

## ANALYZING THE FACTORS FOR LOW QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ISLAMABAD

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### ABSTRACT

*The quality of education in the public schools of Pakistan is very low. The focus of the policymakers has always been on the quantity of education and not the quality. The students studying in public schools cannot think critically. They do not have reasoning skills. Many factors lead to low quality education in these schools. Education is being provided free in public schools but of very low quality. I have analyzed the different elements that lead to low-quality education. The issues faced by the teachers and students in these public schools are also examined in this study. A quality education focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student. It prepares the students for life and not just for testing. A student who gained quality education can imagine things, make judgments and think on his own. The students of the public schools of Islamabad are just good at learning by rote. They cannot think and write on their own. The teachers are teaching by using medieval teaching techniques. The Federal Board of Education remains unable to make policies that ensure quality education in these schools. The system of evaluation followed is obsolete. This study used a qualitative approach to explain the factors responsible for the public schools of Islamabad. The students, who participated in this study, are selected using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The semi-structured interview technique is used for conducting the interviews of the participants. The methodology used for this research includes interviews with 60 participants from two different public schools in Islamabad city. Field notes were also collected during the course of data collection. The data which is collected through the interviews and field notes are used to make themes. In public schools of Islamabad, the major factors behind the low quality of education are huge class sizes, the obsolete pattern of examination, medieval teaching methodologies, ineffective administration, rote learning, lack of concept building, lack of critical thinking, and incompetent teachers.*

**Keywords:** Low-Quality Education, Critical Thinking, Medieval Teaching Techniques, Rote Learning.

### INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that lead to low quality of education. When these factors accumulate within a specific education system, the provision of quality education becomes impossible. They include unsuitable teaching methods, ineffective system of examination, poor learning environment, etc. If the administrators of the schools are quite clueless about these elements, it contributes to the low quality of education. They may not fully aware of the issues faced by the students and the teachers, and sometimes they choose to ignore them despite knowing fully. Poor teaching practices lead to rote learning and decrease the interest of the students in their studies. The quality of education is highly dependent on the quality of teaching staff, curricula, and evaluation system (Education Review, 2016).

In Pakistan, the public education sector has always been neglected in terms of finances and policymaking. There are various factors that cause the low quality of education. This country allocates only 2-2.5% percent of the total budget for the education sector and this percentage has never reached to 3 percent in the seven long decades. There is no trend of sufficient investment in human capital. The teachers are undertrained and dismayed. The students are not motivated enough to study for their good. The role of the household in the academic life of a larger population of students is almost next to

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nothing. Many factors in the public education sector of Pakistan contribute to the low quality of education. The policymakers are unable to solve these issues. The quality of education in private schools is relatively better as compared to public schools. The schools run by the government in the country are producing students with no skills or capabilities. The majority of the population prefers to send their children to public schools just because of ease and affordability (Khan and Mahmood, 1997).

### **Brief Background**

There are many factors that factors lead to low quality of education. When these factors accumulate within a specific education system, the provision of quality education becomes impossible. They include unsuitable teaching methods, ineffective system of examination, poor learning environment, etc. If the administrators of the institutes or schools remain quite clueless about these elements, it contributes to the low quality of education. They may not fully aware of the issues faced by the students and teachers, and sometimes they choose to ignore them despite full knowledge. Poor teaching practices lead to rote learning and diminish the interest of the students in their studies. The quality of education is highly dependent on the quality of teaching staff, curricula, and evaluation systems (Education Review, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

An ideal system of education develops reasoning skills and intellect in the students. Quality education enables people to develop various attributes and skills to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society. In Pakistan, the focus of the policymakers is on quantitative expansion and thus the education system lacks quality.

This research needs to be conducted because the quality of education has always remained a major problem in Pakistan. The factors, which are responsible for the low quality of education in public sector schools, need to be investigated. There are numerous issues faced by the students, teachers, and administration of these schools. The quality of education is not improved in public schools despite efforts that have been made to resolve these issues in the past. In an underdeveloped country like Pakistan, education plays a vital role in nation-building, hence it is important to focus on the quality of education. Well-learned students will perform better in their professional lives which eventually benefits the country.

### **Objectives of Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- To investigate the obstacles in the way of provision of quality education in the public schools of Islamabad.
- To analyze the issues faced by students in public schools.
- To examine the problems faced by the teachers associated with public schools

### **Significance of study**

The findings of this research will explain in depth the elements that are responsible for the low quality of education in the public schools of Islamabad. The quality of education in the public schools of this city is considered relatively better than the rest of the country. Hence this study would rate the highest quality of education provided by the state in qualitative terms. This research would be conducted while spending time in the schools and observing the classes. Hence the readers will have knowledge that is otherwise difficult to gain through the numerical information provided by surveys. The focus of this research is on the data collected by the interviewer to understand the teaching-learning process occurring inside the classrooms.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to (Zafar, 2003) One of the major reasons behind the poor plight of the education sector in Pakistan is the non-availability of adequate funds needed to run a system efficiently. This sector is highly abandoned by the government of Pakistan in terms of fiscal support. The budgetary allocation for this area has never risen to 3 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The process of recruitment of school teachers is influenced by political interference. The local MPAs and other politicians directly or indirectly play a role in the appointment of teachers, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan. After the initiation of their services, these teachers are bounded to act according to the instructions of their appointers. They lack professional liberty and teaching capabilities (Saleem, 2007).

Muhammad (2002) analyzed the significant role of parents in the academic life of their children. In Pakistan, parental participation is insufficient in this regard. The success or failure of the students is entirely dependent on the performance of the teachers and the students themselves. According to Siddiqui (2010), there are several elements of a curriculum but a teacher having a key position can play a vital role in enriching it. Teachers are of chief importance when it comes to uplifting the standard of education. In Pakistan, teachers are not taken on board while designing curricula for public schools.

Farooq (2011) considers textbooks as one of the important sources of gaining knowledge for learners. Contents of textbooks are of crucial importance because they play a vital role in enhancing the knowledge of the students. The quality of education is directly related to what has been taught to the students. Textbooks containing lessons have easier and deeper explanations of the ideas will help them to have a good understanding of the basic concepts.

According to Lave (1988), the writings of, Jean Lave have influenced the idea of sociocultural pedagogy, the learning by the students would be highly efficient if students can be able to relate what they are being taught to their daily lives. The material which students learn in the classrooms should be relatable to circumstances outside the classroom. There is a considerable difference between the population of Japan and Pakistan, but the number of schools in Japan is more than 30 times as compared to the number of schools in Pakistan. There are a total of 35 lac primary schools in Japan. There are 1, 45,829 primary schools out of which 1, 25,829 are public schools. The quality of education in Japan is considered one of the highest in the world. The Japanese score highest positions in numerical and intellect-based international tests, the quality of lessons is mattered and not the quantity. The system of education is unique there. (Malik, 2017).

The higher education system of Pakistan experienced a sharp increase in its funding in the years 2002-2008. This increase has been successful in improving certain parts of the entire system. There is still a lack of improvement in the overall system. If we observe the past of the Muslims of the sub-continent, we come to know Muslims have always remained backward when it comes to education. It is primarily because prejudice is deeply rooted in influential orthodox Muslims against English Language and advanced scientific education. (Hoodbhoy, 1998).

## **METHODOLOGY**

We adopted semi-structured interviews as a research method for this paper. This method requires interactive and communication skills. This method is relevant here because we attempted to analyze here an issue purely on a qualitative basis. Interviews are designed to collect a richer source of information from a small number of people.

### **Research Locale**

The research is conducted in the urban areas of Islamabad. In Islamabad Capital Territory, there is a total of 191 primary schools, 60 middle schools, and 97 high schools according to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-2017. These schools are under the control of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). FDE is a federal department, which works under the Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD). The total number of students enrolled in these 348 schools is 1, 86,526. I have collected data from two schools, which are Islamabad Model College for Girls I-8/4, and Islamabad Model School no 1 G-9/2.

### **Data Collection Unit**

The respondents of a study are those people who are requested to participate in specific research. The respondents of this study are Teachers, Students, Principals, and Scholars. Students: The emphasis of this study is on the problems faced by the students. The students are one of the main actors in the whole system of education of a country. For this research, the students of grades 4 to 10 are interviewed using Convenience and Purposive sampling techniques.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size of this study is **30**. According to Kvale, the size of a sample should be enough to find out what a researcher wants to know for his research (Kvale, 1996). According to the majority of the qualitative researchers, the number of participants has not had a huge impact on the quality of the study. The thing which is quite important in this regard is the element that is considered important to be studied by the participants (Hatch, 1995).

### **Organization of the Paper**

This research paper is aimed at examining the factors that are responsible for the low quality of education in our country. The data collected from the respondents is discussed issue-wise. Students and teachers are the two main entities that are affected by our education system. The issues faced by these students that impact the quality of education are categorized separately.

### **An Analysis of the major themes**

Two major themes are formed to analyze the problems faced by the education sector. First is the issues faced by the teachers associated with public sector education in Islamabad. The issues faced by the teachers include the huge size of the class, low daily wages, lack of funding, and lack of important facilities like multimedia, etc. It is difficult for a teacher to provide individual attention and take questions from a large number of students within a specific time. She has to have a lot of energy to maintain the decorum of class. Another issue faced by the teachers of primary as well as high school is checking notebooks. This is a real burden on a teacher to check the notebooks of 60 or 70 students. These factors irritate the teachers and lessen their focus on teaching. There is a lack of helper teachers who are appointed just for checking notebooks.

The second theme covers the issues faced by students studying in public schools. These issues are the obsolete pattern of examination, medieval teaching methodologies, ineffective administration, rote learning, lack of concept building, lack of critical thinking, and incompetent teacher.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The basic motive behind writing this research paper is to analyze the reasons for the low quality of education in the public sector schools of Islamabad. The experiences of the respondents and their valuable feedback provided deep insight into the research questions raised by this study. The results highlight several factors that are directly and indirectly responsible for the low quality of education in the public schools of Islamabad. There is a huge number of factors that are responsible for the lack of quality education. According to the given data, the following major factors are observed.

### **Lack of facilities**

According to the Principal of the primary school, the public schools remain out of funds all the time. They have little funds for development activities. The teachers themselves fund certain activities like decorating classes, photocopying test papers, etc. There is a huge lack of facilities in these schools with the lack of multimedia at the top of the list. Several teachers made complaints about this deficiency. There are no multimedia facilities for the students of primary as well as high school. I have not seen a single projector in any classroom of both school.

A teacher who teaches Biology told me that she had to use her mobile phone to show the students videos regarding certain microorganisms. The teachers badly need the facility of multimedia in the classrooms

### **Low Daily Wages**

Senior teachers are not energetic enough to perform well hence the daily wagers are there to perform. It shows discrimination towards the junior teachers who work as daily wagers. Both kinds of teachers work in the same school and teach at similar levels but there is a huge difference in their salaries. The senior teachers put more burden of work onto the daily wagers because they cannot say no to the senior teachers because of job insecurity. It implies job insecurity leads to hard work and efficiency.

### **Huge Class Size**

Another major yet unsolvable issue faced by the public education system is the huge size of a class. If improvements are made in all other areas, still they will be of lesser use if the class size is not reduced in the public schools. How can the quality of education be ensured in a school, where more than 70 students studying in a single class? Such examples of criminal negligence lead to low quality of education. The students of primary as well as high schools require individual attention. They are being deprived of this right by the Directorate by not making rigid policies in this regard. In my opinion, the whole focus of the policymakers is on the quantity of education rather than its quality. The huge size of classes confirms this fact. They want more people to get the benefit of getting an education at public schools at the expense of the quality of education at these schools.

### **Lack of Critical Thinking**

In the results section, I have focused the most on the lack of critical thinking because it develops reasoning and analytical skills in students, which is a major determinant of quality education. The

students of public schools are not able to think critically at all. This concept is alien to the students of these schools. Critical thinking is necessary for the cognitive development of students. There is no focus on the cognitive development of the students studying in these schools. It is a fact that the portion of the objective section is increased over time, but it is not about the objective or subjective section. Rather, it is about the nature of questions being asked in these sections. If the answer to the question, of either party, is exactly written in the textbook, then critical thinking is not required to answer such a question. So, the teachers are direct whereas the federal directorate is indirectly responsible for the lack of critical thinking and reasoning skills in the students. The authorities are failed in making policies to ensure the cognitive development of the students. Critical thinking has never been encouraged through making respective policies. This cannot just be a mere act of negligence.

#### **Widespread Prevalence of Rote Learning**

Critical thinking is discouraged by the policymakers and the descriptive pattern of evaluation is proof of it. It is a matter of policy. This is the reason that the students of public schools do not have analytical and reasoning skills. They are just good at describing and explaining things because of the widespread trend of rote learning and memorization. Lack of conceptual understanding as well as the inability to write leads to rote learning by the students. When a student has no concepts, he would memorize them. When a student has knowledge but is unable to produce the knowledge in written form, he would memorize it.

#### **Poor Evaluation System**

The quality of education has much to do with the quality of evaluation. The teachers will teach by the pattern of examination. The pattern of examination for the students studying in public schools leaves no room for critical thinking. The teachers do not bother about critical thinking by the students because it is not endorsed by the pattern of examination. Answering the questions in the exams does not require critical thinking. Instead, it requires memorization and rote learning.

#### **Medieval teaching methodologies**

The medieval teaching methodologies adopted by the teachers in public schools are also responsible for the low quality of education. The teachers teach an entire lesson to the students without having a discussion or session of questioning with them. The teaching-learning process is one-sided in these schools. Teachers are not concerned about the conceptual understanding of the students. Their only motive is to complete the lesson, they decided to teach in a specific period.

#### **Medium of Instruction**

A major difficulty faced by the students is the difference in the medium of instruction and the medium of examination. The students have no grip over writing in a language that is the medium of examination. The importance given to training students in the English language is almost next to nothing. Students in high school are incapable of writing a single grammatically correct sentence in English.

#### **Incompetent Teachers**

A teacher is one of the major actors in the system of education. The competence of the teachers is a determinant of quality education. The teachers teaching in these public schools are neither competent nor well-learned. I can make this claim after analyzing the data: 12 out of 13 teachers, I interviewed, do not read books at all. It indicated the fact that the majority of these teachers are not well-learned, they are just degree holders.

#### **Lack of Conceptual Understanding**

The competence of a teacher can be judged through the extent of the conceptual understanding of his students. Concepts can only be made clear when a teacher answers the questions of the students. In these public schools, there is no trend of questioning by the students. A good teacher encourages as well as provokes the students to ask questions and then answer their questions. Only then the students will be able to learn conceptually. From primary to high school, students complained about a lack of conceptual understanding due to which the majority of the students had to take tuition in the evening. This tuition, on one hand, costs their parents and on the other hand, increases the time duration of study in a day. This mess having a chain effect is created due to the incompetency of the public school teachers. The good quality of education cannot be ensured unless and until the quality of the teaching faculty is improved.

#### **Lack of Creative Activities**

There is an immense lack of practical work, creative activities, class presentations, oral testing, and dramatic and sports activities in these public schools. The students are neither given adequate

opportunities nor are they encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. These things are neither mandatory nor graded here. There is no effort regarding developing creative skills in the students. The class presentations are not mandatory and no teacher takes them. The schools are not provided with sports equipment. There is no trend of oral and open-book testing.

#### **No feedback Mechanism**

Another thing that is mandatory for ensuring the quality of service is feedback. Adequate and formal feedback is not taken from the students. No committees are present for listening to the issues of the students. The class teachers are not concerned much about solving the issues and problems of the students. The idea of respect is vague. The provision of feedback by the students to the vice principals is considered a disrespectful act by the teachers.

#### **Suppression of self-confidence**

The students face various issues in public schools for instance suppression of confidence, personal attacks made by teachers, ridicule, corporal punishment, and psychological pressure. The confidence level of the students is suppressed in these schools due to beating and unnecessary insults. The teachers do judge and personally attack the students of the high school. These things, on one hand, lead to the suppression of confidence and on the other hand, destroys the teacher-student bond. When teachers hold grudges against their students, they can't become role models for their students. There is a huge relationship between the teacher-student bond and the learning of the students. The lack of confidence and element of fear caused by the rude behavior of the teachers discourage the students to ask questions of teachers in the classroom. It is a major reason behind the lack of conceptual understanding by the students. The development of concepts is only possible when the students ask questions. This is not the entire fault of the students. They are the victims of the wrong behavior of the teachers.

#### **Fruitless Teachers Training Programs**

The teacher training programs are incapable of bringing considerable change. It is because they lack consistency and are not mandatory for every teacher in these schools. Secondly, there is no check on the truthful application of the techniques taught by these programs. They are just an activity for the teachers and nothing else. There is an absolute lack of research centers in the schools which are crucial for training the teachers within their schools on regular basis.

#### **Inefficient Administrators**

Another determinant of quality education is the role of the administration of schools in enhancing the quality of education. The administrators of the public schools are not successful in this regard. They are unable to make the teachers deliver their best. They are just holding the position and running the administration of the schools. They do take care of the punctuality of the teachers but what a teacher does in the classroom is not a matter of concern for them. They do not focus on anything related to quality education except the percentage of final results of the students. The principal of the primary school blamed the negligible role of the household for the lower level of understanding of the students. It is difficult to ensure quality education when the Principal of a school is highly clueless about the term "quality education". Understanding the definition, application, and importance of a work is compulsory for doing that piece of work.

#### **Passionless Teachers**

The teachers do not try to capture the interest of the students during the course of teaching. They do not consider it a part of their job. Neither do they bother about concept building, nor do they focus on capturing the interest of the students. A teacher just considers teaching the whole syllabus to the students as her job. Nothing more, nothing less.

### **CONCLUSION**

Education is the most important aspect of human development. The efficiency of labor in a country is highly dependent on the quality of education being provided. In public schools of Islamabad, the students are deprived of quality education. On the hand, the teachers serving in these schools are not well-learned. The administrators do not have any autonomy to run their institutes since they are bound to follow the instructions of the Federal Directorate of Education. The policymakers are clueless about the core issues of the education system. One of the major factors behind the poor education quality is the descriptive pattern of examination that demands the teachers to make their students learn by rote. Two factors i.e. rote learning and the lack of concept building are highly connected to each other. Lack of concept building leads to rote learning. When the students are learning by rote, it indicates the poor

quality of education. It is just like a litmus test. If the policymakers analyze the elements that force a student to learn by rote, they will surely be able to know the factors behind the low quality of education. Any student, who is getting a quality education, would not learn by rote at all. It is because he would not feel the need to do it. A vast majority of the students learn by rote and memorize the lessons in the public schools of Islamabad.

Apart from academic issues like lack of concept building, rote learning, and difference of mediums, the students face a number of non-academic issues too. The students in public schools lag behind in the race of life in their professional lives. It is because they lack social capital. They may achieve good degrees from reputable universities, but they fail to achieve good jobs, especially in the private sector. It is because they are the least confident and have poor English writing and speaking skills.

In the public schools of Islamabad, the teachers do not work hard in terms of concept building, because they have no incentive for doing that. A private school teacher would work hard to ensure job security and promotion. Government school teachers enjoy absolute job security. Their promotions are based on the time scale. It means that a teacher who performs good or bad or even worse will eventually get promoted to a higher grade after a certain length of time. There is no incentive for the teachers working in public schools to work hard and by the new trends of teaching. This cannot just be a mere act of negligence. Critical thinking is discouraged by the policymakers and the descriptive pattern of evaluation is proof of that. This is the reason that the students of public schools do not have analytical and reasoning skills. They are just good at describing and explaining things because of the widespread trend of rote learning and memorization.

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