**Education sector in limbo**

[Dr Amara Khan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-amara-khan/" \o "More Articles by Dr Amara Khan)

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I recently read an article, “How Much Should Teachers Talk in the Classroom? Much Less, Some Say” by American journalist Catherine Gewertz on both student-talk and teacher-talk concepts in the classroom. The article intends to provide consciousness to the teachers to enquire: Are my series of questions increasing learning? Are classes controlled by my talk? Do students have a vigorous function in conversing what they are learning? Am I intentionally checking how much I talk?” In short, teachers need to reflect on these points for the benefits and progress of students.

As I read the article, I came to understand the seriousness of the issue. Yet within the Pakistani educational context — not much attention is paid to this area. The international community wants to further uplift their already uplifted educational system. We, on the other hand, are struggling to get our very basic needs fulfilled. So being a teacher in Pakistan, if I am asked about our current educational setbacks, I would most probably highlight them as; insufficient budget, need of policy execution, faulty exam system, inadequate material amenities, dearth of teacher quality, need of application of education policies, aimless education, little admission, excessive dropouts, political meddling, obsolete curriculum, dishonesty, weak administration and management, need of research, and absence of standardisation. The optimistic side, however, is that none of the aforementioned glitches are unsolvable. Each of these could be resolved by devising realistic policies and strategies and by guaranteeing their appropriate operation.

Though we teachers take pride in saying that a teacher is the pillar of education system but we cannot deny the fact that the quality of teachers in many Pakistani educational institutions is lamentable. According to a UNESCO report ‘Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments’ 2017-18, the quality of the teachers and teaching, in schools, is miserable. The condition is even worse in remote parts of the provinces where many a times teachers are not available. Amongst those who are present, majority of them do not understand the utility of lesson planning which makes them unable to deal with numerous complications in the course of teaching and learning. Most teachers rely on lecture methods which do not offer a chance to students to contribute as effective members. Hence, students depend on route method to pass the examination instead of being evaluated on the basis of performance.

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Education system in Pakistan is hampered by both external and internal forces. Externally the system has been rendered a hostage to political intrusion and internally it is afflicted by the managerial manoeuvrings. Quality education advances individuals in each domain of life and empowers any country to attain its overall national objectives. It is a recognised reality that countries who have invested in their educational sector have a firm social and political system. Whereas Pakistan’s educational system has caused frustration amongst the Pakistani people. The directionless system of education is manufacturing degree holders who are lacking critical thinking, exploration, research, and originality.

On emergency basis the government needs to focus on the education system by providing adequate budgetary allocation in the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Curriculum ought not be imposed on the teachers and students but instead be assessed on yearly basis. A massive review could be done to get views of teachers, parents, and society concerning their hopes and reflections. Educationists and researchers must come up with curriculum goals which would satisfy the needs of the society and the country without any bias of caste, colour, and faith.

There should also be as less political intervention as possible. Examination system must be made free from the faction of deceitful ways, dishonesty, and illegal indulgences. For this reason the system of management and check could be bettered both physically and theoretically. The government should augment the pays of the education professionals so that their inclinations are not directed to wicked ways of receiving financial benefits and provisions. The culture of research should also be encouraged in educational institutes.

As I prioritise the above-mentioned problems in our education system, I came across an incident that happened last week whereby 25 students attending a school in Malpur, near Islamabad, suffered heatstroke and were rushed to hospital. This definitely makes me think that perhaps the foremost issue is the poor infrastructure of various schools. The health of our children is in danger due to long contact with high temperatures inside classrooms that are deficient of essential needs such as cooling and clean drinking water. Of course, health and safety first.

*The writer is an academic and researcher based in Lahore. She tweets @amarakhan28*