

## **EDUCATIONAL CRISIS IN PAKISTAN: A CLEAR & PRESENT DANGER!**

*By Hassan Sattar*

With a rather generous criteria that deems an individual literate, at 55%, Pakistan still has the lowest literacy, even in the sub-continent. Lack of focus on education as a priority, reflected through insufficient allocation of funds, fund mismanagement, poor policies, bad planning, thoughtless regulation, inefficient implementation, nepotism and corruption all are factors contributing to education system remaining unsuccessful in developing the future generation for meeting needs of the 21st century. With 41 million 3-16 year olds attending school now but another 54 million being added to this school-going population by 2025, brewing-up is an educational management crisis of catastrophic proportions.

### **(1) BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION POLICY IN PAKISTAN**

**“Our education system must provide quality education to our children and youth to enable them to realize their individual potential and contribute to development of society and nation, creating a sense of Pakistani nationhood, the concepts of tolerance, social justice, democracy, their regional and local culture and history based on the basic ideology enunciated in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.”**

**National Education Policy 2009 [p-17]**

Here is a snapshot of the policy announcements and their practical realities:

<b><i>Policy</i></b>	<b><i>Literacy Target</i></b>	<b><i>Achieved</i></b>
1959	100% by 1975	21.7% in 1972 / 26.2% in 1981
1979	35% by 1983 / 100% by 2010	26.2% in 1984
National Literacy Plan	53% by 1990	34% in 1992
8 <sup>th</sup> Plan	48% by 1998	39% in 1998
1998	70% by 2012	55% in 2012

History of educational planning proves that changing governments of all colors, creeds and dispositions have not learnt any lessons from ineffective planning whatsoever, leading this nation of 185 million into oblivion vis-à-vis relevance to the rest of the world. This needs to change on a war-footing!

### **(2) MAGNITUDE OF THE 2025 CHALLENGE OF EDUCATING 3-16 YEAR OLDS**

**~ Statistics: 3-16 Year Olds**

	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>Public</i></b>	<b><i>Private</i></b>
Children in School	40.9 Million	27 Million (66%)	13.9 Million (34%)
Number of Schools	271,000	194,000 (72%)	77,000 (28%)
Average per School	~151 students	~139 students	~181 students

<b>Children out of School</b>	<b>~25.1 Million</b>	-	-
<b>Children under 3 yrs of age in 2013</b>	<b>~18 Million</b> (9.71% of population)	-	-
<b>Population Growth</b>	<b>1.71% p.a.</b>	-	-

With 30.6 Million new births, and 18 million born from 2011-13, and assuming that of 25 million kids currently out of school, 20% of these i.e. 5 Million can be brought in the education net, we will have a new school going population of ~ **53.7 Million** children in the next decade.

**~ Forecast Statistics: Education needs till 2025 for 3-16 year olds**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
New children needing school	53.7 Million	35.4 Million (66%)	18.3 Million (34%)
Number of new schools needed	~356,000	256,000 (72%)	100,000 (28%)

*Assumption: Historical public- private ratios held constant.*

To put this in perspective, since first private school of note in 1966-67, it has taken 47 years to build 77,000 private schools. If we want an outside chance of coming close to educating an additional 54 million children in the next decade, and if the Government can actually manage to fund and take up its share of 72% schools (256,000), the private sector will need to contribute an additional 100,000 schools in a decade. Let's do the math:

- (1) In absence of educational zones and purpose-built campuses, residential rented housing is the only option for setting up private schools. On average, a non-purpose built representative school campus houses 200 students;
- (2) For 18.3 Million children, 100,000 private schools need to open in a 10-year period. Mandatory exclusions of public holidays leave 420 weeks. This translates into 238 new private schools a week or 40 new private schools a day need to open every day for the next TEN years;
- (3) Similarly, for 35.4 Million children, 256,000 public schools need to open in a ten-year period i.e. 610 new public schools a week or 102 public schools a day;
- (4) On Private Sector Cost: On average, it takes 2 years for a middle-class school to break-even and costs the owners about \$72,000, before turning a profit. This means it will take \$7.2 BILLION investment of own funds by the private sector to shoulder this responsibility;
- (5) For the Public Sector, educating the remaining 35.4 million carries base cost of \$18.5 Billion at zero corruption and 100% private sector level operational and sourcing efficiency. That is not going to happen. Realistically, it will cost at least two-and-a-half times to fund 256,000 public schools i.e. ~ \$46 Billion in Government costs.

Now that the picture of the next decade challenge has been painted, let us talk solutions.

### **(3) FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR EDUCATING PAKISTAN**

At the existing level of significant hindrances representing complete lack of support for private education, the contribution required from the private sector in the next decade will take 61 years. Conversely, Public-Private-Partnership on education has to be completely re-imagined by the government, the judiciary and the other stake holders within the echelons of power, keeping three things in mind:

- (a) Private sector should be treated as an expert service provider of an essential public service mandatory under Article 25 of the constitution;
- (b) Unless incentivized and facilitated on a war-footing, there is no way to motivate creation of 100,000 schools in a decade;
- (c) Private sector needs to fund to the tune of \$7.2 billion to SUPPORT one-third of the challenge. The remaining two-thirds is still in the Government's domain and that is a massive \$46 Billion on new schools, in addition to the needed initiatives and associated costs of raising standards of existing public schools.

Government must acquire the mindset of a “facilitator for education” – not a dictator of thoughtless, visionless and broadly useless regulation. If this was to work, it would have worked already. In order to become the facilitator, and to have answers for what to do with no money to contribute, let us examine what the government must-not do. It MUST NOT:

- (a) Treat private sector education as a purely commercial undertaking. It is a social service that will not take place unless financially viable but is necessary for the government to achieve its mandatory obligation under our constitution;
- (b) Regulate, keeping in view the public sector education gaps and then applying this gap-bridging regulation on the private sector. Private sector does need regulation – but not one that is not conducive to achieving high quality education and child development outcomes;
- (c) Create red-tape around private sector education initiatives.

Let us examine some key aspects of education related challenges coming out of regulation, administration and courts:

- (1) KP wants free education for siblings, who use up a seat in the class as any other child, teacher time, resources and funds. In a country being choked by population explosion, should we be incentivizing bigger or smaller families? How about this for policy – 2 children will study free in a public school. Anymore and it is mandatory to fund that education in either public or private schools;
- (2) Sindh wants 10% of a class to be free of cost with no expulsion option (even for lack of attendance, discipline or focus on education). In other words, even if there is dead-weight, the entire class must compromise on their right to get equal attention of the teacher just because those not being responsible have a free ride. Who is accountable for the rights of the other 27 kids in a class? Instead, why not offer 10% revenue in scholarship to the best students with this expense being treated as tax-at-source?
- (3) Punjab is contemplating regulation that disallows schools in residential communities by imposing heavy fines on building and school owners alongside threat of imprisonment on the one hand and announcement, that there will be 100% enrollment in 3 years, on the other. This is absolute madness in light of our failed education policy history. Instead, why not set up a “Punjab Education Council” with a mandate to do all it takes to deliver “100% Enrollment by 2025 with 70:30 Public : Private split” and appoint trustees from public and private sector to come up with effective, practical solutions to meet the challenges;
- (4) Federal Cantonments, where Cantonment Act 1924 mandates facilitation of education, and are the only area where Federal Board schools can operate within the country, operate an N.O.C. process that at best, is sporadic and inconsistent on the one hand and, on the other, has no legal cover in courts. Why not develop and apply a “community school policy” that is uniform, consistent, progressive, not dependent of the vision of the

local commander and has legislative legal cover with defined parameters across the country's Federal Cantonments?

- (5) Private schools face wide range of inconsistencies on taxation & charges across the spectrum from various departments. However, despite charging higher rates, there is neither any benefit nor an afforded legal status of the "educationist" classification. Regulation is needed for a clarity of status of "educational institutions" that should be applicable across the board for all forms of taxation.

The most critical role of government vis-à-vis private sector in education is the regulatory framework developed for a win-win partnership. Win-win means - For the government, achieving highest standard child-development education service via the private sector for 30% of the school-going population; for the private sector, delivering a high-quality product at a profit and being recognized for this contribution.

The funding, ownership and regulatory interventions of government affect the choices of both students and education institutes about the nature, type and quality of the education they seek and provide. Poorly designed interventions may reduce overall welfare if they result in wasted resources or education that does not best meet the needs of students. The objective of regulation for private educational institutions must be to ensure (a) world-class education and development standard not currently possible in the public sector; (b) facilitation to achieve this objective at all levels of the government:

#### *PRIVATE-SECTOR DELIVERABLES*

- 1) Curriculum of international stature, high quality teaching methodology and highest standards of oversight leading "non-private-tuition-needed" school-based education;
- 2) Creative additions for personality building and "life- skills" curriculum development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- 3) Mandatory "sharing of knowledge" for capacity building of public sector teachers.

#### *PUBLIC-SECTOR DELIVERABLES*

1. Oversight for transparent ratings and ranking of private sector institutions;
2. Incentivizing taxation, regulatory and legal regime for setting-up educational facilities;
3. Understanding the challenge created out of lack of space planning dedicated for education across the country and developing alternate solutions from existing resources.

### **CONCLUSION**

History of flawed education planning in Pakistan is consistently giving a loud and clear message - if the government does not change the way it thinks about education and more importantly, about facilitating the private sector that is shouldering the education responsibility for 54 Million children, we will continue to move into stone-age vis-à-vis rest of the world in regards to our relevance. So what can the government do? Learn from history, and fast. We have serious problems regarding educating this nation and we need serious people to solve them – the size of that problem is over \$55 Billion in funding and human and physical resource creation in a decade that is equal to 2.1X the capacity created in over 66 years. That is a tall order. We, the nation, need all experienced hands and progressive enlightened minds on deck. Solution will come through a structured public-private partnership on education that is built on a facilitation

and accountability model that is sustainable over time. This ball needs to start rolling, and it needs to start rolling now.

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