

What can help Pakistan to accelerate current education trend for quality, access, gender equity from pre-primary to secondary education?

It's been 63 years since Pakistan became an independent state and yet the country is still unsustainable. Why? There has been a lack of investment in the country's future. Specifically, there has been a lack of focus on what students need in order to contribute to the world in the 21st century. The education sector represents a mere 2.3% of GDP. Clearly this poses a real issue. If left unchanged, Pakistan will be left behind. The country will not be recognized or respected and worst of all; the dreams of generations to come will go unanswered.

Perhaps it's because Pakistan's educational system is still entrenched in an antiquated colonial approach so the curriculum and educational policies remain outdated. Success in schools in Pakistan is based solely on how much a student has memorized. There's no hands-on experiential teaching, critical analysis or independent thinking – often considered to be the building blocks of innovation. The 'Ratta parrot' system vastly prevails especially in government schools. There is strong lacking of critical and analytical mind in our education system except few elites schools.

اجازات	رہنے کی صلاحیت والے سوالات	کھینے کی صلاحیت والے سوالات	کھینے اور کسی تلف سورتمال میں اطلاق والے سوالات	اپنی نگری صلاحیتوں والے سوالات
اجازتی پرواز BISE 2011-12	60%	32%	4%	4%
پنجاب ایگریکلچرل کلاس ہفتم 20-11-2012	55%	27%	40%	2%
اولیول جولائی 2011ء	11%	30%	45%	33%
			89%	

Photo taken from: Monthly 'Naya Zamana' Magazine.

The above table is self-explanatory. It is a comparison between govt. school students and O level school students based on their critical thinking and analytical skills. This must change. Pakistan needs to adopt new ideas so Pakistani students will become responsible citizens and leaders in the world.

The creation of a prior blueprint for reforming the entire education system would be a complex and demanding task that can only be led by major stakeholders, including the government, political leaders and the civil society.

Government must work to develop wise leadership which comes from opening minds up to opportunities and by paving the way for personal achievement. Investing in education in this way will also help create jobs and enable young people to be more marketable and competitive with their peers around the world. By offering students the means to develop skills that will be important to the 21st century global community the country will prosper.

Any reform must be systemic, focusing on a defined set of areas for each sector and addressing them simultaneously. Focus areas may include governance, fiscal resources, human resources, curriculum and infrastructure. These areas are crucially interlinked and omitting one is likely to hamper meaningful and sustainable long-term change.

There must be a centralized result based monitoring system in education sector that will be linked with local and regional school monitoring system .It should regularly include updated information, critical findings and recommendations and feedback mechanism with all relevant stakeholders.

There is need to ensure that parent teacher associations are active across the country and should be given a higher status and strong capacity by the education ministry. This forum must share there feedback and other child related issues with strong participation of child psychologist and other relevant experts.

The selection of teachers must be made through NTS test (as currently KPK govt doing the same good practices for teachers' recruitment). This standard test will be a filter to select genuine people for this very important position. A teacher is a half father of a student and their socialization determines the future of the country.

The curriculum must be modernized so that a culture of novelty and creativity can be nurtured. Politicians must recognize this importance so that educational reform will encourage greater support from the voters.

Being conservative society, govt must take initiatives for mass mobilization regarding women education and gender equity. The Prophet once said 'education is obligatory for both men and women'. Therefore those parents who don't enroll their children, especially girls, even when provided with the opportunity should be held accountable in some way.

The government must create these means/trends for quality access to education by reducing disparities wherever they exist. Public schools must be raised to the same standards as those at private schools.

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