

# Essay

## What can help Pakistan accelerate current education trends for quality, access and gender equity from pre primary to secondary education?

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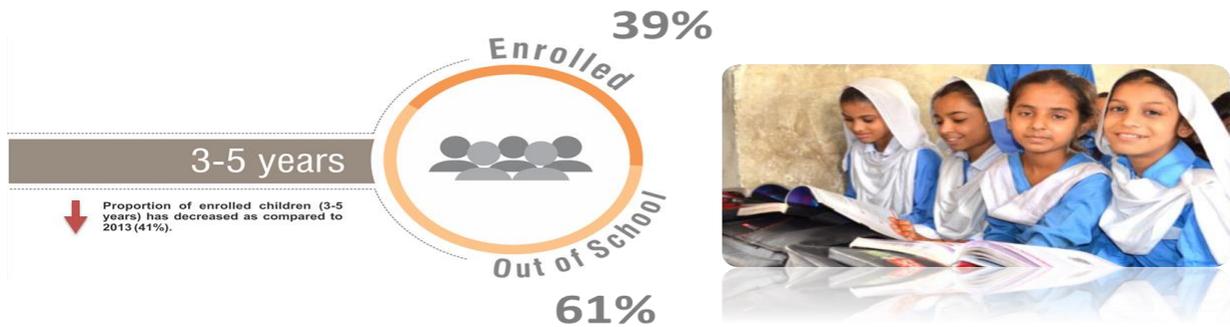
### Outline:

1. Introduction
  2. Current education trends from pre primary to secondary education
  3. Key education challenges in Pakistan
    - I. Access to education
    - II. Quality of education
    - III. Gender equity in education
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The current education system of Pakistan is fundamentally flawed thoroughly rotten and divisive. It has more than its share in squandering the time, talent and resources of the nation. Education has never been the top priority of all the successive regimes. Due to this criminal negligence generations have been rendered illiterate. Pakistani nation is paying heavy price in the form of backwardness, poverty and ignorance. As a result Pakistan stands with Sub Saharan Africa in terms of Human Development Index. In the current era of globalization Pakistan is the signatory of various international agreements regarding the provision of quality education to its children i-e Dakar Framework of Action which ensures universalization of education under the slogan of "Education for All". But the slow and steady progress towards education has tarnished the image of Pakistan in the comity of nations.

At present the state of pre primary and secondary education in Pakistan is in shambles. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, Pakistan ranks 106 out of 113 countries only above Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. Pakistan has not achieved any of the EFA goals except some progress in closing the gender gap, particularly in the early years after 2000. Pakistan has moved slightly ahead particularly in the early years after the goals were set. There were 68 girls enrolled for 100 boys by 2007, the girls' figure reached 83, and then 87 by 2012. But ASER Report 2014 indicates that in rural areas of Pakistan 61 % children between the ages of 3 to 5 years are not enrolled in school.

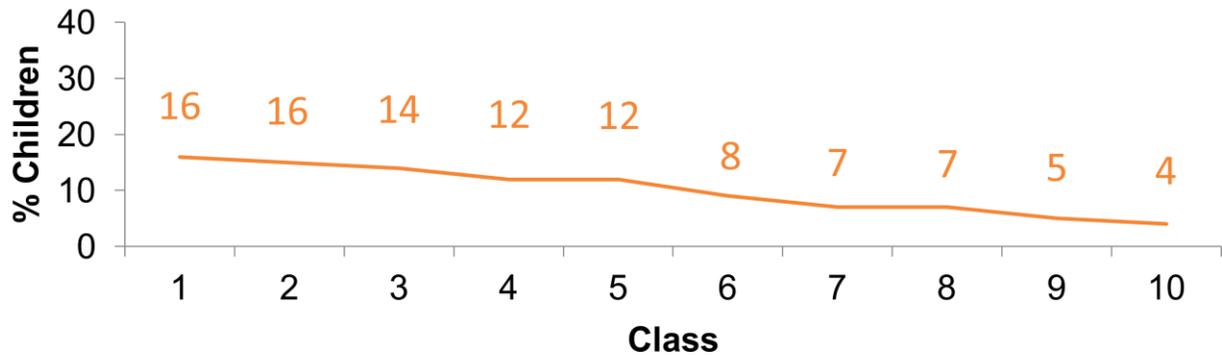
# Enrollment (3-5 Years)



(Source: ASER 2014)

Similarly in secondary education situation is worse than primary education. Among total out of school children 66.7 % are from secondary school age group. **(25 million broken promises report by Alif Ailaan).**

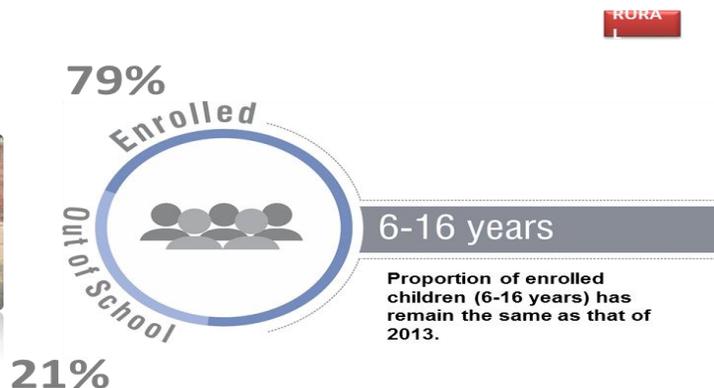
On the other hand ASER 2014 report highlights that there are only 4 % children enrolled in class 10 as compared to 16 % in class 1.



(Source: ASER 2014)

The key challenges to Pakistan's education are lack of access to education, poor quality of education and gender equity. A large stratum of children about 21 % are not enrolled in school between the ages of 5 to 16 years age group in rural areas of Pakistan says ASER 2014 report.

## Enrollment (6-16 Years)



**(Source: ASER 2014)**

According to the "Alif Ailaan report 25 million broken promises" almost 25.02 million children between the ages of 5 to 16 years are out of school. Among these children 23% are primary school going age. The alarming fact which report indicates that the proportion of out of school children increases as the level of education rises similar with ASER 2014 findings. It is important to note here that more than half of country's out of school children are from Punjab which claims better infrastructure and system of education. The EFA review report further elaborates this alarming fact in the following words,

*"Due to a variety of reasons only 66.8% children survive till class 5 and 33.2 % drop out before completing primary education" (NEMIS 2012-13)*

As for as the quality of education is concerned the ASER 2014 report found out that the learning levels of children have declined in 2014 as compared to 2013. Balochistan ranks the lowest in terms of learning levels. On the other hand only 26 % schools were receiving grants from government; useable water was available in only 57 % schools, boundary wall was present in 61 % schools and useable toilets in 51% schools. The basic reason of the low learning level is the lack of well trained teachers, untimely availability of textbooks and overall unfavourable school environment.

Gender parity and equality was one of the goals of UNESCO's education for all which only achieved by 69% and 48% countries globally in primary and secondary education respectively in last fifteen years. At international level gender parity in education is declining due to the efforts

made by international agencies. Worldwide, at the primary level, 69% of the countries are close to or have already attained gender parity. From 1999 to 2012, 50% of Southern and Western Asian countries achieved parity which include; Bhutan, India, Iran and Sri Lanka whereas in Nepal the gender gaps were reversed.

In Pakistan, the average adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) for gender differentials is 83%, however in provinces the gap is wider with FATA showing the greatest disparity gap of 42%. On the other hand Islamabad has more girls enrolled than boys. Similarly according to the findings of PSLM 2012-13, about 83 girls are enrolled as compared to 98 boys in primary education. On gender gap ASER 2014 found out that 10 girls are enrolled against 11 boys in rural areas of Pakistan.



The figure above shows that Pakistan has the second largest gender disparity for enrolment in the region, better only than Afghanistan's.

There are some suggestions to accelerate the current education trends in Pakistan if follows properly.

- I. Strong political will is required to upgrade the system of education in Pakistan.
- II. There is a dire need to enhance the national budget on education at least 4 % of GDP. For this purpose tax collection needs to be increased at least 15 % of tax to GDP ratio which is currently around 9 percent.
- III. Proper utilization of allocated budget to address the education related issues rather than salaries of teachers and other non development expenditures.
- IV. For better education service delivery corruption and nepotism needs to be tackled on priority basis. Education sector should be free from political interference. Transparency and meritocracy should be prevailed. In 2010, the government estimated that around 6,480 ghost schools in Sindh and 5,000 in Balochistan were guzzling funds.

- V. The government should declare a national educational emergency and involve the whole nation in waging a war against illiteracy.
- VI. It is the pressing need to improve the curriculum, textbooks, pedagogy, examination and evaluation system.
- VII. Strong public private partnership is required to ensure the quality education for the millions of out of school children.
- VIII. There should be the robust connection of our education sector with the demands of industry.
- IX. Government will have to take specific steps to end cramming system in education from Govt. as well as Private sector and promote the system of practical work.
- X. The syllabus should be uniform across the country to ensure equality in education.
- XI. For better administration, decentralization of decision making is required. A highly centralized system does not respond effectively to local needs. Better support should be provided for supervision and coordination of the school system at the district and provincial level.
- XII. More girls' schools of secondary level should be established especially in far flung rural areas.
- XIII. Our education system should be research oriented based on the modern requirements.
- XIV. Media and civil society should play a pivotal role for sensitization of people towards education.
- XV. Last but not the least; education should be the top priority of the government to fulfill its constitutional responsibility.

To conclude, education is the engine of socio economic development of a nation. It is difficult for a nation to reach the glory of progress without educating its masses. In this modern era of globalization and scientific development education is the only weapon to get streamlined with international community. The government should learn a lesson from its past mistakes and formulate pragmatic, rational and sustained education policies. We should adopt the successful models of other countries to reform the education system. It is our responsibility to change the destiny of our nation by reforming the education system. People should be aware that education is the basic right of their children and they should raise their voice for the fulfillment of this right. All the political parties especially the ruling party should set the performance benchmarks of education in the constituencies of MPA's and MNA's. It is the dire need to impose the educational emergency in the country to stand on equal footing with international community. At present practical steps are required to revamp the education system rather than sweeping dust under the carpet.

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