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Department of Development Studies

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Economics

'DS Paragraph' is an academic activity in which students, researchers and faculty are encouraged to write critical reviews of books based on the Development discourse. The topical range may include academic debates on issues such as poverty, inequality, gender, conflict and human security. The topic of the book reviewed in 3rd DS Paragraph is **'Education Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections and Practices'** authored by **Shahid Siddique**. The book has been reviewed by Ms. Samar Abdullah.

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Education Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections and Practices

Author: Shahid Siddique

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The book titled "**Education Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections and Practices**" comprises fourteen chapters in which education policies of Pakistan are discussed in terms of four broader thematic domains: *rationale, sociopolitical context, implementation and gender*.

The first chapter titled "**Education Policies: Rationale and Process**" explains the need to have an education policy. It deals with the process of policy planning and implementation. It explains the major components of the policy i.e. the identification of the areas that need attention, measures to be taken and the process of implementation in order to achieve specific targets. In this chapter, the author states the planning process of each policy document since 1947. In addition, this chapter also explains the internal and external influences on the policy makers of the country.

The second chapter titled "**The Sociopolitical Context of Education Policies**" highlights the impacts of the sociopolitical and economic environment of the country on the education policies in terms of their preparation and implementation. A brief analysis of a number of social and political events has been provided by the author in this chapter. President Zia ul Haq's Islamization process greatly impacted the education policies made during his military regime.

In the third chapter titled "**Education Policies: Vision and Ideology**", the author throws light on the role of an ideology in policy making. This chapter uncovers the imposition of vision by the rulers of the country on the policy makers. The crux of this chapter is that the education policies in Pakistan have been deeply influenced by Islam, which is the religion of the majority. Another major factor behind the ideological interference in the formulation of education policies is the foreign funding by the political allies of the country.

In the fourth chapter titled "**Literacy**", the author studies the influences behind the inflation of the literacy rate in the past seven decades. This chapter accepts the superiority of the qualitative expansion of literacy over its quantitative expansion. All the governments in the past could not achieve their targets regarding literacy rate in the specified time period. The literacy rate should be enhanced by providing equal opportunities irrespective of gender, regional and economic status. The distinction between the functional and critical literacy should be understood.

The fifth chapter titled "**Universal Primary Education**" focuses on the challenge of Universal Primary Education. It critically analyses the initiatives recommended by the policy makers. The author discusses the two major problems i.e. access of children to schools and high dropout ratio. In this chapter, a number of initiatives are mentioned which were designed to provide easy access to schools.

The sixth chapter titled "**Higher Education**" explains the connection between higher education and development. The author brings our attention towards the unaffordability of higher education because a larger chunk of population is poor. One of the major problems in this area is the flawed policies regarding the allocation of funds. The quality of research produced in Pakistani Universities is not up to the international standards. In today's Pakistan the biggest challenge in this space is the qualitative improvement of the higher education.

In the seventh chapter titled "**Female Education**", the author discusses the failure of Pakistan's Education System regarding the female education. Social, economic, religious and security reasons are responsible for the low female literacy rates in Pakistan. There is a need to change the mindset of the masses especially in the rural areas in order to increase the magnitude of female education in the country. Lower female literacy rates affect their visibility in the total workforce of the country. A number of efforts in the past were made in order to increase the number of female literates and enhance the quality of education.

In the eighth chapter titled "**Language Issues**", the author underlines the role of language in the educational system of Pakistan. The role of a state language, the Bengali Language movement and the recognition of Bangla as a second language were discussed in this chapter. The author explains the role of regional and native languages in education sector. The medium of instruction used to teach at a school is of utmost importance because it will play a great role in the concept building of the students.

The ninth chapter titled "**Technical and Vocational Education**" explains the significance of technical and vocational education in a developing country like Pakistan. The author analyses the impacts of different policies regarding this particular category of education. In Pakistan, the diploma holders are not respected which leads to build up of frustration among these students. There is a dire need to bridge the gap between technical and general education in order to raise the position of these students in the society and help them get suitable jobs.

The tenth chapter titled "**Special Education**" illuminates the necessity for special education which is aimed at including the special children in mainstream population. Since the formation of the country, policies are made keeping in mind the needs of the disabled children. The major challenge faced by the policy makers is the unawareness of the parents regarding the physical and mental challenges faced by their children. There is a huge lack of facilities of all kind for the handicapped children. Besides the improvement of educational institutions, policies emphasize the need for training parents.

The eleventh chapter titled "**Religious Education and Madrasahs**" considers religious education as one of the basic objectives of the education policies in Pakistan. There is a considerable gap between madrasah education and general education which needs to be filled. This has remained a major challenge for the policy makers because of the different nature of curricula, textbooks and assessment practices. Madrasah education has a number of benefits such as easy access, no cost and free boarding. This package is indeed very attractive for the low income segment of the country. A large number of people opt for it due to several social and religious reasons.

In this twelfth chapter titled "**Curricula and Textbooks**", the author emphasizes on the vitality of the curricula. A curriculum is manifested into books. Most of the textbooks used in the public sector schools are irrelevant and immaterial. According to author, these books are not up to the international standards and hence unable to make a student think and analyze critically. The curricula need to be revised and upgraded. There is a huge room for improvement in the execution of policies regarding revising curricula. There has always been pressure on the policy makers regarding the change of curricula.

In the thirteenth chapter titled "**Teachers and Teacher Education**", the author informs about the improvements made regarding the quantitative expansion of the teachers in the education sector. The number of teachers has been considerably increased since 1947. The author examines the policies made in order to conduct qualitative improvement of teachers and teacher education. The chief policies made in this regard include increasing the salaries, improving the procedure of recruitment and development of teacher training institutions. The implementation of policies in this regard is adversely affected due to poor political will and lack of effective monitoring system.

The fourteenth chapter titled "**Implementation: Challenges and Recommendations**" describes the

hurdles paved in the way of effective implementation of education policies in Pakistan. There are various factors mainly lack of political will, dearth of allocated funds, unreliable data, political interference, political instability, ineffective monitoring, poor governance and weakened system of accountability. This chapter proposed numerous policy recommendations and suggestions to cope with the above mentioned challenges. A few principal recommendations are availability of funds, consistency of policies, absence of political interference and effective surveillance system.

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