

A CRITICALLY REVIEW OF PAKISTAN EDUCATION SYSTEM COMPARE WITH IRAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT: *This article compares the educational systems of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, critically reviewing the sources of secondary sources associated with these two countries. It examines and compares the history of education in Pakistan and Iran, the law, the school level and structure of education, universal primary education, quality of education, language and women's education. This comparison reveals the rapid development of Iran in education, especially after the revolution, while Pakistan lags far behind Iran in the field of education. Therefore, this article also highlights the status quo and shortcomings of Pakistan's education system*

KEYWORDS: Education Level, Women, System

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2010 World Bank statistics, Pakistan has a population of more than 170 million people, growing at a rate of 1.8% per year with a literacy rate of 56% (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund 2010). Although the above statistics started in 2010, the literacy level in Pakistan is still quite unlikely at the time of the latest data release. Since the establishment of Pakistan, the problem of literacy in Pakistan is similar to that of Pakistan. Education is viewed by many as "Crisis" (Noorani, Khan 2010) or "Emergencies" (Pakistan Education Task Force, 2011). However, how can we consider the current level of education in Pakistan and in fact they have improved over the years? A notable example is the data from the first and recent censuses of Pakistan in 1951 and 1998, where the literacy rate rose from 16.4% to 43.9%, although the rise may be considered as unstable (Choudhry 2005, p4). The answer lies in a number of indicators, one of which is the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). GCI is an indicator of how a country operates in the global economy. Among other things, CGI tells how a country competes in education with the rest of the world. Overall, GCI allocated Pakistan to 123 from 2010 to 139 countries in 2010-2011, and one of the pillars that led to a 12% fall in Pakistan was education. Only Pakistan is ranked lower than its five economically or geographically comparable countries of Sri Lanka, Brazil, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. According to Pakistani National Competitiveness Report 2010-2011, which provided the above information, Pakistan's primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment rates are very low, and improvements in the three will translate into better economies (CSF and JE Austin Associates Inc. 2010). Another country that joins GCI 2010-2011, which is very close to Pakistan, is the Islamic Republic of Iran. It has a GCI rating of 69 and if we specifically compare its educational pillar to Pakistan, it will not be surprising. Pakistan's overall primary education and health and tertiary education rank at 123, Iran's primary education and health attainment at 54, and tertiary education and training at 87; Iran's primary and higher education pillars will all bring economic benefits far above those of Pakistan (Sala-i-Martin et al., 2010). Iran's population might be less than Pakistan's (more than 73 million stated by the World Bank in 2010) but there was a time

when its literacy rate was as low as Pakistan's. Two years prior to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the literacy rate was 28.7 percent (Ali 2010, p 6) and if we consider the literacy rate in 2010, it was 85 percent (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund 2010)! Hence in a time span of about half of Pakistan's age, how has the literacy rate of Iran risen to such a phenomenal level? Can Pakistan emulate the aspects, after Iran's revolution, that have had contributed towards the economic growth and development of the Islamic Republic of Iran? This paper will review factors in the Iranian education system and try to identify by means of comparison whether they are lacking, present or in need of improvement in the Pakistani education system. Perhaps it is time that we share much more with Iran in the current era other than the controversial gas pipeline! Some of the research questions that this paper aims to answer during the course of this paper include 1) what are the histories of Iran and Pakistan? 2) Have these histories had any effect on the education system of both the countries? 3) What is the status of both the countries with respect to primary education which is being stressed upon globally? 4) Is the quality of education the same in both the countries? 5) Is there any disparity in the literacy rates of women in Iran and Pakistan?

Brief Overview of Iran's History

We consider the civilization of Mesopotamia as one of the oldest, but Iranian culture predates Mesopotamia and even prehistoric times.

The Middle Empire founded by the Aryans, including Iran, and later conquered by the Great, led to the formation of the Persian Empire in 550 BC, a period of great expansion and prosperity of Iran. However, in 330 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Persia, from which Persia was conquered by various Muslim dynasties until AD 650. Islam replaced Zoroastrianism later, and Arab caliphs began to rule Persia. Safavid dynasty eradicated foreign aggressors such as Genghis Khan in 1501 as a period of cultural and economic booming during Islamic rule; during this time, Islam also became an official religion. When Nadir Shah became a monarch, Safavid dynasty ended in 1736. The Persian monarchy caused oppression on the Persian people. In 1906, a constitution was drafted to strictly control the monarch's power. This period was called the "constitutional revolution"

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Brief Overview of Pakistan's History

Like Iran, Pakistan also has a rich history dating back to the Indus Valley civilization of 2500 BC. When the Aryan race conquered Persia, the Pakistani region was also included in the conquest, and later with the conquest of Cyrus the Great, Pakistan also became part of the Persian Empire. Pakistan was later conquered by Alexander the Great in 326 BC until Arabs invaded Pakistan in 712 AD and several emperors ruled the famous Buddhist Ashoka. As Arabs invaded Pakistan, Islam was introduced into the area. The area still exists in this area. Then, Pakistan was ruled by five different Turkish dynasties and became part of the Sultanate of Delhi during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. From then until the nineteenth century, Mughals ruled Pakistan. Then the British embarked on the territory and began the rule as a colonialist, which eventually led to the establishment of Pakistan (Geographia 2012; Nisar 2012). British rule ended in 1947 with the division they had in India and Pakistan. The efforts of the Muslim coalition have proved fruitful, and an individual Muslim home has finally been acquired. Unfortunately, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Pakistani independent movement, died shortly after independence, followed by democratic chaos and Pakistan's repeated military rule. In 1951 Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was murdered. In 20 years of this unfortunate incident, Pakistan experienced two martial laws in 1971, one was India's war on Kashmir, the other was a civil war, Bangladesh eventually led to the creation. In 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became Pakistani president, replaced by General Zia ul-Haq before his term ended, and was listed in 1979. Islamic regimes in Zia ul-Haq and a system of Islam were forced domestically. However, in 1985, the martial law ended and finally became the prime minister Benazir, daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1988. For the next ten years, power was transferred back and forth to the Nawaz Sharif party from Benazir's party. From 2000 to 2008, General Musharraf established the president after the military coup. After his resignation, in 2007, Benazir's widower died in a bomb attack and was elected president. He remains the president to date. The environmental challenges posed by the massive earthquakes in 2005 and the floods in 2010 have also freed the country from the BBC World 2012 situation. In addition, Pakistan is also facing serious economic pressure to repay the International Monetary Fund. Islamic militants linked to the Taliban have also been further destabilized within the country. Political turmoil in Pakistan has affected Pakistan's education system. Many education policies are considered to be on paper and in an attempt to achieve educational development, reflecting the lack of continuity and stability in Pakistan's politics. And, as Choudhry (2006) put it, political leaders never focus on education because of their top-level and feudal way of thinking. Pakistan's colonial past has also led to a serious disparity within the educational system in the form of English and Urdu medium schools. The existence of English and Urdu medium schools within Pakistan, enhance the non uniformity that already exists in the education system.

Education Laws

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stipulates clearly in Article 30 of the Constitution that it is the government's responsibility to provide free or fee education to its people. The second five-year plan for the country (1995-1999) also stipulates in different articles that it is the state's responsibility to provide compulsory education from primary school to junior high school, including children aged six to 13. Article 52 of the Fourth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan Further Redevelopment of Education in 2005 When the Cabinet Approves the Plan (UNESCO, 2011) There are several articles relating to education in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, in particular It is Article 37b States should work for a short time to eliminate illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education. Article 37 stipulates that the education and economic interests of people in backward areas should be promoted. Article 34 clearly stipulates that measures should be taken to ensure the active

participation of women in all affairs of the country. Article 38d expressly states that education should be provided to all citizens irrespective of their gender, identity, creed or color (Ministry of Education, 2009). In 2010, the President of Pakistan approved the Eighteenth Amendment as each child The constitutional right to education. This constitutional change replaces the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to ensure that all children reach universal primary education by 2015 (Pakistan Education Task Force, 2011). In addition, the three primary schools of "compulsory primary education" and the capital of Islamabad have been adopted despite the lack of implementation in these areas (UNESCO-IBE 2011). The laws and other regulations in Iran and Pakistan provide that education must be compulsory and free for a certain level of children. In addition, both governments have assumed this obligation and all agree with the aforementioned UN Millennium Development Goals on Education

Schooling Levels

In Iran, schooling starts from the optional pre-primary level and it is meant for children for four to five year of age. The first compulsory levels of education are part of primary education from grades 1 to 5 with grade 1 students being allowed admission at the age of six. The secondary education level is divided into two stages, where lower secondary education lasts for three year and upper secondary education lasts for another three years. Secondary schools offer students the option of choosing academic, technical or vocational education. Both primary and lower secondary education together which comprise a total of five years, account for basic education in Iran and are mandatory. When students complete upper secondary education after having gained academic education in the former, they must enroll in a pre-university course which lasts for about a year if they want to enter university. However, those students who chose vocational or technical education can obtain the associate degree of technician by taking a certain two year course. Pre-university can be considered another level of education in the Iranian education system. Higher Education includes universities, colleges and other higher education centres which can offer bachelor, master and doctoral level degrees (UNESCO 2011). In Pakistan, the education system is not as homogenous as Iran's because of the presence of private schools and Deeni Madaris however, according to Lynd (2007) school levels range from preprimary to higher. The preprimary education level includes children from the ages of three to five and although it was never considered a part of the schooling system in Pakistan, the National Education Policy 2009 recognizes it and the district and provisional governments were also provided with adequate funds for including preprimary or Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the schooling system. Most commonly, ECE is known as "katchi" class in the public sector schools (National Education Policy 2009, p 27; Blood 1994). Primary education in Pakistan like Iran, is from grades 1 to 5 and is for six to ten year old children; middle education comprises grades six to eight while secondary education is from grades nine to ten and higher secondary education from grades eleven to twelve (Lynd 2007). Previously grades eleven and twelve were part of colleges but the National Education Policy (2009, p. 29) states that these two grades shall be merged into the secondary schools. Higher education is beyond grade twelve and can go on for as many years as the kind of degree one wishes to acquire.

Education Sectors

According to Kamyab (2004), Iran's education sector is "highly concentrated." The Supreme Board of Education, a body concerned with the legal aspects of education in Iran, has approved all education-related policies and regulations up to secondary education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for almost everything related to primary and secondary education, including administration and finance. However, this ministry will find it hard to coordinate at

the grassroots level, so officials with different roles in the province and in the region are hired to ensure everything is going well. Provincial Education Minister hired by the Minister of Education, district education organization responsible person hired by the head of the provincial organization. At the higher education level, the Ministry of Science and Technology is responsible for science, arts and technology, and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education is responsible for medical colleges and universities. Informal vocational education is in the hands of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs while other basic non-formal education and literacy programs are handled by the Literacy Campaign Organization (UNESCO-IBE 2011). In Pakistan, the education sector can be called a "partial center." According to Pakistan's 1973 Constitution, provinces have allocated education. As a result, all Pakistani provinces have their own education department, headed by the Minister of Education, who, together with the Provincial Department of Education, manages the schools in his area. However, following the "Decentralization Regulations 2001", the administrative power of many provincial governments was transferred to local governments that have the authority to make decisions and plans and now give them (Ridell, 2006). The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for the education in its area of administration and is the overall "decision-making, coordination and advisory body" for the education sector. In particular, the Ministry of Education is composed of six agencies and several other agencies responsible for ensuring the smooth progress of education and for the unification of the national education system. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is the main body responsible for private and public higher education in Pakistan. Some of its responsibilities include funding for higher education institutions, policy development, quality planning and maintenance in the higher education sector. Thus, despite the high concentration of Iran's education sector, Pakistan's education sector is decentralized. The purpose of decentralization is to improve "transparency and accountability" (Riddell 2006, p. 10), but in the case of Pakistan, just as the new national education, due to decentralization and decentralization, policy (2009, p. 27) There is a lack of clear roles and responsibilities at the federal, provincial and territorial levels; the overlap of roles and responsibilities creates redundancies, inefficiencies and abuse of resources within the sector. In addition, private schools and Deeni Madaris, which form part of the private sector of the education system in Pakistan, have not yet been registered with provincial agencies and are therefore not within the reach of state-controlled educational institutions. This is compounded by the fact that these schools do not coordinate with the education sector and follow their own rules and regulations (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Universal Primary Education

For those who are aware of the value of education, it is not surprising that the world is moving toward achieving universal primary education in the 21st century. International organizations place special emphasis on primary education because they realize that primary education is on the path to economic prosperity. Bruns, Mingat and Rakotomalala (2003, pp. 26-28) emphasize the importance of primary education in their essay by giving empirical evidence of the benefits of primary education in the past. They pointed out that primary education can increase personal income and contribute to a 27% global private return. Primary education has also led to improvements in the technological advancement and productivity of the workforce. This is the most positive correlation with economic growth and is a stepping stone for continuing education. Interestingly, others also point out that primary education can also lead to greater management of politically stable countries and natural resources, including the protection of the rainforest! In short, primary education is crucial to closing the gap between the rich and the poor, which countries in the world are realizing. Due to the importance of primary education,

one of the Millennium Development Goals is to ensure that primary education is completed everywhere by 2015, while Pakistan and Iran have also committed themselves. The Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All (EFA) also states that by 2015 all children, especially marginalized groups - girls, minorities and others - will have the opportunity to complete primary education; it further states that this primary education will be Free and compulsory (Bruns, Mingat & Rakotomalala 2003, p. 25). Pakistan and Iran are also committed to achieving this universal primary education goal. According to UNICEF, in Iran, primary school gross enrollment of boys is 102% and that of girls is 103%. In Pakistan, the situation is not optimistic - in the same year, UNICEF set primary school gross enrollment rate 92% for boys and 77% for girls. The total primary enrollment rate (GER) is achieved by dividing the total primary school population by the number of children of "all ages" studying in primary school. Thus, while Iran seems to have achieved the Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Framework goals by the target date, Pakistan is going backwards and desperately trying to reach universal primary education by 2015. In fact, one of the reasons for the new education policy in 2009 is to meet the Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Framework goals. However, as of today, Pakistan has almost zero access to primary education, which has been recognized by the government and has been implicated in recent national education policies (Millennium Development Goals Report 2010, Pakistan Education Task Force 2011, 2009 Ministry of Education, p. 28). One of the reasons why Pakistan will not reach universal primary education by 2015 is because one tenth of non-global primary school children belong to Pakistan. This alarming percentage is based on the 2010 World Bank statistics by the Pakistan Education Task Force (2011). Therefore, if by 2010, 3.1 million boys and 4.2 million girls in Pakistan are not at school, miracles will only ensure that primary education will be completed by 2015. Although primary education in Pakistan is so low, its enrollment rate is highest compared with the levels of education in other countries (Lynd, 2007). This further shows how the entire education system in Pakistan can not do anything good for the masses. If we consider the situation in Iran, we can see that the net enrollment ratio (NER), calculated as the ratio of elementary school children of all ages in the country to the then total population of children, has steadily risen over the years. From 1990 to 1998, the NER increased from 92% to 98% respectively. Given that Iran is also in a marginalized area, this growth can be attributed to the country's efforts. It has not been easy for Iran to achieve such a great success in primary education and it has had to exert a great deal of cultural, social and physical hard work in order to achieve that goal. Redirect isolated village students to densely populated areas and even establish primary classes in schools with the largest number of students, increase enrollment of 6-year-olds, encourage teachers to move from cities to rural areas and create equal educational opportunities in all provinces to change people With regard to the mode of thinking about education, allowing more girls to be educated, opening all girls' schools and closing education between men and women, Iran has tried its best to achieve universal primary education (Sadri, 1999).

Quality of Education

Quality of education can be determined by a number of factors such as teaching facilities, teachers, textbooks and curriculum. However, this paper will look at one of the factors- teachers because according to Andrabi et al. (2007, p 58) years of research have revealed that a school with "leaking roofs, no textbooks, and uninvolved parents can still produce good learning outcomes for students if the teacher is motivated and committed". In Iran, there is lot of attention given to the standard of teaching. Therefore it is a prerequisite for teachers to acquire qualifications of a certain level in order to begin teaching. Furthermore teacher-training centres

(TTC's) have been established all over the country and are responsible for training teachers at the primary and lower secondary level training ; these TTCs provide certificates which equip teachers with the skills and knowledge that will help them in teaching Teachers at public schools are employees of the state and many steps are taken to ensure that teachers are satisfied with their profession and continue to teach with dedication; one of the steps taken to ensure this, is competitive salaries – similar to those of public employees (UNESCO-IBE 2011). According to Sadri (1999) Iran took many more initiatives such as the establishment of in-service training centres, collaboration with the University of Iran to provide training in various fields, allotting funds for short and long term courses and formulation of policies to promote high standards of teaching. And as a result of such endeavors, all public school teachers had acquired certificates to teach at the primary level in the late twentieth century. In Pakistan, public schools are not the predominant source of education as in the case of Iran. According to Lynd (2007) private basic education enrolls more students compared to most other countries and only ten countries that having a larger population than Pakistan, have a higher enrolment rate in private primary and the status of teacher training in these schools is below par. Approximately more than half the proportion of teachers in private schools are untrained and do not have any professional qualification. However, in public schools, the situation is not so deplorable and teachers do bear a professional qualification with only 5 percent having no training. The presence of trained and qualified teachers in the public sector however can be questioned given that the latest National Education Policy (Ministry of Education 2009, p 33) considers the improvement in teaching standards one of the crucial factors in the improvement of the overall quality of education in Pakistan. One of the reforms suggested in the new National Education Policy for the improvement of the quality of teachers is their salary. However, a comparison of the salaries of public and private school teachers in the LEAPS report 2007, shows that government teachers are paid three to four times more than private teachers (Andrabi et al. 2007 p. 59). Moreover the Pakistan Education Task Force's report (2011, p 68) also states that a public teacher earns four times as much as the average parent, a ratio calculated after gathering information from reliable sources. The belief that public school teachers in Pakistan are not underpaid is also validated by the serious issue of “ghost schools” that are thronging within Pakistan. These ghost schools, as the name suggests, are virtually non-existent, mere school buildings or not even those, where there are neither students nor teachers. Such schools merely exist “on paper” to get government funds for teachers' salaries. In some cases, teachers are working elsewhere but are getting salaries from the ghost schools as well which makes their salaries double (Save the Children 2010). A recent case of teachers getting salaries from ghost schools was exposed in Balochistan where teachers in the province's ghost schools were paid salaries approved by the “higher-ups” in the National Education Foundation (NEF) (Muhammad 2012).

Language

The official language of Iran is Farsi Persian and it is the language used in schools apart from the media and the government (UCLA, Language Materials Projects, n.d.). Though foreign language is introduced at the secondary level, it is not limited to English (UNESCO-IBE 2011). In fact, the Ministry of Education most recently introduced five more languages in schools- German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and French; the ministry does not feel any qualms in stating that these new languages have been introduced apart from English so as to break the dominance or monopoly of the English language (Tehran Times 2012). It should be reiterated at this point that after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, all that was considered Western or modern and had been promoted by the Shah was purged to a great extent and to date, Iran tries its best to get rid

of Western influence in the education system (Erdbrink 2011; Morita 2002). With respect to Pakistan and its stance on the medium of instruction in schools, it is quite obvious that preference is given to English. The National Education Policy (Ministry of Education 2009, p19-20) accepts that it is an obstacle for individuals who lack English language skills to find a well paying job and that it is the distinguishing factors in Pakistan between the elite and non-elite. Hence a few of the policy actions that have been stated after asserting that English is one of the causes of differences in the level of education, is the provision of English language learning opportunities for the economically disadvantaged as well as making English the medium of instruction from beginning from class six in the sciences and mathematics. Before class six however, the policy states that it is up to the different provinces to decide what the language of instruction shall be.

It seems that Pakistan is still haunted by its colonial past whereby preference is given to English language and this preference is further strengthened by the increase in globalization. There have been times when Urdu was promoted such as the 1960's when pro- Urdu activities were initiated and Zia's regime when Urdu was made the language of instruction and English medium schools were shut. However, the current educational policy speaks of the value of English and unlike Iran's schools, the national language is not the preferred medium of instruction in Pakistan irrespective of the fact that according to the World Data on Education concerning Pakistan (2011, p 3) Urdu is spoken and understood by 75 percent of Pakistanis. A problem does encounter Iran's schools where Persian is used as the medium of instruction and non-Persian speaking students are numerous, the problem is one which is centered around the languages spoken within the country such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and so on (Hameedy 2005); it is not an issue that concerns a foreign language such as is the case of Pakistan.

Education of Women

Women's education is essential to a country. This is both a women's empowerment and a gender equality that is one of the goals of the millennium development and is necessary for ensuring a healthy nation. Studies by Bruns, Mingat and Rakotomalala (2003, p28) show that women's education has led to improvements in health, productivity and nutrition. In addition, women's education has improved family welfare and ensured the examination of infant and child mortality rates. Like Pakistan, Iran's Muslim population dominates. Both countries have religious and cultural taboos on the education of women. The lack of female teachers in rural and rural areas, the preference of families for girl care and housekeeping, or the use of household income to solve family income issues, although mentioned, also appeared in Pakistani reports in Sadri (1999) . However, the Iranian Ministry of Education has tried to take many measures to overcome the above-mentioned problems that hinder the education of women. The Ministry of Education took some steps towards the country, resulting in a net enrollment rate in 1990-1998 rising from 88.4% in 1990 to 95.3% in 1998, which can be attributed to the establishment of all girls and the closing of coeducational schools and the hiring of more More women apply for local teacher training programs, most importantly, changing their parents' thinking about children's education to help overcome reservations to women's education (Sadri 1999). According to UNICEF, these and many other initiatives raised the gross enrollment rate (GER) of primary school girls to 102%, and the GPI can be defined as the ratio in 2005 According to United Nations statistics, the 2009 Iran The ratio of women to men is 0.99 for primary and 0.95 for middle school respectively, both of which are healthy, since 1 means that the ratio of boys to girls is equal. In retrospect, the revolution in Iran has played a big role in raising the literacy rate of women's education in the country. After the revolution, all primary and secondary schools were separated by boys and girls. Since this

move was not planned in advance, boys spent their mornings in class and girls in the evening because of inadequate school premises (M, 2002, p. 77). In addition, post-revolutionary policies include the appointment of women teachers and male teachers, changes in textbooks and illustrations, representation of male and female roles in Iran as a voluntary veil for female students, and mentoring women in areas appropriate to their gender (Mehran, 2003 Year, p. 19). However, women's education has gone through many stages after the revolution, and there are no differences between women's and men's fields of study. According to Wright (2000, p143) and Iran, thousands of women are engineers, doctors, scientists, lawyers and even clergy. Writers, directors, artists, photographers, painters, athletes and other fields, women are also very prominent. Women's access to a variety of occupations has eliminated the "stereotypical image" of women and further motivated daughters of family education (Mehran 2003, p 18). In Pakistan, primary school gross enrollment (GER) was 77% and primary school enrollment was 0.84 and 0.79 (UN Data 2012). The above indicators demonstrate the fact that women's education in Pakistan and Iran are better than Pakistan in educating women.

Choudhry (2005) cites illiteracy in Pakistan, including women and women. He pointed out that at all levels of schools how the enrollment rate of women is low and only about one third of school facilities and teachers are designed to cater for women's education and how social taboos and cultural taboo discourage domestic women's education. Choudhry's inclusion of women in the list of illiterates other than ethnic minorities, rural populations, the poor and vulnerable groups highlights the essence of the Pakistani Constitution and how to ensure the provision of education for all and all in the form of Article 38d Of the education commitments which state that women should have equal representation in all walks of life but regrettably are not being met. Pakistan's 2009 National Education Policy also acknowledged the lack of gender equality in the education sector in Pakistan, citing several figures and the underlying reason behind the lack of implementation and the erosion of social customs.

DISCUSSION

The comparison of Pakistan and Iran's education system reveals that Pakistan is lagging behind Iran in the educational domain. While Iran can attribute its rise in literacy rates to the revolution which took place in 1979, Pakistan has had no such historical event which could help to improve its education system. In fact lack of political stability and intermittent military rules have done more towards harming the education system of Pakistan than improving it. Moreover, Pakistan's legacy of colonialism has left it in awe of English such that most it is thought above Urdu and the other local language; this in turn is creating disparities within the education system of Pakistan. Indicators such as low primary school enrolment, disparity in female enrolment rates and a substandard level of teaching staff in Pakistan as opposed to Iran can be attributed to many reasons: For one thing, Pakistan's budget for education far below Iran's; while Pakistan barely spent 2.69 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Iran was spending a total of 4.68 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education as of 2009 (trading economics 2012). And although the cabinet approved increasing the percentage of GDP to 7 percent after approving the new National Education Policy (Ghumman 2009) the results are yet to be seen. Having a larger population than Iran and lesser expenditure on education, it is not a surprise that Pakistan is below Iran in education. Moreover, high dropout rates which Bray (1983) had mentioned in his article, still exist to date. According to the new educational policy, about 31 percent children dropped out from primary levels and 16 percent dropped out from the subsequent, middle, secondary and higher secondary level during the

2004-2005 academic year (Ministry of Education 2009, p 61). Another reason for Pakistan's low literacy level is the lack of accountability within the education system. This lack of accountability has led to the rise in thousands of "ghost schools" which although non-functional, are getting government funding for teachers. About 30,000 ghost schools have been found all over Pakistan (Nooani n.d.). Such schools are counterproductive to Pakistan's educational growth as fruitful expenditure on education is further reduced. Iran is alien to the concept of ghost schools which indicates more accountability within the education system compared to Pakistan. While most of the schools in Iran are public schools run by the state (Mehran, 2003 p11), Pakistan has both private and public schools where public schools account for 64 percent of the total enrolment while the remaining 34 percent are in the hands of the private sector. This ratio speaks of the inability of the state to provide education to the Pakistani population (Ministry of Education 2009). Perhaps if only one political party in power had truly understood the importance of education, it would have increased its educational capacity as in the case of Iran after the 1979 revolution.

Limitations

It is noteworthy that while this paper comprehensively makes a comparison of the Iranian and Pakistani education system, it has suffered from certain limitations. Firstly this research paper has been compiled on the basis of secondary data and therefore lacks any personal first hand data. Addition of such data could have added further reliability of this paper although the sources used have been highly reliable. Secondly, although a lot of data could be obtained on regarding education in Pakistan, was a limited data back of information concerning education in Iran.

Thirdly, a lot of data concerning Iran to a major extent and Pakistan to a minor extent could not be included in the paper because of its lack of objectivity.

Implications

This paper has serious implications for Pakistan as it shows how Pakistan's stagnancy in the education sector could have grave consequences for the future of the country. Concerned officials as well as intellectuals must actually be proactive in improving Pakistan's literacy level as the time for drafting policy statements does not exist anymore. All resources must be mustered towards the cause of bringing Pakistan at par at least with countries it is economically competitive with in education and much can be learnt from the case of Iran. Furthermore, in the wake of globalization and international stress on education (in the form of MDGs and the Dakar Framework for Action) Pakistan needs to make a Herculean and sincere effort in improving literacy because it leads to stability and prosperity as can be seen in from Iran. Given that Iran and Pakistan are neighboring countries, collaborative efforts between both the countries should be increased so that Pakistan can benefit from the wealth of education in Iran.

Future Recommendations

Further research can be conducted based on first hand or primary data. Moreover, research on how collaboration between countries has improved literacy rates can also be conducted.

CONCLUSION

A comparison of the education system in Iran and Pakistan was drawn in this paper. This comparison proved really helpful in determining the situation of both the countries –where Iran’s endeavor to improve education in the country has led to quantitative and qualitative improvements within the country while Pakistan’s faces a serious predicament in its education scenario. In particular, literature indicates that while Iran is within the target of universal primary education, Pakistan will not be able to meet its goal; the standard of teachers in Iran is improved through training centres and qualifications but in Pakistan teacher quality is in need of serious reforms; Iran uses Persian as the medium of instruction in all its schools but Pakistani schools face a language dilemma; and while Iran’s women enjoy high literacy rates, Pakistan has not been able to provide its women with equal educational opportunities. The comparisons have also been made in the light of the history of both the countries, where Iran’s education system was positively affected by its revolution, while Pakistan’s history of political instability has negatively impacted education within the country.

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