

PAKISTAN'S 2018 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE PRIVATE EDUCATION SECTOR?

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Abstract

In Physics the term given when two unambiguously events occur within close, but different time frames, and from the same annihilation, is called a coincident.

This paper provides an analysis of the Pakistan Government's 2018 National Education Policy Framework within the context of the December 13th, 2018 Suo Motu ruling of Pakistan's Supreme Court on reducing, and capping the fees of all private schools and private school systems in Pakistan. The paper argues that the publication of the Education Framework and the Suo Motu ruling are a coincident, and are a move towards the nationalization of private schools and private school systems *per procuratorem praestari*.

Two Case studies (Kenya and Rwanda) illustrate how effective, or not, a uniform curriculum is when developed with the express aim of creating national cohesion.

The paper argues for a global outlook in education policy and development; rather than a nationalistic inward approach, and concludes with a set of recommendations for current and future education planning and policy making in Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan, Education, Nationalization

1. A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PAKISTAN'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING

Since Pakistan gained independence in 1947; the history of public education, planning and policy making has been marked with good intention; but has failed to deliver a robust, sustainable, cyclical and evaluative public education model for its population. Successive governments (military and civilian) have developed an array of education policy and planning pathways:

National Education Conference 1947, National Plan of Educational Development: 1951-1957, First Five Year Plan: 1955-60, Report on the Commission of National Education: 1959, Second Five Year Plan 1960-1965, Third Five Year Plan: 1965-1970, New Education Policy: 1970, The Education Policy: 1972-1980

National Education Policy and Implementation Programme: 1979, Literacy and Mass Education Commission: 1981, the 10 Point Programme: 1983, Sixth Five Year Plan: 1983-1988, National Literacy Plan: 1984-1986, Drop In Schools: 1986-1989, Nationwide Literacy Program: 1986-1990

Seventh Five Year Plan: 1988-1993, National Education Policy: 1992, Eighth Five Year Plan: 1993-1998

National Education Policy: 1998-2010, National Education Policy: 2011-2015, National Education Policy: 2016, National Education Policy 2017-2025, National Education Policy 2018. (Bengali, 1999)

At a glance this is an impressive list of the State's intent and purpose to build an educated Nation, and at the core of these plans and policies has been the philosophical ideal that a Nation cannot progress without a literate and educated population. Yet all of them; apart from the second five year plan (1960-1965), were unable to meet their overall objectives. Bengali eloquently; yet modestly describes this historical scenario as "the sincerity of purpose did not produce results". (Bengali, 1999). Riaz Haq is less sympathetic than Bengali and argues that:

"Education spending in Pakistan has increased at an annual average rate of 17.5% since 2010. It has more than doubled since 2010 to reach \$8.6 billion a year in 2017, rivaling defense spending of \$8.7 billion. Private spending by parents is even higher than the public spending with the total adding up to nearly 6% of GDP. Pakistan has 1.7 million teachers, nearly three times the number of soldiers currently serving in the country's armed forces. However, the school enrollment and literacy rates have remained flat and the human development indices are stuck in neutral. This is in sharp contrast to the significant improvements in outcomes from increased education spending seen during Musharraf years in 2001-2008. An examination of the causes shows that the corrupt system of political patronage tops the list. This system jeopardizes the future of the country by producing ghost teacher, ghost schools and absentee staff to siphon off the money allocated for children's education. Pakistani leaders need to reflect on this fact and try and protect education from the corrosive system of political patronage networks." (Haq, 2017)

There are myriad reasons why previous education policies have not worked in Pakistan; these include but are not limited to, administrative problems, lack of resources, India-Pakistan Wars, collapse of the Military Government, lack of clarity on goals, misappropriation of large funds directed to education in the country, lack of planning and implementation, and a lack of provincial collaboration. Tarar captures this scenario aptly and similar to Haq, argues that power relationships are an essential determiner and obstacle to education policy implementation in Pakistan:

"The Theory of ideational power can be applied in this context (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). The use of "power through ideas" is used by religious clerics and madrassas to promote their ideational views and convince people to send their children to madrassas. Political actors use power and ideas to ensure alternative ideas do not get included in policy process...this is apparent with the historical institutional process in Pakistan. The new goals are not added, instruments haven't changed and the discourse is used to promote the things that are moving in a positive direction....The hegemony of the provincial departments and district authorities over schools in the form of budgetary allocations, initiatives and programmes, and the recruitment structures, limits the autonomy and voice of the schools; imposing a constraint over which ideas will be considered" (Tarar, 2018)

Since coming to power in July 2018 on a wave of populism, Imran Khan's government has moved swiftly to reform health, education and improve basic living standards across the country. Some of the education reforms thus far seem to have been actioned via suo motu¹ decisions in the country's highest court, and have not focused on the problems within the public education sector; rather there has been a sustained and prolonged confrontation through the courts with the private school sector, and their fee structures. When the 2018 National Education Policy Framework is viewed in the light of the suo motu decision of the Pakistan Supreme Court regulating the fee tables of private schools, and private school systems, it is argued that the government seeks the return of the nationalization of the private education sector in Pakistan.

2. PAKISTAN'S 2018 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK AND THE SUPREME COURT'S SUO MOTU MOTION AGAINST PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Several weeks after the publication of Pakistan's 2018 National Education Policy Framework, Pakistan Supreme Court's ruled via suo motu that all private schools which charge a fee above 5000PKR per month must reduce their fees by 20%, and repay to parents 50% of the fee charged during the 2017-18 summer vacation period. In effect this judgment imposed a 20% fee reduction overnight on all private schools and private school systems.

The Chief Justice's suo motu ruling appeared not to be based upon any legal precedent, or *ratio decidendi*;

¹ In law, sua sponte (Latin: "of his, her, its or their own accord") or suo motu ("on its own motion") describes an act of authority taken without formal prompting from another party. The term is usually applied to actions by a judge taken without a prior motion or request from the parties.

rather it was predicated upon ongoing cases brought before the lower courts and high courts across the country since 2015, by a parent activist group. These parents have children who attend private schools, rather than schools in the failing public education sector. The parent activists challenged the annual fee increments charged by private school.

The *suo motu* judgment against the private school sector has seriously compromised the future of education in Pakistan. The judgment has crippled private schools, and private school systems. Many of the stand-alone private schools will be forced to close, while larger private schools and school systems will have to make severe cuts across staffing, salaries, curriculum and curriculum initiatives, including the arts, foreign languages, sports and physical education, cultural events, overseas trips, student exchange programs, special educational needs for struggling students, students with disabilities, talented and high achieving students, student counselling, child protection and safe guarding programs, and the disbanding of, or reduction in their international curricula programs including the IBO Primary Years and Middle School programs, the IB Diploma, CAIE's O and A level programs; notwithstanding the Court's ruling which stipulates:

"no school shall under any circumstances be closed, nor any student be expelled from such schools, as well as no student shall be placed under any disadvantageous position in terms of fees he/she was paying before the court order; otherwise respective management shall be held personally liable for disobeying and disregarding the order of the Honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan. In addition, neither any school shall reduce their existing number of, or salary of teaching staff, nor charge beyond the prescribed examination fee of examining boards/bodies..." (Punjab School Education Department, 2019)

The Supreme Court *suo motu* judgment, and subsequent Punjab Government notice has paralyzed the private school sector's ability to deliver a quality 21st century education experience for the hundreds of thousands of children and young people who attend schools in the private sector, and in effect, reversed the country's overall educational progress by 50 years.

It is also noteworthy that the private tuition industry in Pakistan appears to be exempt from the Supreme Court's *suo motu* ruling on capping the fees of private schools and private school systems; yet it is the third most sought out education sector in the country, and is unregulated. It is a fee charging ghost industry and, according to Aslam & Mansoor *"consumes substantial proportions of family income and imposes a heavy burden on low income families"* (Aslam & Mansoor, 2011). A significant number of tutors who operate within the industry have a cult like status and following amongst students in secondary schools, and earn millions of untaxed rupees per year.

3. HOW HAS THE PRIVATE EDUCATION SECTOR CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN & INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL IN PAKISTAN?

The private school sector has made a considerable contribution to Pakistan's growth and development. Since independence in 1947, nearly the entire political leadership of the country has been educated in the private sector (Beaconhouse School System, 2019). Private schools have graduated some of the country's leading national and international leaders in Law, Medicine, Chemistry, Engineering, the Arts, Mathematics, Physics, Astro-Physics, Technology, Economics, Literature, Sports, Humanities and Religious Studies. Mrs. Nasreen Kasuri, the founder of one of the country's largest and top private school systems, Beaconhouse, received the *Pakistan Women Power 100 Award*, in 2012. Furthermore, private schools and private school systems have championed the cause of girl's education in Pakistan through providing equal access to education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Private schools have transformed the lives of thousands of young Pakistanis, through offering merit scholarships and billions of rupees, regardless of their socio-economic status. In the absence of a strong, functional and viable public sector, private schools and private school systems outperform public schools. The government spends more per child on education, than the monthly fees charged by the vast majority of private schools. Through their offering of international curricula and scholarships, private schools have opened access to the world's top international universities. Private school students have received hundreds of millions of dollars of financial aid from these universities (Beaconhouse School System, 2019).

In any democratic society, people are given a choice, and as is the case in Pakistan, parents are given a choice whether or not to send their child to a private schools. The majority do so, as they see this as an investment not only in their child's future, but as an investment in their family, community and country.

Private schools are also the single largest employers of professional women in Pakistan, and out of the 1,585,047 teachers in Pakistan in 2016-17, 51% of which the majority are women, are employed in the

private sector (Beaconhouse School System, 2019).

Private schools and private school systems invest significantly in learning resources, technology, curriculum and teacher development, promoting innovative 21st century learning experiences. (Beaconhouse School System, 2019).

Probably, the single most important contributing factor to a private school education in Pakistan, is that it fosters independent thought, critical thinking and reasoning skills, and promotes unity through diversity over a 'one size fits all' approach to education.

4. GENUINE EDUCATION REFORM OR REALPOLITIK?

Imran Khan's government promised to reform education and introduce a uniform curriculum. In November 2018, the government released its National Education Policy Framework; a year after the previous government had released its 2017-2025 Educational Roadmap.

The 2017-2025 Education Policy was an ambitious road map which also expanded upon previous education policy and planning in several ways. These included, mass mobilization and community involvement, character building, a right to education, eradicating literacy, a focus on health and hygiene, increasing the GDP spent on education, fostering national unity and achieving universal primary education. It also included an emphasis on public-private partnerships in education, with a focus on regulation and monitoring to foster educational development. It spoke of the 'harmonization' of curricula throughout the country; rather than a uniform curriculum across the public and private sector. It also set a goal of reviewing national assessment and examinations and to align these with international standards (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

In dismissing the previous government's 8 year National Education Policy & Program, the current government follows similar patterns of behaviours in education policy and planning ingrained and established by successive Pakistani governments since 1947. However; there is a significant and controversial difference in the 2018 National Education Policy Framework worthy of note and discussion.

The government's 2018 National Education Policy is applicable to *private schools and private school systems*, as well as the public sector. It does not seek a 'harmonization' of curricula, with an implicit recognition of the value of diversity, rather it seeks one uniform curriculum across the whole country.

This is a significant shift from previous policies (leaving aside the nationalization of the private education sector under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) in which the private education sector was an independent and viable alternative to a failing public schooling sector, noted for its "poor leadership, governance, institutional imbalances, and a lack of political consensus" (Fancy & Razzaq, 2017).

Previous government education policy and planning frequently acknowledged the positive contribution private schools made to the country. The 1972-1980 Education Policy noted that while education would be free and universal up to class X "private schools will be suitably supported for the loss of fees incurred by them" (Education, 1972).

When viewed in the light of the *suo motu* decision of the Pakistan Supreme Court, regulating the fee tables of private schools, and private school systems, the 2018 National Education Policy Framework is in essence, the return of the nationalization of the private education sector in Pakistan.

5. AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2018 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

An examination of the Pakistan 2018 National Education Policy Framework notes that it follows the same patterns and trends of previous education planning and policies since 1947. For example; its overall arching goals and aspirations are reflected in the three objectives of the third five year plan (1965-1970):

1. *To provide an educational system which would facilitate transition into an era of science, technology, promote political, social and economic development and bring the country's spiritual and cultural heritage into harmony with the contemporary world.*
2. *To provide the youth of the country with conditions conducive to the full-fledged development of their individual capacities and character.*
3. *To raise the quality of education at all levels so that it may properly fulfil its national building task.* (Bengali, 1999)

While the 2018 Education Policy and Framework is not a fully written comprehensive curriculum, there is still a noted absence of any core understanding of the nature education in the 21st century; the global competencies required for the future, and a core understanding of the nature of a curriculum. It is deficient in

a basic Tylerian understanding of educational *purpose*.

Rather than educational *purpose*, the framework articulate five pillars for educational development across the country:

1. *National Cohesion*
2. *Effective Use of Information*
3. *Improved Governance and Financial Efficiency of the Education System*
4. *Innovative use of Technology*
5. *Active Communication Campaign* (Ministry, 2018)

In many respects these five pillars are also found in the education policy and planning of previous governments. Moreover, the five pillars have a tangential link to education; but are not focused on the *purpose* of education. They are overtly political in nature, rather than educational in substance. As sign posts to a uniform national curriculum they fall short, and are based on Pakistan's previous historical education planning models. They will not improve the educational system, whether public or private, because they do not address the overt lack of political and social will, and the current lack of skill and expertise, to implement social and education policies in the country. The Framework further identifies four areas of strategic priorities:

1. *Decrease Out of School Children*
2. *Uniformity in Educational Standards*
3. *Improve the Quality of Education*
4. *Enhance Access to and Relevance of Skills Training* (Ministry, 2018)

A failing here is that these priorities are not *strategic*; they are *tactical*, and to reach their desired end require an extensive well developed strategic plan. In addition each of the four areas identified have been acknowledged in every education policy and plan in Pakistan since 1947. The failure to realize the historical reasons in not reaching the previous desired outcomes of these four tactical areas since 1947, sets the 2018 National Education Policy Framework up for failure.

The remainder of the Framework is simply a rehash and summary of existing policies circa 1947 through to 2010, in which promises were made to:

1. Maximize existing school infrastructures
2. Introduce two shifts in schools
3. Increase schooling for girls
4. Redeploy unused public buildings for schools
5. Remove financial inequalities
6. Provide funds in disadvantaged and rural areas
7. Recruit young graduates to teach literacy and numeracy
8. Introduce non-formal modalities of education
9. Use technologies of the day (Ministry, 2018)

A common feature of the 2018 Framework with its predecessors, is that it acknowledges the importance of education; but as Bengali aptly summarizes as with "*subsequent policies it is drafted in language that became more and more flowery and bombastic, and the plans and schemes became more and more heroic and fanciful over time*" (Bengali, 1999)

6. NATIONAL COHESION THROUGH A UNIFORM CURRICULUM

Is national cohesion attainable through imposing a uniform curriculum on the public and private sector?

The growth of private schooling in Pakistan has expanded considerably since the 1990s. From 2003 to 2014 private schools grew from 26% to 38% (Ailaan, 2015). However; it should be noted that the quality and curriculum differ significantly across the private school sector in Pakistan. Andrabi, Das and Khwaja argued that

“Private schooling is indeed a large and increasingly important factor in education in Pakistan

both in absolute terms and relative to schooling...and is relatively more at the primary level.

And while the rural gap still remains, the growth trends show a marked improvement in rural areas...while private schools did have a lot of untrained teachers and were mostly self-owned, there was little evidence to suggest that they were providing very poor quality of education. (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2002)

While acknowledging the importance of the private school sector in Pakistan, they further suggest that given the diversity in both curriculum content, infrastructure and quality of teachers and teaching and learning, more research needs to be undertaken into the growth of private schools in Pakistan; especially at the lower end of the market. (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2002)

7. A DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM?

The 2018 National Education Policy does not differentiate on types of private schools; neither does it explicitly mention the more than 29,000 religious schools (Madrassa) in its policy. The Government's plan to impose a uniformed curriculum across the public and private sector is a serious threat to educational freedom, and gives the State the mantle of 'Superior Educator'. (Ball, 1983). Further, in attempting to crush the upper end of the private school sector through punitive fee caps; it risks crippling the human and intellectual capital of Pakistan for future generations, and as previously mentioned, setting the country's educational progress back more than 50 years.

In defining a differentiated model of education, the eminent curriculum specialist Ralph Tyler did not focus on education as an end in itself, or as the core principle in attaining national cohesion. Rather, he argued that there are four essential questions as a starting point which must be resolved when planning a curriculum:

- 1. What educational purposes should schools seek to attain?*
- 2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?*
- 3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?*
- 4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler, 1949)*

Since Tyler developed these four key principles, educators and curriculum designers have created a variety of models which have been applicable to their respective eras; yet they have not digressed significantly from Tyler's model. A 21st century curriculum is still by and large determined by purpose (learning outcomes, skills, experiential learning, core competencies and a variety of fit for purpose educational pedagogies). Today, purpose has been further defined through the lens of the emerging global knowledge economies, the commodification of education, and is international in outlook rather than nationalistic and inward looking.

The Pakistan 2018 National Education Policy Framework is inward looking with an overarching political and social aim of national cohesion through a uniform curriculum:

- 1. Curriculum reforms to include a common curriculum framework across the country (public & private sector)*
- 2. Common national teaching and learning standards (to include all provinces, private schools and school systems)*
- 3. English to be taught as a second language*
- 4. Core subjects to be agreed upon for all public and private schools & school systems*
- 5. Establish and strengthen regulatory systems across all public and private schools and private school systems*
- 6. Adoption of common assessment and examination standards across all public, private schools and private school systems*
- 7. NEAS (National Education Assessment System) to inform about student learning outcomes across various systems. (Ministry, 2018)*

In his press conference, of January 9th, 2019 following the first meeting of the National Curriculum Council, the Federal Minister for Education stated that:

There is “.... no unification in our education system. Education makes ‘frame of reference’; it provides a way to look at the world and a way to interpret the world. Your life experience also does that but education does

the same. If the system of education is not unified, the way to look at the world will be different for everyone...Our desire should be to create one nation, create one frame of reference, create one way of thinking, and look at the world in a same way. For this purpose our government has decided to move towards a unified education system (see Appendix 1). (Mehmood, 2019)

While the overall themes of the Minister's press conference are aspirational; they reflect a more worrying move toward the nationalization of the private education sector. In addition, there is a covert attack on the successes enjoyed by those students who've attended and graduated from the higher end of the private school sector; and have been able to add to the gifted human and intellectual capital of Pakistan. Moreover, the Minister's remarks suggest that it is the private school sector which is to blame for the woes of education in Pakistan, and the terrible state of the public school sector.

This is a purposeful rewriting of history, and an attempt by the government to abdicate responsibility for the sorry and sad state of the public school sector. Furthermore, the criticism of English, and its use as the *lingua franca* in private schools, industry and the corporate sector appears as a neo-colonialist attack on the country's history and any progress it has made since independence. Moreover, there is explicit in the Minister's remark, an agenda in which diversity of thought, creativity, critical thinking and reasoning are seen as undermining the State.

In summary, the Minister's remarks are incongruent with the skills and attitudes required to be a 21st century citizen within a free and democratic society. One significant error in the remarks was on the countries which have a national curriculum. All of the countries mentioned have a diverse and pluralistic approach to curricula in their schools (even Saudi Arabia). In the list of countries mentioned one will also find schools which offer the Cambridge Primary Years Program, the British National Curriculum or an adapted version of the same, Singapore Mathematics Curriculum, aspects of the Australian National Curriculum, the American High School Diploma and Placement program, the International Baccalaureate Primary, Middle Years and Diploma programs, and O, IGCSE and A levels. These all sit comfortably within the National Systems cited, and are harmonized within the countries in which the curricula are delivered.

8. A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PAKISTAN 2018 NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The International Commission on Education for the 21st Century cited four key principles that children and youth need to be able to participate nationally and internationally:

- 1. Learning to know: to provide the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning.*
- 2. Learning to do: to provide the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global knowledge economy and society.*
- 3. Learning to be: to provide self-analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, affectively as well as physically, for an all-round complete person.*
- 4. Learning to live together: to expose individuals to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live in peace and harmony. (UNESCO, 2013)*

Each of these key principles celebrate diversity, difference and the multiple varied ways one may view and understand the world, and are lacking in Pakistan's 2018 education policy framework. No-one, not even the citizens of an authoritarian state, look at the world in the same way. We don't think in the same way; we all perceive and understand the world differently. This is a cause for celebration, and promotes unity and diversity in any society. The one singular goal of any education system is to teach that while others are different they also may be right; this is eloquently captured in the Mission Statement of the International Baccalaureate Organization:

"The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right." (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2005-2019)

National Cohesion through a uniform curriculum has been tried in other countries with diverse cultural and religious traditions, and a multi-poverty index (poor education; health and living standards) in the vain hope that what is good for one person to know; is surely good for the whole population to know too.

Kenya's attempt failed to realize its vision of national cohesion due to its narrow definition and understanding of curriculum, and curriculum content, and because the gaps "between the intended, implemented and achieved curriculum in Kenya is too wide" (Njeng'ere, 2014)

The Rwandan experience while similar, is also a stark warning for Pakistanis as Rajala explains:

"The Rwandan State reach extends into the school society nexus where its hegemonic role enables it to determine the contents of education to a large extent and therefore fulfill its goals...the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan State is also solidified through this process. By teaching loyalty to the State and the Nation, and by romanticizing the imagined past, the State seeks legitimation for its authoritarian policies" (Rajala, 2016).

History is problematic, because each generation of leaders and thinkers has a tendency to hark back to a golden age. This isn't unique to Pakistan. One sees this as a global phenomenon today. It is captured in the West through the rise of populism and a return to the nationalist politics preceding World War Two. It is evident in the 'close the borders mentality' of The United States, Australia, and some European nation states; rather than recognizing the importance of a humane and just approach to the plight of migrants and refugees.

Rather than celebrate difference, the global outlook in the latter years of the first two decades of the 21st century sees difference as a threat. In Pakistan, this was very evident on the acquittal of Asia Bibi. In October 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted her of blasphemy, because of insufficient evidence; although she will not be allowed to leave Pakistan until the verdict has been reviewed; a process that can take years.

It was chilling and frightening to watch school age Pakistani children, in both public schools and madrassas, call for her hanging and or beheading. If ever there was a lesson on introducing tolerance, compassion and diversity of thought into the Pakistan school curriculum-this was it; amidst a stark warning of what a future could be like in an intolerant country, where thinking independently marks one as a heretic; a blasphemer, and an outcaste.

9. GLOBAL LESSONS IN CREATING A VIABLE, FUNCTIONING 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are a number of key areas excluded from the 2018 National Education Policy Framework (and its predecessors). Creating greater autonomy through flexible regulations in both the public and private sectors does produce better student learning outcomes and greater teacher retention.

For the poor in Pakistan "deprivation isn't destiny" (Schleicher, 2018), and for any government to claim so is disingenuous. Creating a world class education system in Pakistan for all children, youth and adults has to be done at a differentiated level. In other words; create diverse, fit for purpose curricula juxtaposed with educational leadership programs, which target the multi-faceted urban and rural communities in the country.

Current government spending of around 2-2.3% of GDP isn't enough-however; more money doesn't necessarily equal more education. It is how the money is spent which will determine the success of the public education sector in Pakistan. In addition; more time spent learning may not yield better results (Schleicher, 2018); the focus in Pakistan should be on quality teacher training up to an international standard. If large private sector school systems like Beaconhouse can achieve this within 43 years; so can the government public education sector.

All children have an innate capacity to learn and want to learn, and may achieve high levels of success in an education system. While it may be argued that the success of a Nation State should be determined by what it teaches its children, in imposing uniformity over diversity, it will achieve a compliant, inward looking, fearful population. This is self-evident throughout history, and today with nation states who have imposed an ideology on its citizenry, over freedom of thought, and an approach to education of national unity through diversity.

Any curriculum, national or otherwise, needs to be flexible so it may be applied in different contexts. It should be adaptable in all settings, so a fit for purpose model in Pakistan, which can address the needs in the rural areas, religious schools, and the public sector needs to be developed and refined. Differentiated literacy models are required for the rural sector and urban sectors where there are high rates of illiteracy. Not everyone needs to go to University; the country's economy has a significant rural and agricultural base-literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills and training for these sectors should be a national priority.

A key focus in the public education sector must be to hold account all the education officials who oversee the

system. There must be a move from administrative accountability to professional accountability, thus ensuring that the right people hold the right positions, through merit and qualifications. There should be the right educational governance in the right place (Schleicher, 2018)

The government ought to partner with and learn from the success of large private school systems. They should create policies which promote equity not uniformity, and educate and fight against poisonous pedagogies which divide, rather than unite the country. Pakistan needs an educational policy which prioritizes educating for global competencies in which all adults, children and youth, are able to examine local, global and intercultural issues, and understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, so they have the core competencies and skills to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for the collective well-being and sustainable development of their country (Schleicher, 2018).

Finally, the one glaring and concerning omission from the 2018 National Education Policy Framework, is the recognition and importance of child protection and child safe guarding in schools within Pakistan (with the exception of the larger private schools private school systems where child protection and safe guarding has become a top priority and policies are in place).

Pakistan is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; yet while children are protected by social, religious and legal standards; the country still has some of the highest global rates of child exploitation, (sexual abuse, trafficking, child labor etc.). For now, children are protected more by not for profit centers, and the private school sector (Pulla, 2018) than a fully functioning government child protection and safe guarding system at a provincial and federal level. This is an area where the government could partner with private schools and private school systems in seeking solutions and being informed on current global policy and practice.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should celebrate the contribution the private school sector has contributed to

Pakistan's growth and development over the last 50 years. Private schools include families and students from a variety of social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They thrive through their diversity and make a significant contribution to the human and intellectual capital of the country. In the large private schools and school systems like Beaconhouse, The City School and Roots, the vast majority of student enrolments are from average families with moderate incomes. These parents send their children to these schools because they believe in their educational philosophies, approaches to teaching and learning, and the kinds of learning outcomes designed to prepare their children for the 21st century. (Alberta Education, 1998).

Further the government should exempt the private school sector from a uniform curriculum subject to a review of each school, school system by its regulatory authorities. Moreover, the government could subsidize all private schools with a fee of 500PKR or below per month, up to 10,000PKR per month so their level of service delivery, infrastructure, curriculum content and teaching and learning is of the same or similar quality as the private schools at the upper end of the market. This will increase enrolments across the country and reduce the number of out of school children.

The government should abandon its goal to create a uniform curriculum, because the evidence from case studies above shows it is doomed to fail. It should work with the Higher Education Commission and rethink its certifications for the national curriculum, and redesign these along the lines of the International Baccalaureate's Primary, Middle Years and IB Diploma programs, or similar curricula models, so as to prepare its young population for the integrated world of the 21st century and beyond.

While not mentioned explicitly in the 2018 National Education Policy Framework, the government has mooted that its desire is to improve the curriculum in the Madrassas. However; prior to doing so, it would be in the best interest of the country, and a significant step toward national cohesion if the government looked at the reform of the Madrassas.

An international report concluded that:

- 1. Madrassa graduates have limited employability because their skill-set is relatively small compared to other school graduates because of an outdated and narrowly focused curriculum.*
- 2. Often modernity in madrassas is equated with access to computers and good infrastructure. However, such attributes without proper curricular changes only make the madrassas potentially more vulnerable to recruiting by internet extremist organizations*

3. Even though a vast majority of madrassas are not linked to any terrorist organizations, they tend to perpetuate an exclusionary worldview both within Islamic sects and with reference to other faiths.

4. While the absolute number for madrassas is a fraction of the total number of schools in Pakistan, their impact is still large in the most isolated parts of the country that have the highest potential for radicalization. (Brookings Doha Centre, 2009)

On the topic of educational, planning and policy making in Pakistan, there are lessons to be learned from the past:

“A review of the history of educational planning in Pakistan shows that setting targets, bemoaning the failure to achieve the same, setting new targets with unqualified optimism has been continuing game policy makers have played ad nauseum and at great public expense...differences in the hues and shades of previous governments-be it civilian or military, elected or otherwise, socialist or Islamic -has made little difference to the manner in which the game has been played. The result in all cases has been the same. And the results show that there has been a single lack of political commitment to literacy and education” (Bengali, 1999)

It is to be hoped that the government, and the policy makers and planners of education in Pakistan, will understand the country's educational history, and set a new direction, having learned from past mistakes. The 2018 Education Policy is thus far limited to a framework. It isn't too late to change this, and create a viable outward and fully functional 21st century public education sector, with policies and practices which take into account the interests and aspirations of all stake holders, including the students, parents, teachers, administrators, and owners of schools in the private education sector.

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APPENDIX 1:

Mr. Shafqat Mehmood's Conference- 9th January 2019:

The three different streams of education have different certifications:

- Private schools: Cambridge system of O 'levels and A levels and recently there is an addition of baccalaureate system
- Public Schools: Matriculation certificates
- Madrassas: have their own system of education and own certification process. There has always been an issue raised by them that the madaaras certification should be accepted the same way as the certification from two other streams.

This has led to absolutely no unification in our education system. Education makes 'frame of reference'; it provides a way to look at the world and a way to interpret the world. Your life experience also do that but education does the same. If the system of education is not unified, the way to look at the world will be different for everyone. Information will be interpreted differently, in different ways. I am not saying one is education stream is better than the other, I am just highlighting that they are different. This difference has resulted as a hurdle in the creation of 'one nation'. There is one nation but within that nation there are different ways to look at things, different ways to interpret information, different ways to look and understand a situation, different ways to interpret the world.

Extreme example is that our children from different streams of education are brought together they might not able to hold a conversation with each other. Not only their language will be different but also the way they look at the world will be different. That's why if we look at it that way (it may sound harsh) by the minds have been divided; in one nation minds are divided. This creates a hurdle in creation of one nation. Along with this there were other consequences as well, not that I am saying that one is better than the other but our society made some decisions: because our official language for government processes, systems and procedures is English, English gained importance. Our corporate sector's language is English, again increasing its importance. Even the important examinations like higher education, civil services exam and more are all in English thus again increasing the importance of English. (Again I am not saying which is better) all this resulted in people belonging to one particular education stream gained advantage over all others, making them more successful with more job opportunities and more success in society. Basically people with education from English schools with international linkages have been more successful in our society. They were given preference in labor market and corporate world. Society determined that these people are more successful. It created difficulties for people who did not belong to this education stream, they had face hurdles which did not exist for the English, elite schools.

This gave birth to injustice in our society; some got an advantage due to their educational stream, things are easier for them while difficult for others. In some cases these difficulties were so extreme that there were no way to overcome those. This led to English system of education or if you want you can call private education system with international linkages attracted more people. Most of the people tried to be part of private education stream. Even many small schools started mushrooming in villages and towns with “English medium school” written in front, in order to attract people, whereas they might not even have the skills to teach English language. But because society had decide that English was the way to success, everyone wanted that, even if we are not ready for it. Even some public school showed a desire to move towards English system of schooling.

Again I am not saying which is better than the other, but all this has given birth to injustice in our education system. Two big problems:

- Divided minds: I don't want to go into the detail of the consequences of this but if we look back over the past 25 years, these divided minds could be/maybe a contributing factor behind many problems
- Injustice: majority left behind while the minority, mostly rich moved forward. Poor left behind

This injustice and inequality cannot be tolerated. Our desire should be to create one nation, create one frame of reference, create one way of thinking, and look at the world in a same way. For this purpose our government has decided to move towards a unified education system. We don't want to do this alone we want our nation to come to one decision. We do not know what it will be and what shape it will take, that's for later. Many curriculums have been devised, we are not going to reinvent the wheel, and we will look at all. But we have to make a commitment towards ending injustice and create one nation. But it does not mean we want to bring down the standard of education, not at all. Setting the standard of education is in our control, why would we want to lower it. If people think the absence of Cambridge system will lead to lowering of standards and quality of education, that's not the case.

Our ultimate desire is that in future (regardless of whether it takes 2 years, 4 years or 7 years) we move towards an education system with one single national certification. We decide together what to study and what needs to be taught and then move towards a single national certification. Change requires time.

There are statistics and ill share few: few countries that have single national certification:

Europe: France, Germany, England, Italy, Ireland, Hungary, Netherland, Portugal, Norway, Spain, and Finland, Asia: India (not completely), Malaysia, Japan, Korea, China, Singapore,

Middle East: Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

If all children belong to one unified education system, it will be extremely helpful in eradicating inequality and injustice and we will move towards becoming one nation