

Problems at Secondary Education Level in Public Sector of Pakistan

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Abstract:

Pakistan is a developing country having literacy rate lesser than many other developing countries. There are a number of problems, hurdles and challenges faced by the education system in Pakistan at every level of education. The focus of this research study is the secondary education in the public sector of Pakistan and the problems present at this level. Secondary education is a bridge between the primary and higher education. It is a sensitive level as the students are prepared at this level to enter the higher education or work force successfully. It also prepares the students to lead an appropriate life. The data for this survey type research study was collected through questionnaires which were being filled by heads and secondary school teachers using questionnaires. The research concluded that there no doubt many problems in regard to secondary education but by taking appropriate measures they could be eliminated or at least reduced.

Key words: Secondary Education, Problems, Public Sector, Pakistan.

Introduction

Education plays a significant role of leadership in the society. The nations are build and developed through education which acts as an instrument. It is a key for the development and advancement of the people's mindset in any society (Shaheen

2013). It is the function of the educational institutions to develop the physical, mental, social, psychological and spiritual elements present in the humans. Education is required to promote and improve the economic, political, social and cultural life of the people who form a nation. The individuals' productivity and efficiency is enhanced through education and skilled manpower is produced which has the capabilities to lead the economy and pave a path of sustainable economic development (Memon 2007)

Secondary Education

Formal Education is divided in different phases such as primary, elementary, secondary, higher secondary so on and so forth. The importance of every phase cannot be denied neither any one can be neglected. Secondary education is the next stage of education after the elementary education and it comprises of class IX and X. This is the procedure in most of the countries. Secondary education means education after the elementary grades. Secondary education is the last stage of school life where the child enters the adolescence. In depth knowledge of various subjects is gained at this level and the students also specialize in few.

A very important role is played by the secondary school education in the development of personality of an individual. On the other hand the national development also takes place through secondary education. It is very vital for the personality building of the teenagers who are the part of this education. It must have the ability to groom the young ones so that they can perform the adult work in a better way. Secondary education should help the teenage students to change into a better adult and ought to help in finding out the leaders (Cowell et al., 2000). This stage is distinguished by others as it is a transition from a comprehensive primary education to a selective and an optional form of training.

Importance and Need of Secondary Education

Grade IX and X comprises of secondary education and the children at this stage are usually 13-15 years of age. Secondary education is essential in order to become an active member of the society, economy and the nation. For the youths of developing countries there is a great need to acquire secondary education as it develops the skills for job and inculcates many other abilities required for a better life style. Because of the economic pressures less developed countries the individuals have to become a part of the labor force at an earlier age. For this reason it is necessary that they are guided well at secondary level. This education of theirs will make it easier for them to contribute in an important way towards their society and economy. A group of qualified people possessing comparatively better knowledge and skills is created through secondary education which contributes well towards economic growth and better employments. Since it is the era of globalization the countries survive, grow and compete through the ones who have been a part of secondary education. It is beneficial to invest in secondary education as compared to primary education because it enhances the export-led growth (Wood et al. 1999). Secondary education has been shown to contribute to enhanced individual earnings. Improved health, social conditions and equity are associated to it. It gives the sense and better understanding worthily home membership, citizenship, vocation, proper use of leisure time and ethical character. It buttresses democratic institutions and civic engagement. The quality of secondary education affects the levels above and below i.e. the primary and tertiary education.

Secondary Education (IX-X) is an important sub-sector of the entire educational system. Where it provides the middle level work force for the economy on one hand, on the other, it acts as a feeder for the higher levels of education. Individuals' basic insights about life and modes of behavior begin to take

shape at this stage.

Sufficient numbers of qualified teachers could be provided by increasing the attention on more secondary education, particularly lower-secondary education as it has a critical outcome on the demand for and completion of primary education for girls. The women could be empowered and gender equality could be promoted. Goel (2005, 3) points out that “secondary for the economy education is a period of education which follows after elementary education and acts as foundation for higher education. The purpose of secondary education is to prepare the students either for obtaining higher education or vocational training”.

Problems of Secondary Education

Following key issues in secondary education have been identified by The World Bank:

- i. Accessible to young people
- ii. Curriculum
- iii. Quality and Relevance
- iv. Teaching
- v. Assessment
- vi. Technology
- vii. Governance
- viii. Financing

(World Bank Study 2010)

A common problem faced by many low income countries is low enrollment in secondary education. A number of young people in poor countries have little chance of entering lower secondary school (IX-X). At lower secondary level the gross enrolment ratio is below 60% in nineteen sub-Saharan African countries, as well as in some Arab States and South and West Asia. In many developing countries secondary education is not affordable and it is usually not relevant to the world of work (EFA Report 2012).

For women empowerment education is important. It is not only for the purpose of acquisition of knowledge rather it is essential for values conducive to social evolution. It provides many other benefits. The development of the mind, critical and analytical thinking, provision of management, organizational and administrative skills is done through education. It also enhances self-esteem. Therefore, education should be made available to all. It is also necessary for better parenting and healthier living. Thus, it is beyond the doubt that educating girls would surely yield a higher rate of return than any as compared to any other investment (Memon 2007).

Secondary Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan secondary education starts from grade 9 and lasts for two years. The age of the students in these classes is 13-15 years (UNESCO 2009). Students are expected to take a standardized test at the completion of grade 9 in the first parts of their academic subjects. These tests are again given of the same courses upon the completion of grade 10. A Secondary School Certificate (or SSC) is awarded upon successful completion of these two examinations. This certificate is also termed as 'matriculation certificate' or 'matric' for short. The curriculum usually comprises of eight course combination which may include electives (such as Biology, Chemistry, Computing and Physics) and there are compulsory subjects as well (such as Mathematics, English, Urdu, Islamiat and Pakistani Studies). The students opt for a group of their choice such as Science, Humanities, and Technical. According to a report, there are 0.88 million secondary institutions in the country with enrolment of more than two million and 0.36 million teachers (UNESCO 2008). In Pakistan, the medium of instruction is usually Urdu in rural areas. In case of urban regions some public and private schools working in towns, cities use English as the medium of instruction. (Shah 2008)

A number of provisions have been given along with the objectives mentioned in the National Education Policies of Pakistan. Secondary education has been emphasized as the gateway to higher education by many policy makers. According to Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 – Article 37-b “The state shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period” but this has not yet been achieved.

Since beginning Pakistan has been facing numerous challenges in regard to political and economic instability. These challenges have led to increase in poverty and social inequalities. As compared to other countries in South Asian region the country has lower literacy rate which has resulted into a decrease in human capacities and there are limited opportunities for affecting change (Rasheed 2004).

One of the reasons of lower literacy rate is the allocation of limited resources to education. The public expenditure on education in 1960 was only 1.1 percent of the GNP. Although it has increased to 3.4 percent with the passage of time but still far more amount is spent on defense. Pakistan was tied for fourth place in the world in 1990 for its ratio of military expenditures to health and education expenditures (Blood 1994). As per the National Education Policies of Pakistan since beginning the emphasis has been proposed to make secondary education compulsory and many efforts are made still there is a need for lot of improvement. Secondary education is a streaming stage in Pakistan, as the students usually choose the future line of action for further education. Keeping this in view the heads of secondary schools thus have to cater to the diverse requirements of the individual students. Secondary education also has to cater to the needs of economy’s productive sectors. The significance of the heads of secondary school has boosted because of the diversification of curricula and importance of the secondary education (Hussain 2011).

Secondary education being a sub-sector of the education

system demands amicable management. Its major objectives are production of middle level workforce for the economy and pavement of a path for higher education. According to NEP (1998, 37) “the quality of higher education depend upon the quality of secondary education. Secondary education is also a stage, where a student reaches to the age of adolescence which is the most crucial stage of life”. Because of this situation also the importance of secondary education has enhanced in the country.

This research study has been conducted to find the problems faced by the secondary education in the country and to see their extent of presence.

Research Methodology

This research study is a part of a larger study having various objectives. Identifying the problems of secondary education in public sector was one of the objectives of that study. The research conducted was survey type. The primary data regarding the problems identification was collected through questionnaires filled by 65 Heads of Govt. Secondary Schools and 180 SSTs of Govt. Secondary Schools.

Two sets of questionnaires were developed separately for the heads and secondary school teachers consisting close-ended questions. Majority of the questions of both the questionnaires were similar except for the few. The questionnaires were based on a five point Likert scale.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the Common Items of Questionnaires for the Heads and Teachers of Secondary Schools

Statement	A%	UC%	DA%	Mean
Secondary Education in Pakistan is in accordance to International Standards	56	13	31	3.3

Secondary education helps the students to make better decisions for their future studies	74	9	17	3.8
Curricula for secondary education is updated regularly	71	13	16	3.7
There is a need to include technical education as a compulsory part of secondary education	92	5	3	4.4
Adequate physical facilities are present at secondary level	67	9	24	3.6
The secondary education being provided is relevant to the market needs	42	14	44	3.0
The retention rate of the students is increasing at secondary level	77	11	12	3.9
There is gender disparity in educational opportunities at secondary level	53	17	30	3.2
There is urban and rural disparity in educational opportunities at secondary level	77	9	14	3.9
The teachers at the secondary level are appointed keeping in view their qualification and experience	77	7	16	3.8
Continuous training and refreshment courses are offered to the teachers at secondary level	62	20	18	3.6
The salary structure of the teachers at secondary level is based on their qualification	50	12	38	3.2
The assessment system at secondary level is fair	65	21	14	3.6
Sufficient scholarships and rewards exist to encourage the students at secondary level	57	19	24	3.3

Table 1.1 Percentages and Means of all Responses of Heads and Teachers of Secondary Schools (common items)

Analysis of the Independent Items of Questionnaires for the Heads

Statement	A%	UC%	DA%	Mean
Continuous training and refreshment courses are offered to the heads at the secondary level	55	11	34	3.3
Teachers for science subjects are available at secondary level	77	0	23	3.8

Table 1.2 Percentages and Means of all Responses of Heads of Secondary Schools (independent items)

Analysis of the Independent Items of Questionnaires for the SSTs

Statement	A%	UC%	DA%	Mean
The curricula for secondary education are in accordance with the students' mental level	76	12	12	3.8
The student/teacher ratio is satisfactory at secondary level	64	13	23	3.5
The Instructional Material (AV Aids etc) is available at secondary level	57	11	32	3.3
The Instructional material is being used by the teachers at secondary level	80	8	12	3.8
The students at the secondary level need to be encouraged by the heads and teachers during the learning process	94	2	4	4.2

Table 1.3 Percentages and Means of all Responses of Teachers of Secondary Schools (independent items)

Discussion and Conclusions

This research study has found out that there are problems at secondary level but there are also means available to overcome these problems. There is a space for lot of improvement and tremendous efforts are required to fill these gaps.

By looking at the Tables (1.1, 1.2, 1.3) the following conclusions could be drawn keeping in view the objective of the study.

Secondary education is essential as it prepares the students to become an active part of the society as well as economy. Majority agree that secondary education provided in Pakistan is as per International standards but many also disagree with this. There is a decrease in the dropout rate and the retention rate is increasing at secondary level.

Both male and female are not given equal opportunities and there is gender disparity in educational opportunities at secondary level. There is also disparity in regard to educational opportunities in case of urban and rural areas.

There is a great need that the output produced through education is in accordance with the needs of the labor market.

This is required to reduce unemployment and in order to strengthen the economy. The findings depict that the secondary education provided in Pakistan is not relevant to the market.

To encourage the students at secondary level scholarships are being provided to the students and the heads and teachers also make effort to encourage the students.

The number of teachers for science subject is satisfactory to some extent. But there is a need that the curricula of the secondary education have technical education as compulsory part of it.

To some extent the physical facilities are present at the secondary level. The student/teacher ratio is fairly satisfactory at secondary level. Instructional materials such as AV Aids are satisfactory and fairly used by the teachers at secondary level.

The appointment of the teachers is in accordance to their qualifications and experience at secondary level and the salary structure is also somewhat based on their qualifications. The heads and teachers do undergo pre-service and in-service trainings and refreshment courses fairly.

For better understanding of the problems and issues and to identify the areas review of certain researches was done which included “Education Development in Pakistan: Trends, Issues, and Policy Concerns” by Mahmood, Naushin (1999). A study by Memon. G (2007), “Education in Pakistan: The Key Issues, Problems and the New Challenges”

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings following recommendations were suggested. The Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education and Provincial Ministry of Education and all related authorities may take following measures:

1. To cope up with the rapid advancement taking place in the world, technical education is very essential therefore it is necessary that measures may be taken to

indoctrinate in the curricula of secondary education, the technical and vocational education. By doing so students will be provided with appropriate skills which will be beneficial for not only themselves but also for the economy.

2. There is a need to reduce the gender and rural/urban disparities in educational opportunities to the minimum level.
3. It is essential to assess the market needs before designing the curricula for the secondary education in order for the students to opt for better decisions when moving towards higher levels of education. This will also assist in producing the output according to the market demands which will enhance the appropriate labor force and reduce the unemployment. Therefore it will be constructive for the educational planners and curriculum designers to consult the people sitting in the market so as to assess the need and then plan accordingly.
4. In order for the teachers to fulfill their duties in a much better motivation is required and this could be provided through rapid promotions to the teachers giving good results.
5. For the purpose of increasing the opportunities for the students having economical problems more scholarships, aids and funds may be provided.
6. In order for better working of all the departments and personnel who are part of education system more involvement of government is required which will enhance the monitoring and supervision thus improving the check and balance.

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