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# AKU-IED: A leader in education change

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## **AKU-IED: A Leader in Education Change**

*Shahnaz Wazir Ali*

*Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, Islamabad, Pakistan*

Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, President, AKU; Dr. Gordon Macleod, Professor and Director, AKU-IED; Dr. Taylor, Acting Professor; Dr. Sadruddin Pardhan.

*Bismillah-ur-Rahman-ur-Rahim*

It is a very special honor and privilege for me to be sharing this evening with you; it is a milestone in IED's history and I can recall the formal inauguration in January, 1994 when I had the privilege of speaking on that exciting occasion. It was a time full of promise, hope, and high expectations, though not without some trepidation, because the challenge that lay before IED was formidable. Today, 10 years later, the promise has been fulfilled, the expectations have been actualized, and hope has been translated into active commitments and visible change in the classrooms that IED has impacted.

I can recall vividly, the beginning of the journey; the intense discussions on the Advisory Council and the great wealth of experience that many members brought to the foundation concepts of IED. The man who put his shoulder to the wheel was Dr. Kazim Bacchus. Although he is not here tonight, I would like to acknowledge his remarkable leadership and also the sagacious guidance given by Dr. Shamsh Kasim-Lakha.

Those early years and the continuing commitments that the faculty and IED's leadership provided have borne fruit, and IED stands as the premier institution for Teacher Education not only in Pakistan but in the region. In steering IED through that period, IED is fortunate, that in its institution building it had those two great architects.

The aim of IED is to contribute to the improvement of quality, relevance, effectiveness and outreach of educational systems in Pakistan, and to the broader goal of social development. The focus is on improving the performance of teachers through professional development leading to overall school improvement, to develop models of effective teaching, learning and school management, to test the models in classroom conditions, to disseminate results through workshops and, through research, to bring the knowledge and experience to inform and influence policy. This is a powerful and path-breaking

agenda for educational change in Pakistan.

My firm conviction has been that the ‘teaching learning’ process is at the core of educational development. This remains the central challenge for Pakistan, which the government, despite all its policies and rhetoric and the billions spent has not been able to address and manage.

We know that in the new endogenous growth theory, human capital has a central role in the growth process. Investment in knowledge and technology offsets the diminishing returns to physical capital; in the long term, economic returns of investment in human capital are greater than those from physical capital. Yet, in the face of all this evidence, public sector investment in Pakistan in the education sector continues to focus on physical infrastructure, paying scant attention to human resource development; and, by human resources we mean teachers, managers, administrators and planners.

Not only are education expenditures misplaced as I have just mentioned, but they are also unacceptably low; in fact Pakistan ranks amongst the lowest groups of countries in terms of education allocations as a percentage of the gross domestic product. To compound an already critical situation, during 2000-2002, real growth in public expenditure was only 1% per annum; when seen since 1989, real growth has been negative; it has been declining. This raises serious questions about priorities and the national development agenda. For the past three years, the government has been trumpeting its achievements on macro-economic stabilization, creation of fiscal space and deficit and debt reduction; but, this has come at a heavy price and at the cost of the social sectors. The total education expenditure between 1989 and 1999 was 2.40% [of the GDP] and, by 2002, it had fallen to 1%.

The bulk of these expenditures are in the primary education sector; global experience has shown repeatedly that investments in primary education are necessary, but not sufficient to lead to economic development. Empirical evidence clearly suggests that high rates of expansion at Secondary and Higher education levels are crucial for the achievement of higher per capita growth.

The secondary and tertiary levels of education are dependent upon the quality of primary school teachers which influences the quality of students coming out of the Elementary level; thus quality assumes enormous significance in terms of the outcomes and impact for the education sector. This is where the challenge lies and this is where IED has made a singular contribution by demonstrating, through its programs, that if educators (teachers,

curriculum developers, managers, supervisors) are engaged through processes of relevance they can begin to change.

For me, the indicator of real success is if, as a result of IED's training programs, the public sector schools begin to manifest quality improvements and improved student learning. And this has happened! The dynamics of the government school teacher, learning coordinator and district officer learning, interacting and participating with private sector counterparts, professional educators, and international experts has catalyzed and changed their behaviour, attitudes and practices.

IED's achievements are acknowledged and its teacher education paradigms are now a cornerstone for school improvement programs. Though IED's outreach may be limited based on the cautious and conservative approach that has been adopted, I endorse the rigour, the 'test', 'modify' and 'apply' strategy; racing to scale up is not necessarily the advisable route. Pakistan's education history is replete with innovations and experiments, either abandoned due to regime change or scaled up before sufficient experience is in place. So, while IED may not yet be changing thousands of primary schools across the country, it has shown demonstrable success in parts of Sindh, Baluchistan and the Northern Areas.

From 14 cooperating schools in 1993, there are 40 in 2003. From 21 MEd graduates in 1995, there are today 120 men and 120 women in the MEd program; more than 6000 teachers and 200,000 students have been impacted through 1200 VTs. In addition there are 200 teachers who have completed the Certificate program and 200 Diploma holders. IED's programs have reached forums in a large number of countries - including Syria, Malaysia, China, USA, UK, Uganda, Kenya, Zanzibar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Tajikistan.

Evaluating and documenting the impact of IED's work is essential. I would leave that as an ongoing activity for Dr. Gordon Macleod to consider. Because effective practice can influence policy and certainly Pakistan's education system is in dire need of "demonstrated best practice rooted in the local context".

IED must not only continue to build up on the strong foundations it has laid but also disperse the seeds from its tree of learning widely across the education landscape.

IED is a 'partner of choice' for developing countries; the interest expressed by universities of Toronto and Oxford in expanding their linkage program is a celebration and

acknowledgment of IED's effectiveness and the maintenance of high standards of professional excellence. The Chinese have many wise sayings; tonight, I would like to share with you one that only affirms what we are all dedicating our lives to:

If you plan for a year, plant a seed.

If for ten years, plant a tree.

If for a hundred years, teach the people.

When you plant a seed once, you reap a simple harvest.

When you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests.

(Kuan Chung, Chinese Philosopher)

Each one of you here tonight is a privileged member of IED's Community. I believe that the fire kindled at IED will be carried by you to light a thousand lamps and the journey of your life will be marked by a thousand stars.

I wish you all the best and all the success and thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this important anniversary event.