

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF BASIC EDUCATION INDICATORS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analytical review of the literature on educational outcomes and education indicators of Pakistan. The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the outcomes of education in Pakistan. Using a qualitative approach, document analysis was carried out by the researcher to analyze the current state of education in Pakistan. Official government documents were selected and reviewed. Comparison of various education indicators across years and provinces were made. Identification of gaps and reporting of educational outcomes was done as a result. Education spending by different provinces and analysis of budgets over the years was also made to fully comprehend the education state. Policy recommendations were given after making contextual and specific discussions on key education indicators. The paper might be helpful for international readers, research scholars, and education personnel in the country.

Keywords: *State of education, educational outcomes, education indicators, Pakistan, Punjab, budgets on education, analytical review.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a base of social development in a country. Improving education equates with social progress and development. Educational performance and standings are measured as a function of multiple indicators. These indicators together form the bases of quality of education. Internationally, the significance of quality indicators of education is stressed through various conventions and declarations. Indigenous pressure on the governments of Pakistan is equally significant to uplift the education quality indicators. Therefore, the researcher has addressed the present state of education in Pakistan by critically evaluating the educational outcomes and analytically reviewing the various education indicators in this paper. The importance of this review paper is multifold. This paper might also serve as the literature on the current education status in Pakistan with a comparison of education indicators from the

past. The developments, pertinent steps and sustained efforts that have been done by the education departments to boost the education system are also highlighted. The fiscal expenditures on the education, both federal and provincial, have also been analyzed with a critical lens of a breakdown of the budgets. The paper also endeavours to point out the possible gaps and improvement opportunities in the education system of Pakistan.

The situation of education is not ideal in Pakistan. School education is facing dropout issues, lack of basic infrastructure, poor performance, and teacher turnover threats. The report published by Alif Ailaan and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in (2016), on District Education Rankings has highlighted the dismal situation of our schools in general, and in rural areas in specific. Punjab though ranked higher than the other provinces, still has an alarming state in the rural districts. The heart-wrenching state of education in Pakistan is mainly because of the low budget allocation for education. Pakistan merely spends 2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on this sector (Habib, 2013). Even the latest government figures, in the recent economic survey of Pakistan, suggest that the government is spending 2.1% of its GDP on this sector (Government of Pakistan, Finance Division, 2017).

In April 2010, the parliament of Pakistan passed the 18th amendment act in the Constitution of Pakistan (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, 2010). In that amendment, the devolution of powers to the provinces was declared and five ministries, including that of education, were devolved. This, as a result, made provinces autonomous in making reforms in the education system of Pakistan (Hussain & Kokab, 2012). Therefore, this research was undertaken to review the educational outcomes, due to its contextual significance in provinces and the centre. Although the paper has taken into consideration the educational indicators from overall Pakistan and all levels of education, however, there was a special focus on the Punjab province and school education department.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this research was to critically analyze the state of education by reviewing the education indicators of Pakistan. To achieve this objective following methodology was designed.

METHODOLOGY

An analytical review of the literature related to the education outcomes and indicators from different subsections of the education system was

carried out. Using a qualitative approach document analysis technique was used to analyze these outcomes and indicators. Document analysis as per Bowen (2009) is a sophisticated process that sets predefined criteria and objectives to analyze the specified documents. Determining such criteria is useful in aligning the objectives of the study with the analysis (Wild, McMahon, Darlington, Liu, & Culley, 2010).

Sources of Data

For that purpose, the researcher has selected the official government reports and documents to see the performance of educational outcomes over the years. The lists of documents that have been reviewed for this research are: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports on population census and Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2014-15), Pakistan Education Statistics reports for the year 2016 and 2017, Pakistan Economic Surveys for the fiscal years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, Pakistan Budget, Citizen Budgets of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, Alif Aillan reports for District Education Rankings, Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU) data and other details from School Education Department (SED) and its allied departments.

Procedure

The researcher reviewed these documents against the criteria set and approved by three experts of the qualitative research domain. The criteria met the objective of the study of analytically reviewing the educational outcomes and comparison of indicators from the past years. The documents were retrieved from the official resources of the above-mentioned institutions and departments. The researcher abides by the strict ethical consideration of reporting the amounts, budgets, values, and data as suggested in the publically made available official documents only.

State of Education: Comparison of Educational Outcomes and Indicators

This section has provided the details of some statistics on education in the Pakistani scenario. These details were important to understand the gaps in the education system of Pakistan and also helped in understanding the current standings of different educational indicators in Pakistan.

According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2016-17) in 1947-48 there were 8,413 primary schools which included pre-primary, mosque schools, and non-formal schools, middle schools were 2,190, high schools were 408, while 40 higher secondary schools/inter colleges, no degree college, 46 technical and vocational institutions, and only 2 universities.

While at present, these numbers have increased in multiples. In 2016-17, there were 182,337 primary schools including pre-primary, mosque schools, and non-formal schools. Middle schools were 49,090, high schools were 31,551, higher secondary/inter colleges were 5,130, whereas 1,431-degree colleges have been established by now, which were zero at the time of independence. There were 3,798 technical and vocational institutions, and 185 universities (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2016-17).

Literacy Rates

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2016), the rate of literacy for age 10 years and above was at 60% and for adults, the literacy rate was 57%. The official data from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) (2014-15) reported the literacy of 10 years and above to be 60% at the national level with rural being 51% and urban at 76%. Men were reported to be literate at 70% and women reportedly only 49%. For provinces, this survey reported that Punjab was leading in the literacy rate with 63%, followed by Sindh at 60%, KPK with 53% and Balochistan was reported to be at 44% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

In the adult literacy report published by PSLM (2014-15) the national literacy rate was 57% with 68% literacy rate for male and 45% rate for female. Punjab showed literacy rate at 60% for the overall population and 69% for male and 51% for female. Sindh stood at 58% total literacy rate out of which 70% males and 46% females were literate. KPK was reportedly showing literacy at 47% out of which males were reportedly at 66% and only 29% was the literacy rate for women. Balochistan's overall literacy rate was 38% out of which 56% were males and only 18% of females were reportedly literate.

The report also highlighted the percentage population that has completed primary level education. Overall Pakistan's population having completed primary level education was reportedly 52%. Punjab took the lead in this category with 54% just ahead of Sindh with 53%, KPK was reporting 44% and Balochistan showed 35% in this category.

Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios at Primary level in Pakistan

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at primary level (age six to 10 years) showed that in overall Pakistan GER was at 92% with Punjab making a clear lead with 98% over all other provinces while KPK, Sindh, and Balochistan reported 92%, 81%, and 73% respectively. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) at primary level (age six to 10 years) was reported to be 68%

at National level, 72% in Punjab, 62% in Sindh, 68% in KPK, and 55% in Balochistan (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Primary level enrollment at government schools as a percentage of total enrolment reported national level to be at 62%, Punjab 56%, Sindh 64%, KPK 69%, and Balochistan 90%. While the net primary enrolment at government schools as a percentage of primary level enrolment reported national level enrolment at 58%, Punjab 53%, Sindh 60%, KPK 68%, Balochistan 90% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Survival Rate to Grade 5

In the year 2012-13, the survival rate to grade 5 was 67%. Though it has fluctuated in between from 2014-15 (69%) to 65% in 2015-16 now again it was 67% in 2016-17 (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2016-17).

Effective Transition Rate (ETR)

The ETR from primary to middle classes was 78% for the year 2012-13. Although it has shown an increase since then as reported ETR from primary classes to middle classes was 84% for the year 2016-17, it is still not very encouraging. ETR in 2012-13 was 88% for middle-classes to secondary classes and it was improved to 91% in 2016-17 (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2016-17).

Number of Teachers, Students and Institutions in Pakistan

According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2016-17) at present, there are 317,323 educational institutions in Pakistan. Out of these, 196,998 are public sector institutions and 120,273 private sector institutions. The total number of students enrolled in these institutions is 50,292,570, from them 28.68 million students study in public sector institutions and the remaining 21.60 million students are taught in private sector institutions. The number of teaching staff in the education sector in Pakistan is 1,836,584 teachers. Out of these teachers, 49% are working in public sector education institutions and 51% are working private sector educational institutions (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2016-17).

GDP Spending on Education in Pakistan

World Bank data reported that Government of Pakistan is spending 2.758% of its GDP on Education for the year 2017 (World Bank, 2017). The official government figures for the public expenditure on education for the fiscal year 2017 were 2.2 per cent of its GDP which were 2.3% for the fiscal year 2016 (Government of Pakistan, Finance Division, 2017-

18). The fiscal year in Pakistan starts from July 01 and ends on June 30. The education-related expenditure in rupees was 699.2 billion for the fiscal year 2017. Although the amount of public expenditure on education in 2017 has increased from that of 2016 i.e. Rupees 663.4 billion, but the percentage of GDP has decreased for the year 2017. The increase in the amount is only because the GDP has increased over one year.

The education expenditure is further categorized as current expenditure and development expenditure. For the year 2017 out of 699.2 billion rupees 596.9 billion accounts for current expenditures and 102.3 billion accounts for development expenditures (Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance, 2018). Out of the federal budget for education, a major chunk is allocated for higher education. The breakdown of the federal budget for education for the year 2016-17 was as follows: primary education (8%), secondary education (10%), higher education (79%) and remaining (3%) for all other types of education (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2017).

Provincial Budgetary Details

The budgetary details of education spending by each province have been given below. The details of the previous two years have been presented in terms of recurrent and development budget. The breakup of educational budget into recurrent and development sections can help understand the educational situation carefully.

Punjab

The latest budgetary figures for the year 2017-18 reflected that the Punjab government has allocated 345.2 Billion rupees for the education sector (Government of Punjab, 2018). It has seen a 49 Billion Rupees increase in the budget from the last year. For the fiscal year 2016-17, the education budget of the government of Punjab was 296,189.3 Million rupees which was 3% more than the previous budget of the 2015-16 year i.e. 286,505.47 Million rupees. The details of the budget have been further explained in a way that it is divided into two major portions: recurrent budget and development budget. The recurrent budget has further two classifications (a) salary budget (b) non-salary budget.

The recurrent budget of education for the year 2016-17 was 233,176.46 Million rupees of which 211,307.31 million rupees were allocated for salary budget and 21,869.15 million rupees for a non-salary budget. Development budget for the year 2016-17 was 63,012.84 million rupees (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2017). This also depicted that

majority of the budget allocation goes for the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Sindh

Sindh government's education budget for the year 2017-18 was 199,785 Million rupees. Development budget for education for that period was 21,128 million rupees and the recurrent budget amount was 178,657 million rupees (Government of Sindh, 2018). The budget for education in Sindh for the year 2016-17 was 175,888 Million rupees. Out of this total budget, the recurrent budget was 158,021.35 million. This recurrent budget was further divided into 114,044 million as salary budget and 43,977 million as non-salary budget. The development budget was 17,867 Million.

The percentage share of the budget of the total provincial budget has remained 20% for the years 2016-17, 2015-16, and 2015-14 but in figures, the budget for the year 2016-17 has increased 19% from previous year's allocated budget for education. Out of the 2016-17 education budget, 32% was allocated for primary education, 28% for secondary education, 17% for higher education and 23% for other types of education (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2017).

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

The budget for education allocated by the KP government for the year 2017-18 was 168,084 million rupees. The breakdown of this latest budget is as follows: salary budget 114,192 Million rupees, non-salary budget 24,752 Million rupees, and development budget 29,141 Million rupees. Out of this total 168,084 million rupees' education budget, 97,101 million rupees were allocated for primary education, 35,064 for secondary education, 29,510 million rupees for higher education, and 6,409 Million rupees for other education (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2018).

Education budget for the year 2016-17 was 123,067 Million which was showing a 3% increase from that of the year 2015-16. The year 2016-17 has seen recurrent budget at rupees 99,008.92 million. From the recurrent budget, the allocation for salary budget amounted to be rupees 91,471.01 million and non-salary budget amounted to be 7,537.92 million. Development budget, however, was 24,059 Million rupees (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2017).

Balochistan

The education budget allocated by the government of Balochistan for

the year 2017-18 was 55.336 Billion rupees, out of which 45.780 Billion were set for recurrent budget and 9.556 billion were allocated for development budget (Government of Balochistan, 2018).

In the year 2016-17, the total budget for education was 48,611.94 million rupees out of which 42,175.27 million were allocated for a recurrent budget. The recurrent budget was bifurcated in 37,404.06 million rupees and 4,771.21 million rupees as salary and non-salary budget respectively. The development budget was 6,436.67 million for the year 2016-17 (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2017).

District Education Ranking

Alif Ailaan (2017) District Education Ranking yielded results for all the districts of Pakistan including the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), and Tribal areas. One district Haripur from KP was on the top of the list and majority of the districts of AJ&K were in the top 12, despite that, overall Punjab province showed better performance. The overall education score includes three indicator scores. These indicator scores are learning score, retention score and gender parity score. Lahore which is the provincial capital of Punjab is placed at position 32 in the overall Pakistan district education rankings with overall education score of 69.2. It has a low learning score of 53.93, retention score of 62.41 and gender parity score of 91.25. The district Bhakkar which is placed at position 67 in the overall ranking is the lowest-ranked district of Punjab with education score of 58.29. The learning score is 53.98, retention score is 46.69 and gender parity score is 74.21. This also highlights the dynamics of different districts across Punjab. It further informs us about the contextual importance in the reforms and interventions needed. The learning score in district Bhakkar (53.98) is slightly more than that of district Lahore (53.93), whereas in gender parity the district Lahore (91.25) is far ahead of district Bhakkar (74.21). Faisalabad is at second position in the overall ranking but leads in Punjab with education score of 76.74 (Alif Ailaan, 2017).

Discussion

There has been much legislation in the education system of Pakistan and multiple educational policies and plans. Based on the policies and plans many reforms have been initiated that includes rationalization, free government education, hiring qualified staff and teachers, devising service structure for teachers, *maar nahin pyar* (no cane but love) policy for

students, and continuous training of teachers and administrators. Courtesy all these efforts and sustained struggles, there is some bright news in the education sector of Pakistan. The reforms in the education system are bearing its fruits now, though not in full strength but they have surely started reaping. Participation in Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) in the year 2019 is a positive outlook for Pakistan (NEAS, 2018). Pakistan has not participated in these international large scale assessments. This made us unaware of the international trends, and the quality of education that developed countries have been providing to their school-going students. This is a step forward and through participation in such international assessments and learning through the experiences, the ratings of the Pakistani education system will also improve. The quality of education might also improve after this. The level of students, their aptitude and skill levels will also be determined. This will further allow probing in the school education system and its quality through the lens of international standards. After participating in TIMSS, Pakistan will also participate in the coming Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This will boost a positive energy and competition environment among our students to perform well at international platforms.

As per the delimitation of the research, this section has specifically discussed the educational achievements, indicators, and outcomes of Punjab province.

Student enrolment has seen an incremental trend from the year 2011 to 2017. In 2011 the annual student enrolment was 8.88 Million, while the highest student enrolment was seen in the year 2015 when 10.33 million students were enrolled. However, it has slightly declined in the year 2017 to 9.91 million students (Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit, 2018b).

The student attendance percentage has gradually increased over the years. In the year 2011, the attendance of students was as low as 78.65%. It has increased to 92.69% in the year 2017. Annual teacher presence percentage is also on the high side at present. The annual teacher presence percentage of 95.32% for the year 2017 reflects the improvement in this aspect as well. Earlier in 2011, it was around 84.63% only.

Regarding the missing facilities and infrastructure, it can be safely said that the schools in Punjab are in a satisfactory position from the figures published in the official annual performance of schools of Punjab across all 36 districts. The report is published by the programme monitoring and

implementation unit. It reported 95.36% schools with electricity facility, 99.6% schools with clean drinking water, 99.27% schools with toilet facility, and 97.46% schools with boundary walls (Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit, 2018b). The remaining schools are also important and these facilities must be provided to them as well.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pakistani education system has long-lasting deeply rooted contextual problems and gaps. The indicators though predict better performances lately; still need strenuous efforts to persist with the results. Already Pakistan has shown disappointing progress towards millennium development goals (Pakistan Institute For Parliamentary Services, 2014) and to achieve sustainable development goal SDG4 a combined effort with government priority is required. Along with these international commitments several legislations—national and provincial—also emphasize the importance of education. The newly elected government of Pakistan in 2018 should continue the policies of previous governments. The progress in Punjab relative to other provinces can be attributed to the persistent policy execution. There is a huge responsibility on the government of Pakistan to chase the international standards in education and to lift the education indicators further from where they are at present. It can be concluded that Pakistan is improving its educational outcomes and with participations in TIMMS and PISA and following other international standards will certainly bring a positive outlook to the facets of education in Pakistan. The budgetary deficits remain a crucial hurdle in achieving the milestones. The government should find means and ways to overcome budgetary deficits and enhance developmental budget on education. The major portion of the education budgets of provinces is utilized in recurrent expenditures and hardly 10% of the total budget is allocated as the development budget. Spending only 2.1% of GDP would not help the cause too. It should be lifted to at least up to 4%.

It is recommended that the policies should continue and more funds and technical assistance should be provided to departments to speed up the progress. The use of ICT and technology can fill many gaps that the education system of Pakistan is facing. The researcher recommends a detailed analysis of each district of Punjab, as it has been pointed out in the discussion that regional and contextual variations within Punjab province are so dynamic that educational indicators change dramatically from city to city. The researcher also recommends inter-provincial

coordination on education and performance of one province should be treated as a case study or benchmark for others. Lessons should be learned and shared because overall the education plays a significant role in the social development of Pakistan and improvement in this sector will uplift the overall performance and indicators of Pakistan.

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