

## Comparative Analysis of the Vision of Quality Education of different Political Parties in Pakistan

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The role of government is critical in providing key services to education, so is that of decision makers. People sitting in the parliament make the most important decisions about the education system in the country and it is very important to know their opinions about creating system for quality education in Pakistan. Although all political parties emphasize upon their own agenda about education quality and improvement, yet practical actions have been missing. The aim is to discover the complexity of political will and governance of education system in Pakistan, why it is what it is and what it should be to fulfill the national aspirations of Pakistan as quoted in Qarardad-e-Maqasid, the vision statement for education system in Pakistan. A qualitative study was carried out opting phenomenological approach and Internet Mediated Research methodology (IMR) to understand the political mindset and conception of quality education of the key players of politics in Pakistan. The textual media related to party manifestos and the independent reports published on the quality of education in Pakistan was triangulated against the statements of the leadership of eight political parties obtained from the visual media, 'The Great Debate on Education', a special talk show hosted by Hamid Mir on GEO TV[1]. Data analysis has been done in two stages. At stage one, the media content analysis was performed and themes were allowed to emerge from the repeated discussions on the interviews and other secondary data selected for the purpose, i.e. party manifestos and Education Performance Reports. At stage 2 comprehensive interpretive analyses was done by comparing and contrasting various views emerging across themes. The discussion led to the implications that quality education might suffer in Pakistan due to a particular mindset. The study is unique for its use of visual and textual media for critical analyses of the political vision and attitude towards quality education.

**Keywords:** quality education. Politics in education. education Governance. policy making. Internet mediated Research (IMR). Media Content Analysis

Pakistan ranks 106 out of 113 countries only above Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015). Pakistan failed to realize commitment with EFA Goals with the exception of reducing gender gap to some extent, and increasing enrolment in early years' education. Two-thirds of Pakistani population is defined as youth (people belonging to 15-29 age groups). There are approximately 180 million youth in Pakistan, and their number is growing 3% annually (Ashraf, Ali, Ali & Schultz 2013). The problems of drop out and quality still stand tall, becoming complex day by day as people entering in job market are either not literate or do not possess desired skills to sustain their jobs. Not only the future of forthcoming generations is at risk, the government's neo-liberal

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economic policies will also fail because all development depends upon generating competent and sustainable human capital.

Many researchers had predicted that Pakistan will be unable to achieve universal primary goals by 2015 (Zakar, Qureshi, Zakar, Aqil & Manawar, 2013) and they were true; it is 2016 and still we are lagging far behind in many areas to reach EFA goals. Unless we learn to look at the problem from systemic point of view, international commitments and challenges like Jomtien Conference, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs0, Dakar Framework of Action and Education for All (EFA) cannot be met. These issues would only be addressed properly if the leadership of the country takes a step ahead in reinventing education policy creatively and systematically and does not just blindly respond to international pressures in wake of globalization.

According to Article 25-A, of the Constitution of Pakistan, free and compulsory education will be provided to all population between 5 to 16 years of age by the state (UNESCO 2011). After 18th constitutional amendment, a Joint Declaration on Education was passed by the federating units in September, 2011. Besides many other goals, an action plan was promised to set the priorities and raise budgetary allocation by the provincial governments keeping in view of challenges set by MDGs and EFA. Budgetary allocation for education was increased from 195 billion (2012-2013) to 210 billion (2013-2014). Whether this meager increase of 7% is proportionate with the growing inflation in the country? Moreover, raise in primary schools' budget was only 2.44%, which was unable to meet the needs of 3.8 million out of school children (PESRP-PMIU 2010; 2011).

How Pakistan will meet its goals regarding economic welfare and peace? How this degrading situation is affecting future sustainability of Pakistan as an independent nation? Whether our leaders can steer the boat to land of safety and prosperity which is stuck in the tsunami of poverty, ignorance and extremism? Whether the political office will ever rise above the rhetoric and lip service and giving hefty political statements about what should be done rather than taking active involvement in what could be done? The key for systemic improvement and change is locked under the hands of decision makers i.e. the political leaders of Pakistan.

The inefficacy of the education system in Pakistan has so far been studied from management perspective; only bureaucratic management of institutions has been investigated or the role of primary customers (parents & students) has been explored. This study examines the problem from a different angle, the role of one of the major stakeholders; i.e., the eminent political leadership is focused. The core intention behind writing this article is to localize the awareness and start a debate about the present status of education and its quality in Pakistan as key responsibility of the elected government of Pakistan.

### **Research Design**

The approach towards research is phenomenological searching for deep meaning and understanding of the complexity of political will and governance of education system in Pakistan. The researchers have used evolving approach of internet mediated research (IMR) for this study. Following IMR the present study is referred to as "Primary Internet research" using original and novel data from the internet sources (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012; Hewson, 2007, 2014, 2016). The aim is to subject the data gathered in research for collecting relevant evidence to answer specific research

questions of the study (Hewson, Yule, Laurent & Vogel, 2003). Web 2.0 technologies have enabled modern researchers to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other media sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram and FlickrR) for selection and gathering of “multi-media observational data” to be used for document analysis purposes (Yoo & Kim, 2012, McCreanor, Lyons, Griffin, Goodwin, Barnes & Hutton, 2013; Hewson, 2014, 2016).

Media content analysis is the technique which is specifically applied to the content obtained from IMR sources. This technique is highly recommended for social sciences research (Holsti, 1959; Shapiro, 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; McNamara, 2005). For media content analysis the instructions have been followed as recommended by McNamara, 2005 & Neuendorf, 2016). McNamara (2005: 4) specifically highlights three qualities of media content analysis, that, 1) it is highly descriptive, 2) it leads to desirable inferences, and 3) the inferences have certain predictive value. All these qualities match very well with the purpose of research. Media content analysis is the technique which merges observational and document analysis techniques in a unique way (McNamara, 2005; Hanna, 2012; Neuendorf, 2016).

Both textual and visual media comprised our population. The websites of the leading political parties of Pakistan comprised textual population of the research. The selected eight parties have been in government at provincial or federal level in past 15 years, and they are: (1) Pakistan People’s Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), (2) Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Group (PML-N), (3) Pakistan Muslim League Qaid-e-Azam Group (PML-Q), (4) Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), (5) Mutahiddah Qoumi Movement (MQM), (6) Pakistan Tehreeq-e-Insaaf (PTI), (7) Awami National Party (ANP) and (8) Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazal-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F). Party manifestos were downloaded from the leading eight political parties’ website. The sampling unit was the text related to vision for education quality and improvement. Similarly, three years (2012-2015) reports published by UNESCO, Alif Aillan and ASER were another textual population and sampling unit was practical actions taken by the governments for the improvement of education sector in Pakistan.

Researchers advise that all texts must be sampled “in view of what they mean, the interpretation they enable, and the information they contain” (Krippendor, 2004:113). Since text does not fulfill the complete purpose and word of mouth was necessary to fulfill the purpose of triangulation, therefore, a TV program comprising interviews with leading representatives of the eight parties was selected. Lacy, Fico and Simon (1991) postulate that purposive sampling is the best option to represent adequately the views of political elites while using electronic cum digital media is considered the best combination for data collection (Hanna, 2012). The visual media content from GEO TV program was used as observational data, since the researchers never mediated or influenced the interview process (McNamara, 2002; Hanna, 2012).

The reliability of the research was obtained by using ‘intercoder reliability’ by using all three researchers as coders, who repeatedly go through all textual and visual media to get free of all bias (Shapiro, 1997; Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002; McNamara, 2003). The validity of the research was obtained by using triangulation of sources and means of obtaining data. The impact of IMR is greater than the documented research, since the sources used are permanently available on the internet, therefore, there are lesser chances of misusing data and researchers’ bias impeding qualitative research is automatically reduced.

The research strategy comprised of watching ‘The Great Debate’ (GEO TV Program) again and again to summarize the key agenda points for quality education and improvement of education performance in Pakistan as stated by party spokespersons. These agenda points were matched with

party manifestos and the Education Performance reports issued by independent agencies, ASER, Alif Ailaan, and UNESCO Pakistan; gaps were identified between the promised and the delivered. Following the phenomenological approach interpretation has been done on various interpretive levels (Schutz, 2013). First, the descriptive content analysis was done focusing on the contextual themes which emerged from the observation of visual data (watching of Great Debate). Second, this data was compared and contrasted with other textual data to find the gaps between the promises and actual practices of the political parties. The results obtained are presented in tabular form. Third the conclusions are drawn, and findings are discussed with reference to the local and world literature to derive deep meanings and understanding of the implications.

## Results

### Analysis of the visual media

Mr. Hamid Mir, journalist and anchor, conducted a program “Great Debate” wherein leaders/ representatives of different political parties of Pakistan presented education policy of their respective parties. Following representatives of different political parties of Pakistan participated in “Great Debate”. Ms. Shehnaz Wazir Ali (PPP), Mr. Khurram Dastagir (PML-N), Mr. Azeem Naqvi(PML-Q), Mr. Farid Ahmad Paracha (JIP), Mr. Raza Haroon(MQM), Mr. Jahangeer Tareen (PTI), Mr. Sardar Hassan Babik(ANP) &Mr. Fazle Ali(JUI-F) participated in the ‘Great Debate’. The representatives were asked to share salient features of “Education Policy” of their party within three minutes.

#### a. Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP)

Ms. Shehnaz Wazir Ali represented PPP, the main left winged national party. She emphasized four key points of the “Education Policy”. Future peace was declared offshoot of quality education; other key points shared within three minutes are as follows:

- PPP has amended Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 and made education as vested right of an individual. Furthermore, the state had been declared responsible for compulsory and free education to the children of ages between 5 to 16 years
- PPP leadership has been responsible for the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 and shifted education as Federal subject to the Provincial one giving provincial governments more autonomy to make appropriate decisions.
- Scholarship to female students from Benazir Income Support Program to lessen financial burden on families so that they can easily meet their education expenses.
- HEC was financially strengthened to encourage higher education. Provinces were also authorized to participate in matters related to higher education at provincial level.

#### b. Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Group (PML-N)

Mr. Khurram Dastagir the representative of PML(N) stated five key points of the “Education Policy” based upon the Philosophy that “Knowledge is source of power.

- Meritocracy will be promoted at all levels, in teacher recruitment and selection, as well as, in student admissions.
- Equal access to digital technology will be promoted.

- Human capital development by investment in teachers and students.
- Investment for updating infra-structure of educational institutions.
- In pursuance to the Article 25 (A) efforts will be made for the enrolment of every child (No child left behind).

#### c. **Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam Group (PML-Q)**

Mr. Azeem Naqvi, the representative of **PML(Q)** shared their education policy as well as recent achievements. The “Education Policy” of PML(Q) is claimed to be extension of the ideology of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who said: “Education is a matter of life and death for our country”. Mr. Azeem asserted that PML(Q) has already contributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment and further they aim to:

- Increase share in budget for Education.
- Focus upon construction of damaged schools particularly in KP.
- Ensure enforcement of fundamental right to education country wide with the implementation of the article 25(A) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
- Wide range trainings for teachers at large level (Human capital development).
- Establishment of independent Commission for the purpose of Assessment and Evaluation (PEC).
- Encourage public-private partnership for educational projects.
- Enhancing scope of vocational education.
- Autonomy to HEC for higher education.

#### d. **Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP)**

Mr. Farid Ahmad Paracha the representative of JIP shared its education policy with the following salient features:

- Focus on nation building, growing persons with true love and belongingness with Pakistan and Islam.
- 100% literacy rate in the tenure of five years.
- Enhancement of GDP up to 7% for Education.
- Focus on Quality Education.
- Encouraging Vocational Education.
- Uniform Education (system founded on the basis of Islamic Education) for all.
- Making curriculum essentially a Federal Subject.
- Mother tongue will be the medium for instruction.
- English will be taught as second language.

#### e. **Mutahiddah Qoumi Movement (MQM)**

Mr. Raza Haroon the representative of MQM focused on the following points of its Education policy:

- Enhancement of the percentage of GDP for education budget.
- Elimination of outdated system of orthodoxy, corruption and nepotism.
- Legislation subsequent to 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment.
- Devolution of power to local council level, for decision making about primary education.
- Uniform curricula for all.

- Modernize education system as present one produces only two persons; masters and slaves.

**f. Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI)**

Mr. Jahangeer Tareen the representative of PTI clearly spelled that Pakistan faced decline since 1947. He emphasized that change cannot occur without systematic change in education system. He claimed that through six point agenda PTI shall bring the change.

- Uniform public education system
- Local language as medium of instruction. The province will decide which language will be taught up to 8<sup>th</sup> class. English language without culture will be taught.
- Devolution of power up to district level ensuring school management free from all political influences.
- Increase in education budget up to 5% of the total GDP.
- Adult and continuing education
- Curriculum will be so designed that the students will touch all thinking levels instead of the knowledge level only.

**g. Awami National Party (ANP)**

Mr. Sardar Hassan Babik the representative of ANP clearly spelled that Pakistan faced decline since 1947.

- Curricula will be a Provincial subject.
- Education in mother language.
- Playgrounds to defeat militancy.
- Increase in number of universities.
- Strict monitoring system of schools and other educational institutions.

**h. Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, Fazal-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F)**

- Believe that Education is worship (عبادت).
- Revise educational goals.
- Intensive teachers training.
- Character building.
- Revision of curricula.
- Restoration of public confidence in institutions.
- Increase in education budget up to 4% of the total GDP.
- Enhance enrolment and control dropout.
- Free education.
- Recruitment of teachers on merit.
- Encouraging girls' education.
- Encouraging non-formal education.

**Summary**

Increased share in budget for Education, devolution of powers, free education, and uniform education are some of the similar points discussed by most of these political leaders. One important issue related to basic primary education i.e., legislation required against childhood labor has not been

discussed by anyone. Similarly issues related to early marriage and population control which indirectly influence completion of education level are also not highlighted. The leaders have talked about free education but no one has talked about free and compulsory primary education for all and the legislation required for it which is pending since 1972.

**Analysis of the textual media**

Situation is quite grim in rural areas of Pakistan as 61 % children of ages of 3 to 5 years never enter school. The percentage of out of school children tends to increase with the age; for secondary school children age group it becomes 66.7%; 33.2 % drop out before completing primary education” (NEMIS 2012-13). As reported by ASER (2014) only 4 % children are enrolled in class 10 as compared to 16 % in class 1. 69% children are enrolled in government schools and the government of Pakistan just spends 2.2% of GDP on their education. On average, there are only 2.35 teacher for each government primary school, whereas, it is further reduced to 1.3 teachers for mosque schools (UNESCO, 2003). Ashraf et al. (2013) report that according to the government’s estimates in 2010,6,480 ghost schools in Sindh and 5,000 in Balochistan were guzzling funds. Still government has not exhibited any serious interest in declaring education emergency in the country. On the other hand, the majority of citizens of Pakistanis also oblivious of the darkness of their future and does not raise any voice for basic right to education.

Pakistan is getting progress in the educational field but with a very low pace. Pakistan’s overall educational score in 2015 remained steady in comparison with 2014 and showed a very little increase of just 1.67% (Alif Ailaan, 2015). The scores which showed the greatest decline was the learning score while improvement was noted in the gender parity and retention score till class 5. The national school infrastructure score which was 57.68 in 2014 has gone up of 62.22 in 2015.

**Table 1**

*Provincial and National Education Scores (Primary School)*

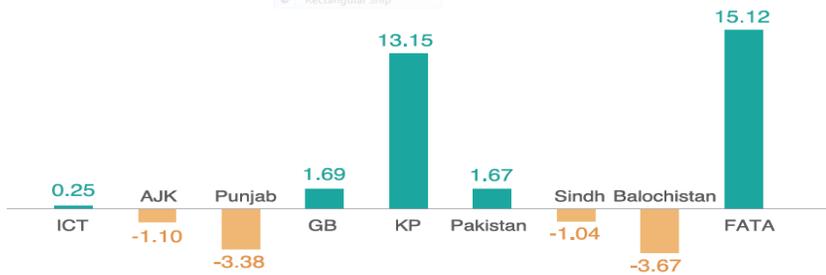
Rank		Change	Province/ Territory	Educa- tion Score	Enrol- ment Score	Learn- ing Score	Retentio- n Score	Gender Parity Score
2015	2014							
<b>2015</b>								
1	1	↔	ICT	83.96	94.31	58.88	87.55	95.10
2	3	↑	AJK	76.67	77.70	57.60	76.96	94.40
3	2	↓	Punjab	76.30	79.67	59.06	72.01	95.38
4	4	↔	GB	73.78	70.25	57.70	81.23	86.21
5	6	↑	KP	70.86	74.80	50.03	75.10	83.69
-	-		Pakistan	70.33	74.80	52.33	67.05	89.29
6	5	↓	Sindh	61.02	65.85	47.61	52.85	83.02
7	7	↔	Balochista n	55.99	59.35	40.50	49.49	74.48
8	8	↔	FATA	55.62	67.63	46.70	43.23	59.93

Source :AlifAilaan, 2015

According to the Provincial and National Education Scores of Primary School, Islamabad has the highest position and its education score increased this year by 0.25%, while Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab have second and third place respectively (AlifAilaan, 2015).

Punjab showed the decline of 3.38% in its education score in 2015 and got the third place whereas in 2014 it was on second position. Gilgit-Baltistan showed the increase of 1.69% while the increase of 13.15% was noted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In two components of enrollment and retention Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) showed the highest increase of 15.12%.

Figure 1: Percentage change in education score (compared to 2014)



Source :AlifAilaan, 2015

The district education scores of the primary schools show the dominant ranking by districts from Punjab, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, which almost cover top half of the rankings while the districts from Balochistan, FATA and Sindh cover bottom half of the rankings (AlifAilaan, 2015: 23). Sindh’s situation remained poor in the whole rankings; only the districts of Karachi, Hyderabad, Naushehro Feroze and Sukkur have their place in top half, whereas, Karachi is the only district, which appears in top 50 of this ranking.

Since one of the main objects of this paper is to compare the initiatives of different political leaders to promote quality education in Pakistan, we present here a comparison of performance for education by elected leaders in their respective districts. Lower Dir managed by Siraj-ul-Haq (JIP), Dera Ismail Khan managed by Fazl-ur-Rahman (JUIF) and Sukkur managed by Syed Khursheed Shah (PPP) are the districts positioned in the worst performing districts (AlifAilaan, 2015: 23). On the other hand Rawalpindi managed by Imran Khan (PTI) and Lahore managed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PMLN) are the highest ranked districts. A worth mentioning leader here is Qaim Ali Shah (then the chief minister of Sindh) who could not improve the educational attainment of his constituency even after winning from there seven times. Khairpur gets the 98<sup>th</sup> position out of 148 districts, whereas, Karachi holds the 43<sup>rd</sup> position.

It is to be noted that even after hit by massive earthquake in October 2005, Kashmir has been able to recover its educational infrastructure maintaining its quality even better than Punjab in spite of all the hazards posed by a difficult terrain. The involvement of foreign NGOs in Kashmir and GilgitBaltistan could be one obvious reason for improvement but at the same time the willingness of political leadership is worth mentioning who aspire to lead and not to be left behind.

**Critical Analysis**

In the following analysis the claims made by parties in their respective manifestos and interviews of parties’ leaders and the gaps in implementation of those promises have been discussed.

Political Party	Claims	Gaps
Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)	Scholarship to female students from Benazir Income Support Programme Legislative measure taken like 18 <sup>th</sup> Amendment.	No proper measures were taken to implement 18 <sup>th</sup> amendment
Pakistan Muslim League (PLM N)	Professional development of teachers Emphasis on controlling dropout and increasing enrolment. Development of institutions like PEF and PEEF.	No legislation on compulsory primary education subsequent to 18 <sup>th</sup> amendment. No increase in budget on education.

	<p>Recruitment and training of quality staff in education department.                  Incentives for teachers for continuous professional growth.                  Regulating strict monitory system in school.                  School governance through SMCs</p>	<p>Increase focus upon privatization                  No new public schools are constructed.                  Waste of resources on projects like Daanish schools.                  Have no control over corruption and misuse of funds.</p>
<p>Pakistan Muslim League (PML Q)</p>	<p>Improved policy and implementation.                  Increased enrolment.                  Profess commitment to increase in % of GDP for education budget.                  Realizes training of Teachers.                  Vocational Education                  Independent HEC                  Elimination of corporal punishment in schools.                  Free text books and stipend for girls.</p>	<p>Did not increase % of GDP for education when remained part of the Government.                  PML(Q) was not able to repair all schools in KP after earthquake &amp; bombing. 50% of schools are still waiting to be reconstructed.                  No control over corruption.                  Many projects did not realise due to change in government.</p>
<p>Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP)</p>	<p>Character building addressed.                  Addressed medium for instructions rationally.</p>	<p>100% literacy rate in five years is ambitious when JI Ameer Sirajul Haq’s own constituency is the lowest in educational attainment in KP: Lower Dir 62.54% and Upper Dir 58.21% (AlifAilaan 2015).                  What about compulsory primary education? Whether they will sign on compulsory female education in all provinces?                  If so why they have not presented the bill as yet in KP assembly?</p>
<p>Mutahiddah Qoumi Movement (MQM)</p>	<p>Talked about uniform curricula.                  Talked about following of Constitution.                  Further devolution of powers.                  Addressed legislation subsequent to 18<sup>th</sup> amendment.                  Increase GDP up to 7 % for Education.</p>	<p>They never presented any bill in the National Assembly or Provincial Assembly.                  Huge gap between policy and strategy.                  No meritocracy.                  Increasing racial and ethnic divide.                  Karachi falls at 43<sup>rd</sup> position in district educational ranking</p>
<p>Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI)</p>	<p>Medium of instruction should be mother tongue.                  Protection of Culture.                  Enhancement of GDP.                  Adult Education.                  Uniform Curricula.                  Devolution of power                  Free of all political interference school system managed at district level.</p>	<p>More idealistic than practical. Yet to be implemented.                  No policy has been pronounced to make mother tongue the medium of education in their 4 years tenure in KP                  Lacks emphasis upon vocational education.                  No strategy defined for proclaimed vision and goals.                  There is a wider educational attainment gap between Punjab and other provinces.</p>
<p>Awami National Party (ANP)</p>	<p>Addressed fight against militancy.                  Enhance % of GDP for education.</p>	<p>None of these claims have been implemented during the provincial government (2008-2013).</p>
<p>JamiatUlama-e-Islam Fazal-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F)</p>	<p>Character building.                  Free Education.                  Intensive Training.                  Enhance GDP.                  Revision of curricula.</p>	<p>They never presented any bill in National Assembly or Provincial Assembly.</p>

### Discussion

The total failure of Pakistan government is exhibited in failure to govern education system uniformly throughout the country. After implementation of the 18th amendment the situation has worsened as the government has closed its eyes over the poor performance of Sindh and Balochistan. Change of governments and inconsistent policies further corrupt the situation. Caplan, Crampton, Grove, and Somin(2013:4) argue that “citizens vote for results, not policies ... and politicians win popularity by delivering prosperity, peace, safe streets, and well-educated students.” Does it stand true for Pakistani citizens? Whom we vote for, the deliverers of their promises or the squanderers of dreams? Are our citizens conscious of their rights, especially the basic right to education? It is realized that unless parent and community voices are raised about the issues faced by the public school education, comprehensive policy making & implementation would not follow. Tikly and Barrett (2011) have praised the rising voices parents through civil society organizations in India and Pakistan, who are taking active interest in government schools’ performance and are holding government and bureaucracy accountable for their poor performance. They should also add the names of key political leaders and criticize their role as key decision makers in public policy and governance of the education system.

Khalid and Khan (2006) have stated that Pakistan is facing two major challenges in development of education system; one is ‘ideological’ as people from multiple ethnic and cultural backgrounds constitute Pakistan. Although, the constitution of Pakistan allows a generic respect towards all religious and ethnic factions hinting towards a secular framework of action, but as the name ‘Islamic Republic of Pakistan’ signify secularity as antagonistic to the idea of a religious state carved in name of Islam. Moreover, the political leaders of all parties have failed to achieve consensus, which interpretation of Islam should be followed. The other challenge is demographic emerging from wide socio-economic differences in various parts of Pakistan (Qadri & Shakir, 2015). Moreover Pakistan’s population has been on constant rise; from 34 million in 1951; the number grew to 154 million in 2005 and is expected to almost double by 2030 (Khalid and Khan, 2006). Are we ready to educate and equip one of the largest cohorts of youth in the world with the modern skills.

Political parties tend to have distinguished interests and distinct preferences for steering public sector education and granting autonomy to professional community, therefore, their political orientations play a key role in setting their dimensions of policy making (Jungblut, 2014,2015). Similarly, governments tend to exhibit versatile behaviors in determining their preferences (Gingrich, 2011); therefore, choosing a particular reform strategy could be highly idiosyncratic. Jungblut (2015:5) states that the leftist tend to opt for a centralized control because of their preference for a ‘strong interventionist state’, whereas, the rightists opt for a relatively de-centralized control, wanting a ‘weak state’ and offering individual and tailor made rather than collective solution. However, we see a mixed response in Pakistani situation, Mr. Zardari of PPP, a leftist, seeking devolution of power through 18th amendment and PML(N), the rightist challenging provincial autonomy for curriculum design and implementation. It is uncertain in this case, whether, there is a paradigm shift in party positions or personal interests of leaders take precedence over the party ideology.

Jungblut (2015) has also demonstrated a strong link between the orientation (left or right) of a political party and its tendency to spend on public education. Leftist tend to spend more liberally on

education and favor subsidized education (Castles & Obinger 2007; Ansell & Lindvall, 2013), true to some extent for PPP in our country for their nationalization of schools and free education in 70s, and the 90's drive to uplift higher education as means of upward social mobility and progress can be attributed to left wing politics of PPP; similar agenda was well taken by PML(Q) with Gen. Musharraf consequently. On the other hand, PML(N) has failed to show any interest in liberalization of higher education, although strongly in favor of neo-liberal economic policies. It is impending that misappropriation between means and ends and failure to cognize education as the most eligible tool for economic welfare of country will always act as a block in reaching its major national goals and objectives.

The policies are formed and changed at bureaucratic level but the political leadership fails to take ownership of those policies and implement it at local level, especially in their own electoral region. Researchers advocate that political parties need to take a higher stake in education (Jungblut, 2015). The ideological back ground of party seems to cast negative influence instead of positive in cause of education, especially in the case of female education, but liberal parties like MQM, PPP or ANP also failed to create any hope regarding legislation for compulsory primary education, and forbidding child labor and early marriages. This grotesque situation causes further disinterest of the educated in the electoral process and democracy is left wailing at the mercy of the illiterate masses and the politicians who agree with them on a petty bargain either in the name of religion or the tradition.

While reviewing literature on the role of political parties in decision making about education, it has been further highlighted that different political parties exhibit different levels of centralized control over the education. HEC was designed to have a central control over the higher education in the country, but PPP and subsequently PML(N) have declared education as a provincial matter making a vague policy for distribution and regulation of funds. Most of the research funds are stuck with the federal capital and the provinces do not even have adequate knowledge about their rights and share of the funds allocated to HEC. Such state of affairs further establishes the view that structure of education is mainly shaped by the political interests.

### **Conclusion**

All parties profess to bring revolution in the education sector, but everyone has failed to take practical steps to reach the desired destination, which will not be possible without significant increase in the allocated percentage of the GDP to the education sector. Each party has some significant point to contribute to the development and improvement of education system in Pakistan, but we need a cohesive national action plan, which should be comprehensive and inclusive of all individual good points included in the individual policies of the parties. The party who will be able to make such a plan and get it unanimously approved by all parties as Zulifqar Ali Bhutto got affirmation for 1973's constitution will do a real service to the people of Pakistan.

It can be safely inferred from the data presented above that terrorism and extremism is directly proportionate to low education scores of an area. Islamabad, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and Punjab are relatively more peaceful and prospering areas of Pakistan, whereas, Sindh, Balochistan and KP are rift with conflicts and extremist activities. It is also worth noting that Islamic organizations have the poorest education scores, as Mr.Siraj-ul-Haq's district ranks at 78<sup>th</sup> position, and Fazlul Rehman's district stands on 74<sup>th</sup> position out of 148 districts. Such poor scores reflect least involvement of the respective leaders in education, and thus peace and prosperity of their homeland (AlifAilaan, 2015: 23).

### Implications

Education plays key role in granting human beings the true freedom of 'choice', through building human competencies (Sen, 1999). Researchers have highlighted the importance of higher learning, and adoption of technology & innovation, while using new means and ways of production to reduce poverty and income inequalities (Chaudhry & Rehman, 2009; Moaz & Neeman, 2008; Dănăciță, Belascu and Llie, 2010; Terada-Hagiwara, 2010; Afzal, Rehman, Farooq, and Sarwar, 2011; Afzal, Malik, Begum, Sarwar, & Fatima, 2012). Fabre and Augersaud-Veron (2004) have highlighted that poverty gap would increase as well as child labor if opportunities for quality education are absent in the communities.

The issue of education is the most sensitive for the country but how many politicians seriously patronize the cause of education in Pakistan? Kremer et al. (2013) have pointed out that public participation and involvement in education is cost sensitive. Increasing costs of health and education in Pakistan is making education out of reach. In Punjab there is an increasing emphasis on privatization of education; there are 90,000 private institutions in the province.[1] Government is not building any primary or secondary schools; most of the schools built are one teacher and one classroom and they are not adding quality to the system. Will any politician patronize the improvement in education as a cause and take the responsibility of reflecting upon existing policies and shaping public opinion in favor of right to quality education of each citizen of Pakistan? All lip service is being paid to issues concerning access and equity of education for all, that too, in reiteration of reports published by various agencies. The political leaders who criticize others in opposition fail to take effective measures in their own tenure and keep throwing responsibilities at others. Therefore, we need an active voice of academia about pedagogical reform, use of instructional technology, improvement in assessment & evaluation methods, and last but not the least raising of a school teacher's status and self-esteem.

What is to be done involves better advocacy campaign about compulsory primary education making each Pakistani mother well aware of her duty to educate her children like Japanese or Chinese mothers. Pakistan is not even following the role model of other Asian countries like China, Japan and Korea. The literacy rate of South Asia is 43% far below the world average of 60%. The lowest literacy rate and poor learning outcomes are hindering the desired rate of social progress and transformation. The outlook and behavior of the people remain orthodox and regressive conforming to the prevailing values of social milieu. The failure is not confined to dissatisfactory improvement in literacy rates but it lies in linking educational outcomes with goals of national economic welfare and progress. Lack of emphasis upon technical vocational education, lack of leadership interest and efforts to link growth and development with investments in health and education are obvious.

Too much reliance upon donor communities for taking initiatives for the improvement, too large districts, huge populations to manage, and orthodox management styles are the key challenges requiring effective decision making from the political leaders. Lack of leadership urge to break the status quo, e.g. political resistance in enhancing the number of administrative units defines leadership purpose and motivation in Pakistan. Not only more provinces are needed, legislation regarding empowerment of local bodies to handle issues related to basic primary education is also an urgent requirement, but the ruling elite seems totally disinterested in the devolution of power.

On one hand, due to increased privatization, and ever increasing cost of education quality schools are becoming out of reach to the lower middle class; on the other, lack of privatization, self-governed or NGO initiatives in rural areas is limiting growth of education in these areas. Somehow, we need to strike the right balance. The focus of neo-liberal policies of existing government is upon public investment so it is realized that unless the private sector gets interested in expanding its efforts to rural disadvantaged areas the net enrolment ratio and education score cannot improve. How the proponents of liberal economy will convince the business community to invest more in education in disadvantaged and under-privileged areas is a challenge yet to be addressed.

Pakistan seems to be stuck in the eternal vicious circle of poverty powered by the causal relationship of poor educational attainment, unskilled workforce, low wages and poor incomes distributed in large families. Early marriages and lack of attitude towards birth control worsen the situation further leading towards various social crimes, delinquent behaviors and even terrorism (Kruger and Maleckova, 2003; Afzal et al., 2012). It is ascertained by many researchers that education is the only eligible means of developing human capital and a workforce with standardized skills, which may help to stabilize economic institution in Pakistan cutting the chains of poverty (Afzal et al., 2011,2012).

The difference between the quality of workforce of the developed and under-developed countries is the consequence of poor educational outcomes in the developing countries, which ultimately leads to unemployment, low incomes and poverty (Schlicht, Stadelmann-Steffen & Freitag, 2010; Qadri, Qadri & Shakir, 2015). It is recommended that the government and other policy makers should focus on short term as well as long term solutions of poverty reduction by giving proper attention to education sector reforms. Continuous socio-economic distress reflects poor planning, weak public policies (Qadri et al., 2015) and this socio economic distress will continue unless leadership pays critical attention towards strategic management of the implementation policies emphasizing accountability.

Although globalization is the main agenda underlying all policy making activities, but both political leaders and bureaucracies are offering mixed responses to it confusing the practitioners. Most of the solutions offered are either short term or sound 'too good to be true'. Globalization requires comprehensive change in how institutions are managed and administrated and new levels of accountability with increasing privatization (Reynolds, 2012; Harris, Chapman, Muijs, Reynolds, Campbell, Creemers et al., 2013). We need new regulating authorities to manage the performance of schools both in public and private sectors. It will become harder to run school education as monopolized bureaucracy of the running government, because increasing awareness about the importance of quality education has set new levels of expectations in the minds of parents and if public sector fails to deliver, the public institutions will no longer remain the prime choice of customers. It will create another crisis about the authenticity of public institutions and their relative meaningfulness in creating public service. Therefore, the people in government should come out of the aura of illusion that few structural changes in the system or some luxurious provisions like laptops and Daanish Schools will bring magical change into real gruesome picture of education sector in Pakistan. The leaders need to develop realistic outlook and practical approach to bring meaningful change in the system of education. Is it possible if the leaders will keep imagining themselves 'the deliverers' and always adopt top-down approach for the solutions of problems? Education is a service and it requires servicemen with an aptitude of service quality to bring real time changes in the lives of people.

End Notes

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[1] Great Debate on Education (Part 1&2)(02-02-2013). Retrieved from

<http://www.awaztoday.tv/News-Talk-Shows/32848/Great-Debate-On-Education-Part-1-2nd-February-2013.aspx>

[2] reported by Kamran Khan in his show “Dunya Kamran Kay Saath’ on Dunya TV dated 07-03-2016 at 9:30 pm

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