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Need for initiating education reform based on school effectiveness and improvement in Pakistan

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NEED FOR INITIATING EDUCATION REFORM
BASED ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND
IMPROVEMENT IN PAKISTAN

By
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Possibility of conceiving education reform based on school effectiveness and improvement in Pakistan.

Pakistan Education Reforms

Like many third world countries, education reforms in Pakistan are mostly based on the externally imposed innovations to schools proposed by the donor agencies. These reforms are based on piece-meal approach by using top-down organisational model embedded in the mechanical process of management development. The donor-driven innovations might be good in certain contexts, but these could not be worthwhile in the context of Pakistan. Such innovations are always taken for granted by the educational planners and policy makers who do not seem to have realised the implications for school effectiveness and improvement. Therefore, the education reforms based on donor funded projects and programmes could not achieve their desired targets. Perhaps these reforms were not in line with the needs of the society. Any planned and systematic reforms should address the issues of education related to critical citizenship, democratic society, and social justice (Giroux, 1989). The policy makers and planners should assess the potential impact and success of any education reform before they implement it. The education reforms should address the questions such as: (a) What is the purpose of education? (b) What kind of society do we want? (c) How do we educate students for a truly democratic society? (d) What conditions are to be provided for both teachers and students for worthwhile and meaningful education? If the purpose of schooling is to develop students as critical thinkers and problem solvers, then the policy makers should not take any reform for granted. The current scenario of education does not seem to respond to the issues of education related to critical citizenship, democratic society and social justice. There is a generally held opinion among the teachers, teacher educators and others that these innovations failed to make any possible significant impact on the quality of education except some "cosmic changes" in schools.

While reviewing the elementary education in Pakistan, Vandal (1996) mentions that present situation cries out for change and reform. The need is not only of increasing the number of schools but, more important, of a change in the philosophy of education that set free the creative genius of the children of Pakistan. We have to get away from the narrow, constrained and dogmatic view of life and in essence, to give our children the freedom of thought and speech. Bishop (1986) has rightly mentioned that the massive changes can rapidly be initiated but they cannot rapidly be adopted on a stable or permanent basis. Therefore, there is a need for overhauling of education system based on alternative paradigm, which is acceptable to the society as a whole. The education reform should be focused on school effectiveness and improvement so that quality of education could be improved without wasting any further time, resources and energy.

Any planned education reform requires changes in 'deep structures' of schools (Cuban 1990), for making it successful. Otherwise, the teachers and others will resist it by preserving continuity with their past experiences. Thus, the teachers and others become sceptical of mandated changes and, in some cases, outright hostile (Stoll and Fink, 1996). This situation seems very common in many parts of the world; therefore, Mirel (1994) concludes that the educational reformers throughout the world have failed to convince their publics of the benefits of change. The present scenario of schooling can be improved by developing teachers as researchers and reflective practitioners. Stenhouse (1984) mentions that good teachers are autonomous in their professional judgement. They do not need to be told what to do but they are able to make sense of things in their contexts. Concerted efforts are required to produce effective teachers through intensive and rigorous professional development programmes so that they are able to become reflective practitioners and researchers. In this regard, there is a need to restructure both pre and in-service teacher education in Pakistan.

Western Education Reforms

The western education reforms emerged in late 60’s led by school effectiveness movement resulted from the Coleman and others’ study (1966) that the home background has a far greater influence on the children and schools have made little difference to children’s lives. Literature on school effectiveness and improvement presents different definitions of effectiveness. Mortimore (1991) suggests that an effective school is one in which children progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. This refers to value added by schools. Stoll and Fink (1996) describe an effective school is one which "promotes progress for all of its pupils beyond what would be expected given consideration of ini-

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tal attainment and background factors; ensures that each pupil achieves the highest standards possible; enhances all aspects of pupil achievement and development; and continues to improve from year to year (p. 28). Sammons and others (1995) identify eleven factors for effective schools. These include: professional leadership, shared vision and goals, a learning environment, concentration on teaching and learning, high expectations, positive reinforcement, monitoring progress, children rights and responsibilities, purposeful teaching and learning organisation and home-school partnership.

Halton's model of school effectiveness contains four guiding principles. These include: (a) each school would focus on its effectiveness by using a collaborative approach; (b) school would provide broad direction and support for schools by using top-down; and bottom-up approaches; (c) focus on effective schools would be integrated into existing supervision, planning and managerial systems; and (d) project would not use 'quick fix' approach since 'change is a process, not an event' (Fullan 1982). The Halton effective school model contains twelve characteristics, which fall in three broader categories—a common mission (shared values and beliefs, clear goals, instructional leadership); an emphasis on learning (high expectations, teacher collegiality and development, instructional and curriculum focus); and a climate conducive to learning (student involvement and responsibility, physical environment, recognition and incentives, positive student behaviour, parental and community involvement and support). This model advocates the use of the collaborative and co-operative efforts to share information among the members and learn from each other's experiences. Stoll and Fink (1988) have rightly mentioned that the school staff knew whom the staff members actually were. Murphy (1992) emphasised that effective schools should address fairly radical changes in the design and unfolding learning experiences. Little critical thought on school effectiveness and improvement in the western context suggests that there was no particular recipe for effective schools.

School improvement is considered as a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of achieving educational goals more effectively (Van Zelten et al., 1985). This indicates school improvement and effectiveness go hand in hand. Harris and others (1996) maintain that 'school improvement is a systematic attempt to enhance teaching and learning which has its focus both in the classroom and in the school' (p. 15). School improvement encompasses three strategies viz. reviewing and evaluating, change and innovation; and action research and action learning. These strategies address the questions such as: where are we now?; where do we want to get to?; what do we need to do get there?; and how will we know when we have got there? The major thrust of school improvement is to manage change effectively. School development planning, action research and action learning are considered to be effective tools for school improvement.

The school development planning is considered as a statutory requirement for schools in UK. This allows headteachers to develop their own plans based on school needs. Action research helps teachers to become researchers (Stenhousse, 1975) and reflective practitioners (Shon, 1983). To sum up, school improvement deals with process whereas school effectiveness deals with outcomes of schooling.

Initiating Education Reforms Based on School Effectiveness and Improvement

In the context of western world, a great amount of research has been done to document the qualities of school effectiveness and improvement but in the context of eastern world in general, and Pakistan in particular, educators and others do not know much about school effectiveness and improvement. In Pakistan, many efforts are made to improve schools through donor-driven innovations that are externally imposed to the schools, but due to lack of research and documentation, it is hard to draw any conclusion about the impact of such innovations on schooling. However, there is a generally held opinion that these innovations failed to contribute to the quality of education in Pakistan. I agree with Sizer (1990) that creating a school without collegial trust and the authority to carry out improvements, one would end up with creating a third-rate school. This indicates that there is no 'short cuts' or no 'quick fix' or 'teacher proof' techniques to achieving educational excellence. The donor-driven innovation should be contextualised before they are implemented in the schools. There is a need to document the impact of such innovations and see how our schools have been successful. Even, education policies talk about the quality of education but these lack clarity of the concept of quality education. Currently our thinking and actions are guided by the western literature, which may have serious implications for the image of school effectiveness and improvement. If the policy makers and planners are not clear in their own thinking and actions they might invite risk of being failure in the process of school effectiveness and improvement. However, there is a need to set out principles and processes for improving schools in Pakistan that will help to understand the process of school effectiveness and improvement.

Currently teachers and headteachers don't understand children's problems they bring to school. Schools are complex organisations. Policy makers at the state level tend to treat all schools as same, paying little attention to the differing needs and problems that are encountered at the level of school and classroom. Changes are always based on steady and patient efforts to work within the schools (Louis & Miles, 1990). The headteachers should not be seen at the lowest end of the school effectiveness and improvement. However, the head teachers and school leadership are important in the development of effective schools. The development of effective schools is a complex process that needs to be understood. Louis and Miles (1990) in fact, the head teachers as school leaders who are ultimately responsible for establishing school vision and developing school plans for improvement. School improvement shows that the school improvement requires effective management and leadership skills at the level of the school. Louis and Miles (1990) have rightly mentioned that "the hard work of improvement comes in negotiating the difficult path of getting new practices and ideas into real life of the school" (p. 5). The education policies must start with high expectations for schools and ample trust in professionals such as teachers and head teachers. We must avoid taking the risk of failing to achieve excellence, and the risks of cynicism, superficial rhetoric, otherworldly despair will follow in its wake. We need to learn from our own experiences for making schools effective and develop our own image of excellence and practical guidelines to transform ordinary schools into effective schools. These guidelines should be shared with all stakeholders who are responsible to make schools successful. Thus, the important thing is how to do rather than what to do. The documentation will help us to illustrate school management and leadership issues related to school effectiveness and improvement and how schools address and resolve these issues. The tree schools (schooling under a tree) of the past seemed to be better than today's brick and mortar schools. These tree schools were more capable of reforming themselves in a typical school milieu. Of course, environment plays a significant role in effective schooling but the teachers who create a culture and milieu of schooling is more important than any thing else. We need to enhance the quality of teachers through school-based professional development programmes. We need to search for excellence in schooling so that we are able to develop the indigenous model of 'excellent' or 'effective' schools. This will help us to understand the culture and dynamics of effective schools. Effective schools have a clear vision, mission, goals and leadership. Effective headteacher as a school leader has a vision, which is communicated to all staff, students and others. School headteachers should be concerned to do the right things, which is only possible to provide them with professional autonomy.

Stoddill (1974) maintained that the leaders should possess a sense of responsibility, concern for task completion, energy, persistence, risk-taking, originality, self-confidence, capacity to handle stress, capacity to influence, and capacity to co-ordinate. In order to improve the quality of education, the education reforms should be devoted to the achievement...
Government has prepared a master plan to educate the working children. Sources said that 840 new schools would be set up in different parts of the country where around 50,400 children would get education. These children will get free books, uniform and Rs 20 daily stipend. Books and uniforms would be provided by the Prime Minister's Literacy Commission and stipend by the Baithul Maal.

**Medical education in Pakistan termed obsolete**

Karachi, 24 Oct: A Representative of World Health Organisation (WHO) in Sindh Dr. Asad Ali Abro said that the present medical education in Pakistan has become obsolete. He underlined the need for having an institutional arrangement to update the general practitioners on latest medical researches. Speaking at the concluding session of a 10-day refresher course held at PMA House for GPs, Dr. Abro said most of GPs do not know the latest developments in medical science. Quoting a survey, he said no forum is available in the country to make the general practitioners update about latest information of medicine.

**Plan to set up 21 varsities may be dropped**

Islamabad, 28 Oct: The ministry of finance has expressed its inability to allow establishment of 21 new universities due to severe financial constraints. These universities were planned to be set up in the country under the new education policy.

**Basic education a constitutional commitment**

Rawalpindi, 29 Oct: The Minister of State for Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education, Begum Tehmina Daultana, has said that it was a constitutional commitment of the government to provide education to every child of the country. Speaking at a certificate distribution ceremony at the University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi, she said both men and women should work together to make the country prosperous and at par with other developed countries of the world. She termed the agriculture sector as a backbone of the country's economy, and stressed the need for boosting agricultural growth through collective struggle and hardwork.

**Industrial training for NED graduates**

Karachi, 30 Oct: The NEDians Association and the NED University of Engineering & Technology launched an ambitious programme aimed at providing industrial training for each of its graduates. The NEDians Association, in collaboration with NED, held a seminar in which the programme was introduced to the representatives of public and private sector organisations. Sindh Governor Moin-ud-Din Haider was the chief guest. The idea of the programme is to ensure that every BE graduate gets a job when he walks out with a degree in hand. According to the programme, NED was establishing a directorate of industrial liaison and a centre for continuing education. The two bodies would help the graduates find employment.

**CSS exams from 13 Feb**

Lahore, 30 Oct: The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) will hold the CSS Competitive Examination, 1998 from 13 February 1999. According to a notification issued by FPSC, the examination will be held simultaneously at Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

**NEWS WITHIN**

This is an important feature, and indeed all news purporting to give an update on education within Pakistan cannot be extricated from it to go unseen and unnoticed.

And we, in Education 2000, give top priority to all such news, and we would like to bring these to the kind attention of our valued readers.

News/Press Release on education or educational institutions and campuses within the country may, therefore, please be sent alongside photographs to:

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ment of school effectiveness and improvement. The issues of education should be studied and resolved in the perspective of management.

This will help to make schools as living or learning organisations and everybody will become accountable to his/her own actions. The headmasters and other personnel who are responsible for managing schools effectively should be provided with opportunities of professional development in the area of educational management to improve their management practices and understand the complexities of school effectiveness and improvement.

Conclusion

The present government seems to be committed to the overhaul of education, however, it requires realistic planning, workable implementation and monitoring strategies and charismatic leadership with clear vision and mission. The national council for education development chaired by the Prime Minister of Pakistan has been assigned task of monitoring the outcomes of education policy, which seems a positive trend. This indicates a political commitment and will for education development, but this approach may not lead us towards building institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation of school effectiveness and improvement. There is a strong need to involve schools to document all possible information related to school effectiveness and improvement that may help in developing informed education policies in Pakistan. The management of schools is increasingly seen as making a major contribution to the learning and personal development of children. Successful schools happen because of effective school management and leadership. Currently, the issues of education seem to be issues of management and leadership. In order to deal with them the headteachers and all educational managers should be exposed to innovative management and leadership issues and practices so that they are able to effectively manage education in general and schools in particular in Pakistan. The headteachers and teachers are to be trusted and empowered for bringing about change in schools. They do not need to instructed but they should be encouraged to take initiatives for the overall 'school development' (Cheng, 1996).

References


