

## WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Education is the key to all the national endeavours for development, progress and economic growth of a country. In spite of the fact that male and female population of a country plays an equal role in the development of the country and Islam provides equal opportunities for the education of men and women, the female education in Pakistan has been grossly neglected.

Keeping in view the fact that female population in Pakistan is about half of the total population and its education has tremendous multiplying potential, the Government of Pakistan have tried to give priority to the education of women in each development plan and education policy. But despite these efforts, the female literacy ratio is 15.2% whereas over all literacy ratio for both the sexes is 26.2% in the age group of 15 years and above. This is further reduced to 6.3% in rural areas for females. According to the census 1981,(1) the literacy rate among women, area-wise and province-wide, in the same age group is projected in the table.

TABLE -I  
SHOWING LITERACY (%) AMONG WOMEN  
AREA-WISE AND PROVINCE-WIDE

Areas	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan
Urban	35.9	35.3	40.4	21.3	17.9
Rural	6.8	8.6	4.7	7.7	2.0

Source: Government of Pakistan, Economic survey 1989-90, Statistical Appendix, p.8.

Most countries in Asia have taken rapid strides in increasing female literacy and are focusing greater attention on women's education. The following table shows that Pakistan female literacy ratio (in the age group of 15 years and above) is almost the lowest among the countries of the region:

**TABLE-II**  
**SHOWING LITERACY RATE OF THE REGION**

Country	Year	Literacy ratio of both sexes	Female Literacy ratio
Bangladesh	1981	29.2	13.2
India	1981	40.8	25.7
Indonesia	1980	56.6	44.6
Malaysia	1980	69.6	59.7
Pakistan	1981	26.6	15.2
Philippines	1980	83.3	82.8
Saudi Arabia	1982	51.1	30.8
Singapore	1980	82.9	74.0
Sri Lanka	1981	86.6	82.0
Thailand	1980	88.0	84.0
Turkey	1984	74.2	62.5

Source: Own calculation based on Unesco Statistical Year Book, 1988, pp.1, 19-21, 21.

### POLICY DECISIONS IN PAKISTAN

Since independence, various educational conferences, committees and Commissions have stressed the need for expanding and focusing greater attention on female education, while identifying the weaknesses of Pakistan's education system.

### THE FIRST EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The first conference on education was held at Karachi in 1947, and passed 24 resolutions for improving women's education.(2) Some of them were:

- i) More education facilities in the form of scholarships, properly equipped boarding houses and conveyances be provided for women students.
- ii) Primary schools could be co-educational or otherwise according to the local needs.
- iii) 50% of the amount allocated for adult education be spent on adult literacy centres for women.
- iv) Government should grant liberal stipends and scholarships

for girls desiring to take up courses and subjects like nursing, radio engineering, etc, and thereby encourage educational training among women.

v) Establishment of first rate teacher training institutes for women for training in nursery and primary classes.

vi) Encourage vocational training among women.

vii) Include women experts on syllabus committees.

### THE COMMISSION ON NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Commission on National Education in 1959, stressed that the foundation of education for women should be firmly consolidated and the facilities for female education be in every respect equal to those available for boys. It also recommended that curriculum for class VI-VIII, apart from common subjects, should include special subjects for girls, such as elementary homecraft, needlework, tailoring, weaving, cookery, home and child care. From class VIII onwards they were to be guided either into secondary schools or vocational schools, which were to provide training for careers. In secondary education, the subjects of typing, stenography, book-keeping, food technology, catering, textile designing and interior decoration should be included. It was further recommended that Departments of Home Economics in Women's Colleges and in Universities be opened. The female teachers, preferably at primary level, were also to be provided. But no targets in quantitative terms were fixed by the Commission.

### THE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The Education Policy 1972-80<sup>(4)</sup> re-affirmed that access to education would be equalised through provision of special facilities for women, the under-privileged groups in all areas and the backward areas in particular.

Keeping in view the importance of the female population, the National Education Policy 1979 announced that high priority would be given to the rapid expansion of female education at all levels of education, particularly at primary level, and solid foundation would be laid to achieve universal education among females by 1992. About 30000 female teachers would be recruited for primary schools during the next five years to achieve that target. Education as subject would be introduced in sufficient number of intermediate

colleges. Furthermore, nearly 5000 Mohallah Schools would be established for imparting literacy and selected home management skills to girls. Enrollment of girls at the secondary stage would be increased from 400000 at present to 650000. For female teachers, 6000 residences, mostly in the rural areas, would be constructed. For higher education of the female, the scope of post-graduate courses, including home economics, would be expanded. To begin with, post-graduate classes would be started in selected Women's Colleges. The University Grants Commission would set up a Committee to undertake a detailed study of alternative approaches to the establishment of Women's University. To begin with, two women's universities, one at Lahore and the other at Karachi, would be established. Liberal scholarships and loans would be provided exclusively for the female at all levels of education. Major stress would be laid on the improvement of facilities for the teaching of science and introduction of economics subjects. The seats in women's hostels would be increased. The science laboratories would be strengthened and books would be provided in adequate numbers to the libraries.

#### SEVENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

The provision of facilities for female education in seventh five year plan was made in view of the fact that Government wanted to increase literacy rate among women in Pakistan. Proposed facilities were:

- A Primary School will be established for every settlement of 500 persons or more for children (boys and girls).
- Part time employment for girls Primary School teachers on a contract basis will be allowed and their salaries indexed to the number of daily hours contracted.
- The maximum age limit for recruitment will be abolished for local teachers.
- In due course all Primary Schools will have only female teachers.
- A large number of Primary and Middle Schools for girls will be upgraded.
- At least one Model or Comprehensive School for girls in each district will be opened.

#### PRACTICAL SCENARIO IN PAKISTAN

Since independence though the number of female institutions, enrollment and the female teachers have progressively increased at all levels, yet tables V, VI and VII (Annexure) showing the actual increase of female institutions, enrollment and teachers reveal a glaring sex disparity. About one-third of existing educational institutions from Primary to College education are of females. Roughly one-third of the total enrollment is of females at School and College levels, one-seventh at Secondary Vocational institutions and Universities, and one-fourth at professional Colleges. As far as teachers are concerned, one-third of total teaching staff is females at school level, one-fifth in secondary vocational institutions, two-fifth at college level, one-fourth at professional colleges, and one-seventh at university level. Since the implementation of Education Policy 1979, the annual increase rate in institutions, enrollment and teachers of 1979-80 over 1987-88 is given in table below:-

TABLE - III  
SHOWING ANNUAL INCREASE RATE FROM 1979-80 TO 1987-88

Area	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	Ses: Schools	Sec.V. Irist:	Colleges	Pvt. Colleges	University
Institution							
Total	4.96	2.91	4.49	3.97	3.83	0.25	4.90
Female	3.99	4.84	5.79	2.92	5.20	0.00	-
Enrollment							
Total	4.97	5.26	0.67	7.62	6.70	0.84	4.10
Female	5.39	6.57	5.58	5.81	7.10	3.88	7.01
Teachers							
Total	4.09	1.82	4.07	6.11	12.57	1.68	3.24
Female	3.01	2.10	4.27	3.19	18.81	7.62	9.05

(Own calculation, based on Economic Survey 1988-89, Govt. of Pakistan (6), p.193)

Though the increase in female institutions, enrollment and teachers is very progressive, the male and female gap has remained unbridged so far. One important reason is drop out. Only 34% girls of the school going age enrol in class I, while the drop out rate during the primary cycle exceeds 60%. The

situation at the middle and secondary levels is even worse, where 13.5% girls of the relevant age group attend schools.

The female participation rate is quite low, as compared to other countries of the region.

TABLE - IV  
SHOWING GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIO FOR  
1ST, 2ND AND 3RD LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Country	Year	1st level		2nd level		3rd level	
Bangladesh	1987	59	49	18	11	-	-
China	1986	129	120	42	35	1.7	1.1
India	1984	92	76	35	24	-	-
Iran	1986	117	107	47	38	5.1	2.9
Japan	1986	102	102	96	97	28.8	21.2
Korea Rep.	1987	94	94	95	92	23.9	20.9
Malaysia	1987	101	101	59	59	-	-
Pakistan	1986	44	32	18	10	5.1	3.1
Saudi Arabia	1986	71	65	44	35	13.4	11.4
Sri Lanka	1986	103	102	66	70	3.9	3.1
Turkey	1986	117	113	44	33	10.2	7.0

Source: - Unesco Statistical Year Book 1988, (7) p.3.44 - 3.55.

The table shows that the gross enrolment of females in Pakistan in 1st and 2nd levels of education is the lowest than other countries of our region. Due to low enrollment and a heavy drop out at primary level, the financial, as well as human resources, are being wasted. The early marriage system, illiteracy among the parents, negative attitude of teachers, poverty, lack of research and planning, inadequately trained and poorly paid teachers are the major factors contributing to the slow rate of growth in enrollment and the high drop-out. This continues to pose a serious problem.

The teachers play a key role in the process of education, but unfortunately they are not performing their duties effectively due to lack of facilities such as housing and transport etc. Lack of accommodation for female teachers in rural areas poses a more acute problem. The house rent allowance is not admissible to rural teachers which results in frustration and absenteeism among those serving in rural areas. The salary structure of whole education system needs revision.

The female education at secondary and post-secondary levels also needs reorientation. It should be given a technical treatment with comparatively wider range of subjects to be introduced visualising the employment opportunities in future.

The society at large can only reap fruits of its efforts to the extent it has invested in the education of its females. This neglect is contrary to the injunctions of Islam which makes it obligatory for each man and woman to seek knowledge. A state created in the name of Islam can not remain oblivious to its duties towards the education of females.

### SUGGESTIONS

In order to take into cognizance the neglect that female education has suffered in the past, a modified/revised education policy, specifically aimed at the expansion and improvement of female education, with greater focus on rural areas, should be formulated. Some suggestions on this subject are given below, which can be considered while finalizing the new policy by the government:

1. Separate financial resources be allocated to the female education or at least some reasonable percentage of total educational budget may be provided for female education;
2. More educational institutions for girls should be opened in rural areas;
3. Adult literacy programmes for females be launched on the basis of local geographical, socio-economic and cultural conditions;
4. Parents be motivated to send their daughters to educational institutions, through mass media;
5. Female educational institutions be strengthened by providing financial assistance from Zakat collection.
6. Local bodies, communities and individuals may be encouraged to set up female schools, particularly in rural areas. They should also share the responsibilities of maintenance of other facilities of school education;
7. Curricula at all levels of education should be revised to make it purposeful, suitable for females according to the needs of the society;

8. Suitable supplementary reading material and other audio-visual aids may be developed for making teaching more interesting;
9. To encourage poor girls, particularly in the rural areas, small stipends may be provided in elementary classes;
10. The existing Mohallah Schools be strengthened and new ones may be opened;
11. Higher salaries and allowances be provided to the teachers. A special allowance may be provided in rural areas to female teachers to attract them for teaching at primary level;
12. House rent may be given to all teachers whether they are working in urban or rural areas;
13. Residential accommodation for female teachers be built in rural areas, otherwise transport facilities be provided them from their residences to place of duties;
14. The subject of education may be introduced in all female higher secondary schools/colleges;
15. In each female primary school, particularly in rural areas, two teachers be appointed;
16. An effective evaluation system may be devised to measure the achievement level of female students, as well as administrators;
17. Well established female primary schools in rural areas be upgraded to middle schools;
18. At the secondary and higher levels, new subjects, such as homecraft, tailoring, weaving, cookery, childcare, computer training, book-keeping, textile designing, interior decoration etc. be introduced;
19. Micro computers may be provided in well established female secondary schools and colleges;
20. A system of competitions among different schools in curricular and extra-curricular activities be evolved;
21. Female teachers should be posted at their home towns/villages or nearest schools;
22. Playing fields/material should be provided in each female school/institution;
23. Guidance and counselling centres at female secondary and post-secondary levels be established;

24. Parent-teacher committees/councils may be established at all levels of education;

25. Educational facilities be provided to female students through distance education in the country;

26. Allama Iqbal Open University courses for teachers training be expanded throughout the country particularly in rural and remote areas;

27. As announced by the Punjab Government for establishing a Women University, other Provinces should also take initiatives for Women Universities;

28. Common school system within 10-15 kilometers radius be evolved by providing common transport facilities to students and teachers in that locality.

If these suggestions are carried out a lot of the proliferation of the female education in Pakistan can be expected to be accomplished as was hypothesized in the various education policies, plans and commissions. This is what the day demands today.

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