

Educating For the Future

A PBC Position Paper by the Education Panel

2011

Introduction

This report presents the recommendations of the Education Panel of the Pakistan Economic Forum created by the Pakistan Business Council. It highlights some of the key strategic issues facing the Pakistan Education System and presents strategic recommendations to address these. These recommendations were developed through a series of meetings, videoconferences, and exchange of concept papers by members of the Educational Panel and informed by comments on these by the PEF at its Lahore meeting on April 1, 2011.

Background

The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) formed a Pakistan Economic Forum (PEF) with the mandate to engage key stakeholders, leaders, and experts from different sectors in deliberations and debate on issues affecting the economy of Pakistan. It is expected that these deliberations will gradually turn into a think-tank to foster economic growth in the country by informing and influencing the government's policies, priorities and actions. Under this forum, *five panels* were created each for **Energy, Macro-economic Stability, Regional Trade, Education, and Social Protection** sectors in Pakistan. Each panel was responsible for deliberations on key issues and formulation of strategic recommendations to share with policy makers and concerned authorities to inform their short and long-term development plans, policies, and practices.

Composition of Education Panel

The Education Panel was Chaired by **Mr. Shamsah Kassim-Lakha** (Founding President of the Aga Khan University and former Federal Education Minister) and Co-Chaired by **Mr. Razzak Dawood** (Former Federal Minister of Commerce and Rector Lahore University of Management Sciences). Its members are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Shahid Hafiz Kardar | Governor State Bank of Pakistan |
| 2. General Javed Ashraf Qazi | Senator and Former Federal Education Minister |
| 3. Mrs. Nasreen Kasuri | The Beacon House System, Lahore |
| 4. Mr. Salman Burney | CEO, GSK Pakistan |
| 5. Mr. Asaad Ayub | CEO, The Citizens Foundation |
| 6. Mr. Asif Saad | CEO, Lotte Pakistan |
| 7. Mr. Sikandar M. Khan | Chairperson, Millat Tractors and Former Head TEVTA |
| 8. Dr. Sohail Naqvi | Executive Director, Higher Education Commission |
| 9. Dr. Rasul Bakhsh Raisani | Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Balochistan |
| 10. Dr. Muhammad Memon | AKU- IED, Karachi |
| 11. Dr. Mir Afzal Tajik | Head, Outreach, AKU-IED, Karachi (Rapporteur) |

Mrs. Naheed Durrani, Secretary, Department of Education and Literacy, Government of Sindh participated in some dialogues at the invitation of the Panel.

The Chair and Co-Chair are grateful to members of this panel for their valuable contributions to these deliberations.

Terms of Reference (ToRs)

The Terms of Reference of the Education Panel were as follows:

1. The panel will address all aspects of the formal education continuum, from pre-primary to higher education, including vocational education.
2. It will identify issues it believes are constraining the quality of education with respect to its relevance to the social and economic growth of Pakistan as well as the development of its citizens.
3. The panel will spend maximum time looking into the future and formulate policy options rather than 'looking at the rear view mirror', at the weakness of the past decades.
4. The panel will make practical policy recommendations on what government, civil society and business might do, including through partnerships among them, to address the above issues, leading to the formulation of an education policy that will prepare Pakistanis for the 21st Century.
5. In making its recommendations, the panel will be guided by the outcome of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, whereby, school education is a provincial subject whereas the status of higher education is under review at this time.

Deliberation Process

The panel members were engaged in an intensive and rigorous process of deliberations and discussions on educational issues through a series of videoconferences, face-to-face meetings, development and review of concept papers, exchange of views and ideas via email and telephone, and presentations. While deliberating on key strategic issues members were guided by the following considerations:

- The 18th Amendment to the Constitution rightly addresses the importance of devolution for future development of Pakistan. For devolution to succeed, it is necessary at least for education and health, to ensure that key elements of quality and purpose are not jeopardized. It is critical therefore that bulwarks are put in place at the outset for a smooth and effective transition of responsibilities from the federation to the provinces. It is also important to consider that:
 - No economic development will occur without continued attention to improving the quality and access to education.
 - Education is the key to developing a knowledge based society.
 - Impact of any changes and reforms in the education policy takes a generation to show outcomes.
 - Although educating its citizens is the responsibility of the State, it alone cannot provide quality education; hence, it should facilitate the private sector's efforts in this field.

Key Issues and Recommendations

The list of issues affecting access to and quality of education in the country is never ending. At the same time however, unlike many other national reforms, it is the experience from around the world that educational reforms are much more complicated and difficult to implement because of a variety of reasons including the large number of stakeholders involved and their competing priorities and values. Besides, the education sector is one of the largest if not the largest national employer. The situation in Pakistan is further complicated by the fact that there exist at least three different education systems in Pakistan (national curriculum and examinations, Madrassa education and overseas systems such as 'O' and 'A' levels and others); educational priorities and policies have been changing with every change in government; and historically education has received very low priority in terms of funding and human resources.

The Education Panel's deliberations resulted in a long list of over two dozen recommendations in critical areas in education. Considering prevailing political conditions, resource constraints and competing priorities, there was agreement however that it was not practical to expect government to address all of these at this time. Therefore following further reflection, the Panel prioritized *eight strategic areas* for further consideration by the Pakistan Economic Forum on April 1, 2011 at LUMS, Lahore. Consequently, there was consensus that access and quality of education can both be improved by adopting the following recommendations:

Importance of Political Will and Strong Visionary Governance

One of the main reasons for the pathetic situation of education in Pakistan is the lack of commitment and political will required to transform the education system of Pakistan. This has been a weakness of successive governments since independence. These include attention to curriculum, teacher education, physical facilities and school administration. The percentage of GDP Pakistan spends on education (2% in 2009-2010) is far less than that of other developing countries such as Bangladesh (3%), Iran (5.2%), Malaysia (4.7%), Maldives (8.3%) and India (4%). The percentage of GDP allocated to public schools is 1.5% which is less than the annual combined subsidies given to loss making state operated organizations including PIA, Pakistan Steel, and Pepco. Even the 2% of GDP dedicated to education is not prudently used due to poor governance and management. The multi-layered and hierarchical structure of governance and management in public sector education has hugely hindered any progress. Teachers and head teachers are the key implementers of any change and innovation at school level but they have no authority to make any meaningful decisions for their schools. Similarly, parents and community leaders, who are the direct beneficiaries of educational provisions, have no say, nor do they have any active role to play in schools. There is no communication and coordination amongst different levels of hierarchy.

Recommendations: *Success of any education reforms will require a long range vision of Pakistan's human resources and their development. This must translate into a strong political will and sustained support from the entire political leadership of the country. All political parties including government must demonstrate their active support and will for education reforms by:*

- *Increasing the education budget by 0.6% of GDP every year until it reaches 5% of GDP in five years.*
- *Revamping the governance and management practices at all levels including empowerment of district education departments, schools, and head teachers as well as community representatives.*

- *Separation of the education cadre from the Basic Pay Scales.*
- *Details of this revamping can be provided once government accepts this recommendation. Many of these recommendations and their implementation strategies are also available in the report of the National Commission for Government Reforms, 2007.*

Inadequate Access to School Education

Pakistan stands 2nd in the global ranking of out of school children. Out of 70 million school age children only 28 million (40%) attend schools and 42 million (60%) are still out of schools. This means that one of every 10 children out of school around the world is a Pakistani. Around 68% of the 28 million children enrolled in schools attend government schools and 32% of the children go to private schools. The main reasons for the dropping enrolment in schools are poor infrastructure, shortage of qualified and poorly motivated teachers, absence of effective governance and management, and declining quality of education in public sector schools. For example, 85% of the 49,605 government schools in Sindh have less than 5-rooms, and over 10,000 of these schools are shelter-less. Of them, 45% do not have drinking water and toilet facilities while 86% of these schools do not have electricity. Over 30,000 public sector schools in Sindh have either one or two teachers and over 10,000 schools have enrolment as low as 35 students only¹. The situation in rural Sindh and other provinces especially KPK and Balochistan may be worse.

The position at the national level is not dissimilar, where 11% schools lack building facilities, 60% schools lack electricity, 36% schools lack drinking water facilities, 38% lack toilets facilities for students, 39% schools lack boundary walls, and 11% school buildings are declared as dangerous. The rural schools have been badly affected by lack of the above basic facilities².

Recommendations: *According to the Constitution of Pakistan (Article 25—A), “The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law”. However, this does not mean that education should only be provided in State owned facilities; on the other hand, the State should:*

- *Consolidate the public sector schools and improve their standard of education.*
- *Encourage the private sector to provide education to more children.*
- *Private schools (the vast majority of which are not for profit that educate children from middle and low income families) should be incentivised by government on the condition that in return they enrol without fees, a certain percentage of students from poor economic background.*
- *Use information technology to increase access to education.*
- *Both public and private schools in thickly populated areas should run double-shifts to accommodate more students.*

Poor Quality of School Education

The quality of education in public sector schools is declining due to several reasons. Poor infrastructure, absence of well-defined education standards, poor quality of teaching and learning,

¹ Sindh Education Information System (SEMIS) Education Data, Karachi.

² Pakistan Education Statistics 2007-2008. Academy of Educational Planning and Management , MoE, Islamabad.

defective examination system, poorly motivated teachers, weak leadership and management are amongst the key factors impeding the quality of education in government schools. A study conducted on educational achievements reveals that only 35% of school children, aged 6—16, can read a story, while 50% cannot read a sentence. Similarly, less than a third can answer simple comprehension questions after reading a paragraph in Urdu (*Pakistan Education Task Force- March for Education, 2011*).

Another reason for the poor quality education is the absence of accountability at all levels and lack of professional capacity of teachers, head teachers, and education managers. There is no accountability of teachers, nor is there any reward or punishment for them. The absence of checks-and-balance has led the teachers to get away with their lethargic attitudes. Because these teachers are appointed as permanent employees, they pay little heed to their performance. They draw their salaries (higher than those of counterparts in private schools) whether they work hard or not at all. The public sector has been spending substantial amount on continuing professional education of teachers and other staff but this has not made a significant difference at institutional and classroom levels.

As a result of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, the federal ministry of education stands abolished which raises a number of questions. These include who should represent the country at international fora on Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on school education, responding to Parliament's queries on education, briefing on education to international donors, high-powered delegations, and others, follow up of education policy and plan, and coordination of curriculum and other strategic matters of education.

Recommendations: *After the implementation of the 18th Amendment, school education is a provincial subject and all should now work towards making this a success. However, there is a serious risk of affecting quality and purpose of education unless some effective and efficient mechanism for coordination and quality assurance is put in place jointly by the federation and the provinces to ensure a smooth transition for at least five years. Such a coordinating body for school education should:*

- *Develop education standards, policy and planning, and quality assurance.*
- *Work with the provincial governments in developing core national curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the country.*
- *Coordinate with the provincial governments on effective implementation of national curriculum, follow up of education policy and plan, monitoring of EFA and MDGs and offer support for creating effective coordination among provinces on strategic education matters. The Education Policy of 2009 which was supported by all provinces offers a good basis for such collaboration.*
- *Support in the preparation of syllabi and textbooks by the provinces.*
- *New teachers should be recruited on contract basis and the extension of their contract must be linked to their performance.*
- *Revamp pre-service/in-service/continuing professional education programmes for teachers, head teachers, and education managers to enhance their professional skills, competences, knowledge and attitude for improving student learning outcomes.*
- *Empower school heads to improve performance of schools.*

Sustainability of Higher Education Reform

Since the introduction of far reaching reforms in higher education in 2002, including the creation of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), there has been significant improvement in the quality of tertiary education in Pakistan and equitable access to it. This has resulted from empowerment of universities, support for research through introduction of a host of different programs including the Pakistan Education and Research Network and the Digital Library Program, provision of scholarships, improvement in governance and management of institutions as well as increased funding for development of faculty and other human resources, physical facilities and research. Careful regulation of quality and accreditation at all levels through programs such as standardization of bachelor, master and PhD level degree programs as per international norms has played a critical role in consolidating this achievement. The process of higher education reform needs careful thought and requires the buy in of multiple stakeholders including faculty, students, parents and of course the relevant governments. Therefore it takes time to put in place and its impact takes even longer to materialize, often as long as a generation. The above referred reforms in higher education which have been in place for less than a decade have yet to show their full impact. A weak examination and assessment system further affects the quality of their graduates enrolled through colleges or privately. Consequently, even with the current level of investment and impressive progress in many areas, some public sector universities still suffer from stagnation and inertia due to poor governance and management, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified staff, and absence of dynamic leadership.

Knowledge creation through research and innovation is a fundamental role of universities. The higher education sector forms the backbone of a knowledge economy and for Pakistan to truly benefit from its young population it is crucial that it invests substantially in this sector. While there has been an impressive eight fold increase in international research publications and there is now a concerted program for converting this innovation into patents, the contribution of most Pakistani universities to knowledge generation through research, publication and scholarly work is not yet at a level comparable to regional peer institutions. Enhanced focus is required on the research and innovation role of universities and their linkage to the local economy.

Under these circumstances, recent moves following the 18th Amendment, to drastically contract the remit of the HEC has raised justified concern that even these hard earned gains will be jeopardized and quality will deteriorate further, especially in new public and private institutions.

It is noteworthy that despite sizeable funding increases for higher education, Pakistan invests less than 0.30% of its GDP in this critical sector, which is far lower than most developing countries in the region (India 1.03%, Iran 1.1%, and Malaysia 1.2%). It is therefore essential that such support be continued and enhanced through contributions both from the federation and the provinces if recent gains are to be consolidated and advanced. While there is sympathy for the financial constraints of the country, it is interesting that around 35,000 Pakistani students are studying abroad due to lack of access to good quality higher education institutions at home. Assuming each of them on an average spends around \$15,000 per annum, this represents a drain of around \$500 million annually –an amount similar to the current funding allocation for all higher education in the public sector. Pakistan not only loses this huge amount of foreign exchange but also loses its intellectual capital in the form of brain-drain as most of the highly talented students who go abroad for studies never come back. The Panel recommends that the quality and capacity of public sector universities must be improved further with continued government funding and careful oversight.

Recommendations: *Considering the foremost importance of higher education for the future development of the country and building upon the encouraging initiatives taken by HEC, it is recommended that:*

- *To reap the full benefit of investments already made, the HEC must be allowed to continue in its current form, at least for a period of five years to enable it to:*
 - *Further develop and strengthen educational standards*
 - *Promote and fund research, publication and scholarly work*
 - *Ensure accreditation and quality assurance*
 - *Provide International interface*
- *The role of HEC regional centers in the Provinces must be enhanced to allow for higher level and greater consultation with Provinces in all areas of higher education.*
- *The quality of public sector universities must be improved further through collective oversight of the performance of tertiary education both by the federal and provincial governments*
- *HEC should work towards improved governance mechanisms, respecting the autonomy of universities while also ensuring greater accountability to the stakeholders.*
- *The provincial government should provide financial support for key elements of higher education especially research to supplement federal funding.*

Incentives for Public-Private Partnership in Education

Private sector education institutions provide access to around 28% of children at affordable cost and supplement government's efforts in this constitutional responsibility. Policy makers often overlook that only a small fraction of these private schools cater to the economic elite while an overwhelming number serve children from the middle and low economic segments of society. They operate in local *mohalas and galis* and are founded and administered by the local communities. Sadly, despite their noteworthy contributions, all private schools suffer from lack of recognition and incentives by government. There is a traditional disempowering environment and little or no political support for them to expand capacity and further improve the quality of their offerings. Nevertheless the private sector has made a break-through in education by providing a better quality of education to a significant number of children in Pakistan; and at a lower transactional cost than the public sector. It is doubtful that while government is engaged in a major devolution in this field, it will be able to substantially increase the capacity and quality of its schools at the same time.

Recommendations: *Government should create an enabling environment for public–private partnership by recognizing the private sector's role in education and providing incentives to encourage and facilitate the private sector in taking new initiatives. The government should assist the private sector by providing:*

- *Loan and grant funding through appropriate mechanisms that would enable not for profit private schools and educational institutions to expand their capacity and thereby complement government's efforts to create greater access to education.*
- *"Education Vouchers" to high achieving but un-affording students. These vouchers can only be redeemed at schools that qualify under pre-set standards of performance. The Punjab Education Foundation has successfully operated this scheme with impressive outcomes. The value of these vouchers should reflect the cost of providing an acceptable level of education such as not for profit schools operated by The Citizens' Foundation.*
- *Private sector schools of high credibility should enrol at least 10% of talented students from poor economic background. Schools admitting students with "Education Vouchers" should be*

obliged to enroll a higher percentage of poor but meritorious students in return for this support.

Examination and Textbook Boards

Because parents and school administrations most often judge their performance by the outcome of examination results, teachers around the world teach to pass the examination rather than to the curriculum. Consequently, the saying goes that, "it is the examination tail that wags the education dog". In Pakistan, the main reason for the deteriorating quality of education in public sector schools is the poor practice of examinations conducted by the public sector Examination Boards. The examination system deployed by almost all these Boards encourages rote learning by students. As a result, both students and teachers use various means, often un-fair, to pass the examinations. At the same time, the Examination Boards are largely driven by financial considerations and operate with very little oversight and accountability either to their provinces or the federation. No education reform will succeed unless the public sector Examination Boards are transformed in line with modern practices and international standards of examination and assessment that largely test critical thinking and ability to apply knowledge.

Text Book Boards were established by each province to oversee the quality of text books. Instead, they have tended to write or commission books themselves and have them printed under their patronage and control. Almost in all cases, these Boards prescribe only the one book they sponsor and thereby earn significant sums of money from this monopoly. Text Book Boards seldom invite tenders from private sector publishers whose books are available at competitive rates.

Recommendations: *Public sector Examination Boards need to move away from their dominant culture of testing rote learning and memorization to assessing students' comprehension and their level of analysis and application. Similarly, the Textbook Boards, which are working as publishers and printers of books, need to transform into credible institutions that provide oversight for quality of text books, enabling schools and students to have choices in the books they use for their lessons. Therefore it is recommended that:*

- *The public sector Examination Boards completely revamp their system of examination in line with modern methods of assessment, eventually leading to computerized examination systems to avoid corruption which is now rampant.*
- *Provincial and federal governments must review the system of oversight of these Boards and ensure they strictly follow their mandate.*
- *The private sector should be encouraged to come forward and establish credible Boards to develop examination and testing systems of international standards for which there is increasing demand and market. In doing so, they will follow the national or provincial curriculum as laid down by government.*
- *The Textbook Boards should not act as publishers and printers but as overseers of high quality school books by private publishers.*

Mainstreaming of Madrassa Education

Due to inadequacy of the public education system, an increasing number of children receive Madrassa education which is predominantly Islamic education with an out-dated curriculum, traditional pedagogies, and ineffective examination and assessment practices. The approach largely involves indoctrination and the outcome is devoid of critical thinking and life skills. Most Madrassa curricula have very limited room for secular subjects such as science, mathematics, IT and languages. Therefore, lacking the required technical knowledge and skills, Madrassa graduates are unable to compete in the job market and are unable to contribute to the economic growth of the country. Despite these issues, Madrassas adamantly resist change and innovation which can bring about positive reform in their education system.

Recommendations: *To bring Madrassa education in level with mainstream education, government should take the following steps:*

- *Revamp the Madrassa education curriculum, pedagogies and assessment and examination practices in a way that these promote critical thinking, creativity, and technical skills in students.*
- *Curriculum of Madrassa education should move away from a narrow approach to Islamic education and should encompass a broader framework of religious education which promotes tolerance, respect, and appreciation for diversity and pluralism.*
- *Madrassa education should include a core of secular subjects including science, maths, IT, languages and possibly technical education and vocational training to enable students to compete in the job market and thus contribute to the economic growth of the country. Acceptance of degrees issued by Madrassa must be subject to their compliance with the above requirements.*
- *Some Muslim countries have successfully mainstreamed Madrassa education and the example of Indonesia and some East African countries are worthy of emulation.*

Supply-Driven Technical and Vocational Education

Considering the immense and growing need of Pakistan's economy and huge prospects for overseas employment, there is a major dearth of technical and vocational education institutions. There are only 624 TEVT institutions with 7042 teachers and 105,000 students. The existing institutions are suffering from out-dated curriculum, shortage of qualified teachers, and poor examination and assessment practices. On the other hand there are a disproportionately large number of students enrolled in BBA and MBA programmes in small private institutions running purely on commercial basis and whose quality is often suspect. This exacerbates the gap between the available qualified manpower and the demands of industry, business, agriculture and other technical fields.

Recommendations: *To address the country's growing need for qualified manpower in industry, business, agriculture and other fields of the economy, government must consider paying greater attention to technical education and vocational training by doing the following:*

- *Establish a credible polytechnic institute in each district and a technical training centre in each tehsil.*
- *Revamp the curriculum, pedagogies and assessment practices of the existing TVEIs to link their programmes to industries, businesses, agriculture and other economic sectors.*
- *Encourage and incentivise the private sector to establish new technical and vocational education institutions of international standards such as City and Guilds. Where such institutions are*

established by industrial units and businesses, they should be incorporated as separate legal not for profit registered entities to ensure proper governance and accountability.

- *Funding for these technical and vocational institutions can come from the sponsors' own sources supplemented by a government "Education Voucher" scheme. In addition, listed corporations contributing Workers' Profit Participation Fund and Workers' Welfare Fund should be allowed to spend 50% of these funds to support technical institutions founded by them. Alternatively, their contributions to WPPF and WWF should be reduced by 50%. There fortunately is significant overseas donor assistance available for such training and greater efforts should be made to harness this aid.*