology across political parties on it are different and 2) when consensus comes on the builds then public education delivery institution takes it as their failure which becomes a hurdle besides 3) low expenditure per child in public schooling due to cost constraints and 4) absenteeism of public school teachers. Further, he added that the potential of poor people is much more than the privileged children given they are street smart. But whether they will actualize this potential depends on how much investment is done on a child. If only 1500Rs are spent on them then they may not be able to compete with children that have 50000 per month spend on them in terms of education in spite of being more in potential. NGOs such as TCF have contributed a lot to social mobility through providing education to the poor since they did not compromise on quality.
5. Private school chain in Pakistan is not just about profit but about providing quality education to students.
6. The government should focus on the evaluations of learning outcomes and if the government wants to regulate annual school fees of the private sector that should be linked to learning outcomes of private schools.



7. Mr. Kasim Kasuri also highlighted that there are two models in public-private partnerships in Pakistan. The one in Punjab withdrew their teachers and let the private sector not just take over the public school infrastructure but allowed to hire their own teachers and the second that was done elsewhere was to give the public schools and their teachers of the public sector under the private sector to run. In his experience, the performance was only better when the private sector could hire their own teacher.
8. In the private school partnership model, the government should collaborate with low-cost private school providers rather than investing in more infrastructure.
9. In collaboration or limited PPP, government need to register all sorts of private schools from high to low-cost schools, and teachers should collaborate with low and medium-cost schools in many ways such as in the provision, and teachers training, etc.
10. The private sector coming in the public sector can fix the education problem beautifully but we need to realize that if such a policy is indeed taken at primary and secondary level then this will imply for tertiary level too
11. Dr. Neelum Hussain suggests that our education system should try to give not just IQ to students but emotional intelligence. And finally, the government should not put boundaries on learning in the name of regulation that is a massive mistake in the era of the internet.
12. Mr. Mosharraf Zaidi with experience of Taabadla and Alif Alaan Campaign, stresses that all education campaigns should be focused on enrollment and cognitive learning, but in his view, PPP is not much of partnership in Pakistan but more an attack on public school. This attack at some level is justified given the public sector has failed to deliver but at the level, but we need to acknowledge that the public sector in spite of its failure carries a huge bulk of the poor population. So terms of PPP conversion need to move from attack on public sector schooling to real partnership.



Key Messages

1. The digital age has and will continue to lower the cost data delivery and analysis. Education is the transfer of information from teacher to student
2. Using digital technology can customize and individualize education.
3. Education delivery which has been regimented in the past and based heavily on communication of content can now be deconstructed to improve quality for each and every student.
4. “Flipping the class-room” is now very possible along with developing sharper skills at an individualized level.
5. Technology does not replace the teacher or schools but accommodating it means that the process of education needs to be re-imagined.
6. Mainstreaming technology in education will allow greater flexibility in delivery. School attendance can be more flexible, skills can be monitored at a fine level, teachers can be focusing on problems and details and the entire system can be managed from the individual to the macro level.
7. School space and teacher remain important because space is equalizing and offers extracurricular education. But there is no reason to maintain the 5 day and 8-3 routine. With technology, space use can be reimagined and run more intensively (ie, more shifts).
8. Currently, families are expending about Rs.750 billion on school fees, another Rs. 350 billion on tuition after school and about 300 billion on transport.
9. With technology, tuition after school could be substantially reduced and reducing school attendance to less than 5 days a week could save on transport costs.
10. In current pedagogy about 1.4 trillion rupees are spent in the private sector and about a trillion in the public sector. The quality of this schooling is on average lower than international levels and the variability of this quality is large.
11. In the current system adoption of technology remains low despite the many advantages listed above.
12. Cost of developing and delivering content remains quite low. Experts suggest that content, testing and data analysis could be developed and maintained in relatively cost-effective ways.
13. Delivery of education through technology will therefore lower costs of education substantially and release the huge burden that families are undertaking.
14. There are a large number of tech entrepreneurs who have started development in this area, and they are seeking to disrupt the education system. However, in India there are proportionately far greater numbers of efforts in this direction than here. The government is more supportive of these efforts in India.
15. Tech adoption seems to be higher in small entrepreneurial schools that need to save costs. The government and the larger chains appear to be less flexible in adopting change in their teaching methods to involve technology.

Key Messages

On the last day of the PIDE education roundtable Minister Shafqat Mahmood not only brought forward the current government vision on education policy but also reviewed suggestions and findings that had been collected from the deliberation of Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque with representatives of different stakeholders such as educationalists from public, private and NGO sectors, policy analyst, social activist to name a few. The key messages from this intellectual discourse are as below:

1. Minister Shafqat Mahmood strongly re-enforced the Prime Minister's and the Government's commitment to education whereby he pointed that the centrepiece of current policy is the development of the Single National curriculum (SNC).
2. In this context, Honourable Minister stressed the need for SNC as a necessary action for ensuring equity given without doing away with the current system that offers an advantage of quality English education to elites and a disadvantage of lesser-quality Urdu education to poor, can only lead to polarization in capabilities for the poor.
3. Further it was pointed out that the government is flexible, and ready to adapt and change the SNC as per people opinions for which various consultative initiatives and mechanisms are already functional.
4. The consensus so far achieved in the parliament includes that as per SNC first five years will uniformly be in the mother tongue, and that some Islamic teaching will be part of the curriculum with allowance for minorities to get their own religious instruction. For management of SNC, it has been agreed that the Interprovincial Education committee is going to meet regularly.
5. In response to conference findings that school governance, decentralization and diversity as worthy goals, the respected Minister also agreed in principle but explained that in practice these goals have been found as politically and administratively very difficult to implement.
6. In response to findings from the PIDE discussion on how use of technology presents an opportunity for Pakistan to improve high quality education accessibility for all, the Minister informed the audience that Government's intent to actively consider use of technology by backing EdTech and setting up procurement mechanisms for the purpose.
7. Shedding light on educational challenges emerging out of COVID, the Minister informed that the Government is deliberating on how to create support for small private schools that have been adversely affected to a much larger degree.
8. Discussion also pointed to the need for systemic reform which apparently is not possible. Further, it was noted that school governance, decentralization, diversity of approach, specializations in pedagogy are hard to develop when systemic reform is impossible.
9. People noted that recent digital revolution as well as emerging trends in the labor market, require a disruption in the education system. The current status quo with only the establishment of the SNC will not be enough.

10. Everyone agreed that the 5-day round table had raised valuable new issues and was worthwhile. However, it was also noted that several groups were absent: government bureaucracy, political leadership, leading and visible education thinkers, and leading education institutions.
11. Schooling in isolation does not create a culture of learning. As pointed out by many, the reading habit is not being cultivated in our universities. What is needed is the development of a culture of learning. Such a culture will only happen when leaders of society are willing to engage in debate. Webinars is a great opportunity. Those in policy making positions and knowledge creation must find the time to attend.
12. It was concluded that there is a dire need to extend the discussion on education and learn how to develop a learning culture in Pakistan.



<https://pide.org.pk/index.php/research/webinars?id=773>

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