

PRIVATE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN KARACHI – CONFLICT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Sound education policy is a promising feature of economic and social development of the society. A learner can improve his present social status and however, this literate and skilled population can bring more prosperity and strength to the country. Early school education is an important aspect to look upon by the government. The curriculum and methodology of teaching particularly in schools should be of more priority as it creates foundation of a person's life. Recently with the introduction of 18th amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, provision of primary education comes under the direct responsibility of government. The main objective of the study is to analyze the state of primary and secondary education with reference to the Public and Private schools in Karachi district. This study reviews the policy and rules designed by the Government of Sindh for the working of private school management under article 25A followed by some suggestions to bring harmony between Sindh government and private school management over recent fee hike issue.

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Introduction

After a century of struggle for independence from British rule, Pakistan achieved independence on 14th August 1947. Right after independence, the founder of nation and first Governor General Quaid -e - Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah emphasized on the importance of education for this newly established country. He realized that his people were deliberately deprived of quality education during the British rule. Realizing this fact he once stated in his speech at the fourth session of the Gujrat Educational Conference held on 14th January 1945 that: “*education is matter of life and death to our nation. The world is moving so fast so that if we do not educate ourselves we will not be only left behind but also will be no more*”(My Notes Library) Following his vision a first *Pakistan Educational Conference* was held in Karachi, on 27th November 1947 which resolved that the nation needs to educate itself scientifically and technically. Moreover, education should not only emphasize on the knowledge but it should promote the holistic learning for the future generation; a generation which will have high level of self-esteem, readiness to serve the nation selflessly, and prompt towards the realization of its responsibilities.

One should make it clear that there is a difference between being an educated and literate. The simple definition of *Literacy* as per 1988 census of Pakistan is “*The ability of a person who can read or write in any language*”. The criteria are not about the level of education one has to fulfill to be recognized as a literate person. With this minimum requirement of literacy in Pakistan we have been able to achieve 49.9% literate population and because of this low level of literacy ratio Pakistan attains 136th position in World Human Development report (Afath, 2013).

In order to bring drastic change in economic and social condition and to raise the standard of Human Development Index of Pakistan huge investment is required in the field of education. In this regard government as well as private sector has to realize their functional roles. Law making bodies should formulate feasible policies to widen the role of private sector whereas private educational institutes

must contribute to share the responsibility with government. They should propose the educational facility to meet the requirement of the community.

Education is one of the basic human rights which not only benefit the individual but ultimately whole community would progress. Considering this basic human right, recently the Government of Pakistan introduced an amendment (*18th amendment*) in the Constitution of Pakistan. Article 25-A states that;

“It’s a prime responsibility of the state to provide free education to all children aging between 5 to 16 years” (New Education Policy of Pakistan-2015).

If the Government of Pakistan ensures the provision of quality education under this Article this will guarantee progress, peace and stability to the country.

Pakistan Educational System

The educational setup in Pakistan has not grown in a substantial way. Bureaucratic redtivism & corruption, feudal system, urban-rural division, subconscious division of social classes and recurring political instability in the country affects the educational developmental projects. In addition to that the minimal role of civil society and lack of interest by governments are also among the factors which had negative effects on the educational growth of the country. Currently Pakistan educational system is divided into 6 major levels. Our study will focus only primary to secondary level schools specifically in the district of Karachi under Government of Sindh.

1. *Pre- Primary Level* for early childhood education between 3 to 4 years
2. *Primary Level* starts from class 1 to 5
3. *Middle Level* from class 6 to 8
4. *Secondary Level* from class 9 to 10 class leading to Secondary School Certificate
5. *Higher Secondary School Level* or elementary level starts from grade 11th and 12th leading to Higher Secondary Certificate
6. University programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Ironically, the quality of education at primary and secondary level has always been neglected and compromised in different regimes. On the other hand

governments showed considerable interest in upgrading the higher educational institutes because of lucrative international grants. However, Government of Pakistan needs to realize that a well-built foundation is required as a promising feature for improving higher education standard. This elementary level of education is actually very important which induces the basics of literacy and numeracy to the learners. The initial basic concepts taught in this stage will reflect throughout the professional career of a person. Moreover, the overall environment including; teaching techniques, sports facilities, course content, library, co-curricular activities, skill development workshops and seminars cumulatively plays an important role in capacity building of a child.

Like many developing countries Pakistan has three different setups of schools i.e; public schools, private schools and charitable schools. Financial assistance and curriculum development in the name of *National Educational Policy* (NEP) is the domain of Federal Government. However, Provincial Government is responsible for administrative supervision of public schools within its jurisdiction and formulates educational policies under the guideline of *NEP*. Like many developing countries Pakistan has three different setups of schools i.e; public schools, private schools and charitable schools. Provincial Government is authorized for designing the policy framework for private schools. Each Provincial Government of Pakistan has regulatory bodies to guard and manage the operational setup of private schools.

Public/Private School Management in the Province of Sindh

The state owned schools in Pakistan has been continuously deteriorating. Most of public schools in Sindh possess an ideal premise but lack of proper infrastructure and basic facilities listed them on undesirable choice for parents. Lack of furniture, absence of labs, non-availability of quality of books in libraries, lack of play grounds and in some areas lack of security has contributed in the least willingness of parents to send their children to public schools. Beside the lack of infrastructure, most of public schools have failed to provide quality education to their students. Orthodox techniques of teaching and outdated curriculum further worsen the situation. Mostly teachers are not well trained to teach. They don't have an adequate knowledge to use the latest teaching techniques. Moreover, public schools use *Urdu* as a medium of teaching which makes these students less competent for higher level learning. Syllabus is also out dated, books are not

available on time and students are taught to learn their syllabus without having in-depth knowledge of the subject. Public schools also lack the supervision by district educational office. All these factors make public schools least desirable among the masses.

Under this condition, like other developing countries, Pakistan has a parallel educational setup, operate by private companies/individuals. Private schools are those enterprises whose financial arrangements and administrative functions are performed by individuals, private or charitable organizations. As most of the public schools have failed to provide quality of education, therefore preference is giving to these private schools but these private schools are dependent on the finances provided by the students in terms of *fee*. Mostly parents faced major issue in sending their children to these private schools because of their weak financial status. They are unable to afford the fees demanded by these private schools. A survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan in 2009 shows that 49% of Pakistanis afford to send their children to private schools while the rest of 51% are still going to public schools as their fee structure is more affordable for the parents

In Pakistan, private school management works as business enterprises. Their categorization is based on fee structure, infra-structure and general social status of the locality where the school is functioning i.e; lower, middle and elite class schools.

Changing role of Government of Sindh

Sindh is the second largest province of Pakistan in terms of population and economic growth. It is divided into 23 administrative districts. The educational setup has improved in previous years, but the time has come where lip services is not sufficient to meet the future educational needs of the province. According to The Express Tribune, 2015, Pakistan Bureau of Statistic depicted educated population in Sindh is as follows:

- Below primary level: 15.56%
- Primary level: 27.13%
- Middle and Matric level: 19.2% and 17.84 respectively

However, the statistics of Punjab shows;

- Below primary level: 19.16%
- Primary level: 31.73%
- Middle and Matric level: 21.81% and 16.78% respectively.

(Source: www.pakistaninformation.com/sindh/district).

Taking the advantage of 18th amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan and following the guide line provided by NEP, the Government of Sindh has designed a strategic plan, namely “*SINDH EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN (SESP) 2014-18*”. This plan proposed reforms in the educational policy for next 5 years (2014-2018). The highlighted features of SESP are:

- Provision of free education to all children (5-16 years) in Sindh
- Priority will be given to the Early Childhood Education (preprimary class)
- Provision of Quality Education in the province- improved curriculum and learning outcomes of students by improved teaching methods and training the teaching staff
- Strengthening the governance and supervision of the resources
- Improved adult literacy rate
- Improved working relationship between Public private sectors.

(Source: *Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-18*)

Moreover, the *Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill* has been passed by Provincial Assembly on 13th February, 2013. This Bill has some interesting guidelines for private schools operating in the province of Sindh in chapter IV of Bill i.e. *RESPONSIBILITY OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION*.

Some key rules of the bills are;

- Private schools have to offer 10% admission of their total strength to the less privileged children, no discrimination other than merit should be considered.
- The facilities school promised to provide at the time of admission cannot be drawn afterwards.
- Age of child should be determined by birth certificate.
- Private school need to be registered with the government. Moreover, each branch has to be registered separately.

- Annual audit reports should be submitted to Registering Authority.
- Admission fee should charge once at the time of admission only. tuition fee must not charge for more than three months at once
- Fee increment is not allowed in the mid of the academic year, it has to remain constant as proposed at the beginning of the academic session.
- The fee may be increased up to five percent only of last fees schedule subject to proper justification and approval of the Registration Authority.
- Minimum salary and allowances of a full time teacher with twelve months of continuous service shall not be less than four times the monthly fee of the single student the highest class charged by the institution, if it's not a charitable institute.
- No school shall be allowed to function unless it meet all the norms and standard prescribed by government
- Every school must have a school management committee comprising of equal presentation of government, teachers and parents, its prime responsibility of the committee to keep a check on the functioning of the schools, whether it's in compliance with the governmental rules.
- Teacher should be competent for his job, must be punctual, nurture knowledge among the students and must have a child friendly personality.
- Certificated should be granted to the student according to his academic achievements
- Government has given a protection to a child under the child's right to education
- Government has reserved the right to invigilate the school, to check if the school is working within the limits of these laws

(Source: Provincial Assembly of Sindh Notification Karachi, The 11th March, 2013. The Sindh Right of Children to Free and Complusory Education Act, 2013 Sindh Act No.Xiv of 2013).

(Sindh Private Educational Institutions Regulation & Control Rules, 2005).

It is aimed that level of education in the province can be improved with the help of public private partnership. SESP report revealed that the quality of private schools is comparatively better but still they occupy less share than public schools in the province. It is the responsibility of Government of Sindh to empower regulatory body and implement amended laws for eliminating social disparity and ensure equality in the provision of education.

Karachi District – Conflict Analysis!

Karachi is one of the biggest cities of Pakistan with diversified and complex features. Statistics according to District-education-profile-Karachi-city-2012 shows that 43% public schools in Karachi don't have clean drinking water, 29% don't have lavatory facilities, 30% public schools in Karachi are without electricity and 10% are not secured by a boundary wall. Moreover, total numbers of primary, secondary and high level boys' public schools registered 1058 with 123,221 enrolments. On the other hand there are total 884 girls public schools for primary, secondary and high level schools where 201,925 enrolled. However, the total number of private primary schools functional in Karachi for girls and boys are 1,419. However, 1,136 secondary level and 1,263 high level private schools for boys and girls are operating in the district of Karachi (Private Educational Institutions in Pakistan by District - MARCH, 2000, report published by Pakistan Bureau of Statistic)

Recently the district of Karachi witnessed disagreement in terms of exorbitant fee hikes. The confronting parties included; some elite private schools, government and parents. Private schools showed their reservations about the new amendments in the law. They claimed that the public educational system of the country has almost destroyed by unjustified policy adoptions and this seems a similar case with private institutions as well. Private schools are sharing the burden of government by providing education to large number of people, both in rural urban regions, while according to Article 25A it is the government's responsibility to provide free education to all. Government itself has failed to fulfill its commitment and now it's making it difficult for private organizations to play their part in the spread of education by imposing unrealistic rules and regulation over them. Private institutes claim that private education is expensive throughout the

world like Harvard, Princeton, Oxford and Cambridge along with some Pakistani institutes like, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) are the most expensive institute. There are some governments who provide funding to private schools to bear their expenses without putting extra burden on the students; an example is Australia where the government provides assistance to private sector.

Private School Association of Pakistan (PSAP) propagated through all leading newspaper regarding their role in providing education throughout Pakistan. In this advertisement PSAP claims that private school are providing quality education to the children, almost 40% of children in the country are enrolled in private schools (Untold story of private schools published in Daily Dawn, The Tribune), and nearly 59% boys and 41% girls in Karachi are studying in private school (Taha Anis Education Analysis Published: July 29, 2014, The Express Tribune). Moreover, PSAP claims that are helping the government of Pakistan in fulfilling their moral and constitutional responsibility. They also claimed that they have a right to raised monthly fee as they are imparting quality education among their students. It is an only private school that enhances opportunities for admission into leading national and international universities for their students which will open up lucrative job opportunities for young, lower middle class and middle class Pakistanis. Moreover, about 173,110 private schools in Pakistan are collectively the largest employers of professional women in private sector of Pakistan. Approximately 20 lac teachers and technical staff employed by these schools. In short, all private schools are fully aware of their social responsibility and have contributed generously during times of national crises. It helps in creating progressive and internationally skilled youth who are playing their part in the development of a modern Pakistan.

Private schools have expressed their grievances after the recent episode of confrontation between government, parents and the institutes. Some of their points I will discuss here are very much valid and government as well as parents need to understand and accept the validity, so that these schools can continue to provide quality education to our coming generations. This is also important as the condition and working of public schools is declining with every passing year. Some of the valid points given by private school representatives are as following:

- Private schools has to increase fees every year as the child progress to next grade to meet and maintain the quality of facilities needed, as the cost of such facilities are proportionally increasing every year.
- Electricity bills across Pakistan are ever increasing. Private schools are not an exception to this either. In addition, many private schools operate generators for backup power. Maintaining generators is prohibitively expensive.
- After December 2014, private schools have exponentially increased their expenditure on the provision of security which is the fundamental responsibility of the state.
- Over the past 3 years, on average, computer equipment has increased by 15% per annum, laboratory equipment by 14% per annum, school furniture and fixtures by 18.20% per annum, vehicles by 12%, etc., with an additional 16% GST!
- Private schools are treated as fully commercial entities by the government, and pay 33% income tax, 16.17% GST, 3% Super Tax, 6% EOBI, 6% Social Security, heavy Property commercialization fees, commercial property taxes, and a host of other taxes and levies.
- With 0 to 5% increase in fees private schools will not be able to spend on the development training of their staff, almost 40 lacs children of the private schools teachers are educating in these schools with substantial fee or no fee charged from them, with 5% increment per year private schools will not be in a position to continue this concession.

Conflict Resolution

The role of private schools in disseminating education is quite evident. The gap of public sector in establishing the strong academic opportunities for our youth is significantly filled by private sector at all levels. Parents have started this feeling that schools nowadays pressurizing students to strengthen their businesses. Although they are private entities which basically work for businesses but they also realize their social responsibilities. These private schools being the service provider to the future of our country perform their role very diligently.

It is suggested that these private schools should devise some mechanism to give relieve to those merit based who unable to meet their financial requirements. It will help to break the vicious circle of poverty and eventually we can achieve progress, peace and stability in long run. It is also supported by law that private school should give 10% admission to less privileged children who meet the merit criteria of the school. Moreover, private schools should arrange scholarships for these eligible students.

In order to avoid potential conflict government should work to raise the standard of public schools as their Constitutional responsibility. They should take all stake holders on board specially the representatives of private schools before formulating policies and ensure that the private schools should work within rules & regulations designed for them. Private schools management should not allow putting any psychological, social or financial pressure on the children or on their parents. It is the responsibility of government to have proper accountability on this with the help of annual audit reports. This will also give guideline to the authorities to consider financial aspects before applying new taxes and revising related laws. Moreover, government employees and bureaucrats (of all levels) encouraged to send their children to government schools. This is the most effective way of uplifting government schools. Lastly, leading private schools should be encouraged to enter into public-private partnerships.

Quality circles consisting of parents, teachers and government representatives should be made. These quality circles will help in building a strong communication among different confronting group and resolve potential conflicts. On the contrary, schools without high-quality of students can never achieve good names and vice versa. So government need to understand the genuine demands of private schools; whereas private schools should come forward to give more relieve to the concern parents. Private schools should also ensure that whatever they charge from their students must be justified in response to the facilities and standard they are offering. Government should give them some relief in term of financial assistance and rules and regulations. Parents should also acknowledge the contribution of private schools and should cooperate with the school management as far as they can. All these three parties are dependent on each other and need to accept and respect their genuine needs and demands.

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