Envisioning Education Reform in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa

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PTI has emerged as a single largest party in the Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa in the last general election. Whatever their stance on other issues, but we hope that they will bring visible changes in the education sector as their manifesto has clearly explained. Similarly providing elementary education is the job of provincial government, therefore the people, who mandated PTI will never accept any excuse from government side. It is owing to the fact that they have voted for real change and not the change of faces.

Education Reforms has always been the priority of every government in Pakistan. Since partition many education policies took shape under various dictatorial and democratic regimes. At policy level every government put their efforts to improve the declining of education and to bring the quality at par with the international standard. But it is pathetic to know that the students at classroom level students hardly benefited from these reforms.

In this write up my intention is to bring to light the educational issues mainly focusing school and the classroom along with suggestions for improvement. It is based on the empirical research findings in Pakistan and abroad, the writer personal observation as an action researcher. Interestingly the social media circle were also used to bring the issues to the light. As a result the issues of Teacher education institutions, gap between planned and taught curriculum and different school and classroom level came to the surface which are as under. Moreover, he write up is being published for a larger audience in such a time when the provincial government of KP is going to implement an education policy very soon.

REFORMS IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Our teacher training institute especially those in the public sector have a very little impact on the positive development of trainee teacher and the ultimate result is that after completing the pre service teacher training the prospective teachers rote memorize some of the philosophies and psychological underpinnings. They can articulate them without being able to apply them in the real classroom setting. Teacher Education institutions should rethink and reflect on their prevailing approaches of teacher education.

- More Pragmatic approaches of teaching and learning should be adopted with more emphasis on,
  - What does really work inside the classroom environment irrespective of the philosophies and psychological theory? We must remember that all the theories are driven by the context and the situation prevailed at the time when a specific philosopher or psychologist lived.
  - Holistic approach of teaching and learning instead of teaching only the letter and numeracy.
Classroom based research for the teacher must be encouraged.

Ongoing formative assessment instead of one time summative assessment will provide a teacher to see the ongoing progress of students as well as the teacher.

Open inquiry instead of cook book or recipe book method of laboratory work will highly be fruitful.

On job training of teachers by Mentoring and peer coaching because a one time pre-service training is not enough. Change is a permanent phenomenon there every time we must equip ourselves to cope with it.

Training session for curriculum enrichment by the teachers and use of locally prepared instructional materials.

Adopting constructivist approaches of teaching such as inquiry, problem based learning instead of age old theory of behaviorism.

The question of what to learn is less important than how to learn. Learning how to learn will equip a teacher with the ingenuity and tools to be a life long, creative and more innovative learner.

Linkages with the teacher education institutions both on national and international level and exchange of staff and students may lead to bring critical mass of change agents and will develop intercultural learning.

**MINIMIZING THE GAP BETWEEN PLANNED AND TAUGHT CURRICULUM AND MORE**

Pakistan national curriculum 2006 is one of the best in the world in terms of its more learner centered approach. The main objectives of the curriculum document are to produce such individuals who are tolerant, respectful of others and inquirers of the nature but rarely these attitudes have been highlighted in the text books. That could be the reason that our students are unable to develop tolerance, respect for alternative explanations and inquiry mind in their daily lives. Why this gap between planned and taught curriculum and how to fill it is a big question? This is natural. Planned curriculum is not possible to be received by the student in true spirit. Many factors such as translating the curriculum objectives, preparation of teaching and learning material, unawareness of teachers are responsible. Even the personal mindset and ideology of a teacher could be responsible to widen this gap. However, this gap can be minimized to major extent by writing standard text books and other resources, training of teachers and improvement inside the classroom. If planned curriculum is not implemented at classroom level then it is reduced to only a wish list.

A major shift from tradition Jug and mug approach to an inquiry approach of teaching and learning is visible in the curriculum document. Therefore, we disparately need some of the following measures to be taken.
TEXT BOOK AND PREPARATION OF OTHER TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The national text book and learning material policy and plan of action 2005 endorses the view that the text book are central in any education setting. It is a single resource that is available to the majority of teachers especially both in rural and urban context where there is a dearth other resources. There the following are the important measure to be taken.

- We had been reading age old stories of ‘The camel and the jackal’, ‘Rustam and Sohrab’, ‘taajir ki daanai’ and “thirsty crow” with no hidden messages. Recently developed text books have to some extent covered this deficiency. Nevertheless, following changes may further help to improve the standard of text books.

- Latest trends and development in science and technology should also be the part of the science course.

- A teacher should have the autonomy to enrich the curriculum so as to make to make them familiar with the students life. In this way, ownership of the knowledge by the student will be ensured.

- Possible pedagogical strategies and Students learning outcomes (SLOs) may be helpful in the beginning of each chapter or unit to help the teacher.

- In the rural context even in many urban schools resource are scarce and teachers are unable to use the materials and equipment. To avoid this problem the authors of a particular textbooks must take the local context into consideration. So that alternative resources could be utilized to get the purpose.

- Sequence of the topics in a coherent and logical sequence could make the subject easy to understand

- As far as possible text books should be more interactive and lively.

- Last but not the least, the preparation and use of lecture notes, guide books, keys, and guess papers must be discouraged and banned for all the times.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SCHOOL

There is a need of groundbreaking shift from the old traditional jug and mug belief to a more open and autonomous learning environment. Some of the structural changes must be introduced in the educational department.

- The highly concentrated organizational structure of elementary education system should be dissolved into decentralized system. Let the school head put his/her efforts to bring the quality.

- The teachers should be given opportunities to develop them professionally in the real term.
• Head teacher role has been conceptualized as a pedagogical leader with administrator. As a pedagogue he/she is also responsible for the classroom observation, model lesson delivery, providing teachers opportunities of on the job training by mentoring, peer coaching and through the arrangement of workshops. Many models are present with some private teacher education institutions for the School Improvement Program (SIP) that are could prove valuable if adopted.

• Developing more linkages with the private sector teacher education institution and removing the hurdles of red tapism.

• The teachers should specifically be exposed to some important skills such as research skills, reading and writing skills as tools for their professional development.

• Proper financial management is also lacking in the schools. On annual basis a single school receive enough funds for different purposes. However, it has been seen that majority of the funds suffer time lapse and returned without any proper utilization.

• The provincial government in the last budget has allocated Rs. 60 billion for education........ a laudable decision indeed. Only allocating budget will not resolve the problem. We need honest and professional financial managers so that the money does not fall prey to the corrupt.

PARENTS TEACHER COUNCIL (PTC), A DREAM YET TO BE IN PRACTICE IN THE REAL SPIRIT

Research has shown that parental Involvement has been proved to be instrumental to ensure the quality education especially in the rural and most backward areas. The idea of Parents Teacher Council (PTC) in the public sector school is a recent phenomenon that needs to be strengthened by the adopting more professional approaches.

It is worth mentioning here that that our communities cooperate well with any foreign or national NGOs. If that hand of cooperation is extended to the government institution than that also guarantee the success and achievements. The rewards of the community participation are multifold. One major philosophy behind it is to ensure ownership of the development thus making it more durable and sustainable. Meaningful community involvement in the education process can provide effective check and balance on the local level to the school academics and other support staff. They will facilitate the smooth running of the school affairs.

• Parent teachers’ council need to be strengthened and their role must be defined. Empowering them and giving them ownership may further help to ensure the quality education.
• Currently established Parents teacher councils are one man show, i.e. only the chairman seems active. More and more portfolios could be created to address the specific areas by involving more professionally sounder individual on voluntary basis.

CONCLUSION

‘Survival of the fittest’ employs only to the fittest in education. New age has many rewards along with many difficulties with it. Various social, cultural, economic issues are cropping up. The gravity of these challenges will be more intense in the coming years. Challenges are omnipresent the only solution to these problems is meaningful education. We cannot escape problem but we can have strategies to solve them. In the world of Knowledge Economy we could not afford to live with uneducated population.

We need more effective education system with honest and highly professional education managers without being influenced by any pressure from politician and other societal forces and skillful, ingenious and creative teachers in our academic institutions who are life long learner. More over we must be sure that new problems demands new approaches and way of thinking. They are no more soluble by stagnant and sluggish approaches. I would further assert here that as a single problem has many factors, similarly the same problem could have many solutions.

Any revolutionary measure could prove fatal. It will further harm the system rather to improve it. The new PTI government has very new faces in the provincial cabinet. Many of them have very less experience of working on such a large scale. Therefore they must show tolerance and maturity while taking any decision. Therefore my last suggestion is that each and every step in educational change must be informed by the concrete empirical research and not be firing in the air

Last but not the least, if the present provincial set is really sincere than my suggestion would be to abolish multi schooling system. It is only achievable when the sons and daughters of the chief minister, education minister and all other high ups sent their children to an ordinary government school and set precedence for others. Only forcing a government teacher to send his/her child to government school will not serve any fruitful purpose.

REFERENCES:

