

PIDE holds webinar on ‘Future of Public Education in Pakistan’

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ISLAMABAD: Educationists while stressing the need for digitalisation of the public sector educational institutions have said that over the past many years, national education is underperforming and drastic improvements in accordance with global standards are the need of the hour.

Speaking at a webinar titled, “Future of Public Education in Pakistan” organised by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), here on Wednesday; speakers said that the country needs to introduce a smart class system using modern tools to boost the performance of the public sector education system. They stressed that distance learning solutions can be implemented to improve teacher performance, address teacher availability, accelerated learning to make up learning losses, supplementary learning for children pathway for individualised learning and pathway for remedial learning.

Speaking on the occasion, Zulfiqar Qazilbash, education tech advisor to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, said that the current system is administered on an output basis. There is no incentive for outcome or impact. Pakistan was described as “among the world’s worst performing countries in education,” at the 2015 Oslo Summit on Education and Development. He said that with the introduction of the latest technology in other fields of life, the education system across the globe has also witnessed drastic changes, especially after the fallout of the coronavirus. He said that during the Covid-19 pandemic, digital education had become the major tool of education.

He said that the introduction of digital education will also reduce the spending on publishing textbooks, reduce the financial budget of the parents and the children can get the best quality knowledge. He said that the country can benefit from global education funding for improving the education sector.

He said that the ministry has devised an efficient policy in this regard which will reach a vast majority of the estimated 90 million school-going children with a centralised content and efficiently provide services that set a floor to teacher performance and at the same time allow better teachers to improve performance which will uplift the overall system.

He said that the rationale for Ed Tech is that it will improve learning. He said that the government has started working on a viable plan to promote digital education and within the next five years,

significant development will be evident.

He said that to achieve the goals the government is working on the basis of public-private partnership basis and the government is also going to launch six education-specific television channels, adding that in India there are some 20 such channels working. He said that this move will help educate the out-of-school children.

Speaking on the occasion, Mehboob Mahmood, CEP, Knowledge Platform said that the education sector in Pakistan must focus more on execution and output. He said that digitalization of the education sector will add \$100 expenditure per child and considering 90 million students in Pakistan the total per annum cost is estimated at \$9 billion per annum.

He said that at present, the private sector has overtaken the public sector education system. He further said that the government must divert more focus on the provision of good infrastructure.

He said that improvement in learning depends on an effective integration of technology and pedagogy that can only be measured in outcome/impact. Therefore, evaluations of interventions need to move from output to outcome and impact.

Haroon Yasin, CEO, Taleemabad while speaking on the occasion said that a key proposition of the strategy is for the government to engage with the newly-emergent Ed-tech industry, which will help reverse brain drain and provide best performers in Pakistan's IT industry an opportunity to channel their creativity and agency toward the social sector.

Yasin further said that new distance learning programmes are an opportunity for the government to develop and provide best practice learning pathways for the masses through guidelines, policies and standards. Ultimately, active research makes programmes fit needs and the capacity of the target students.

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